

Questions and Answers about God's Law, the Holy Bible

Transcripts of Discussions with Harold Camping on Family Radio's "Open Forum" Call-in Program about the Bible.

WITH APPENDICES:

- 1 – What is the True Gospel?
- 2 – How Do I Become Saved?
- 3 – God's Magnificent Salvation Plan
- 4 – Sunday: The Sabbath?
- 5 – Faith Study
- 6 – The Phenomenon of Speaking in Tongues
- 7 – What God Hath Joined Together
- 8 – Interview with Harold Camping

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

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Questions and Answers about God's Law, the Holy Bible

Transcripts of Discussions with Harold Camping on Family Radio's "Open Forum" Call-in Program about the Bible.

INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK

This book includes about 120 additional transcripts from Family Radio's "*Open Forum*" program that became available since the early versions were assembled earlier in 1999, thus making the total about 490 separate discussions. The answers are related to the Bible whenever possible. "*Open Forum*" is aired live every week night and is hosted by Bible teacher, Harold Camping, who has studied God's divine Word, the Bible, for over 50 years. Mr. Camping is also President, General Manager, and Cofounder of Family Radio, which is based in Oakland, California, USA.

These "*Open Forum*" discussions were transcribed over a period of years by Family Radio. A listener in Australia, Leon Kolberg, has made the transcripts available over the Internet on his World Wide Web site at www.ozemail.com.au/~lkolberg, which can also be accessed from Family Radio's Web site at www.familyradio.com. In this book "**CALLER**" refers to the anonymous person who called in with the question, and "**HC**" refers to Mr. Harold Camping.

This book was assembled by two Family Radio listeners who have grown in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior over the years with help from the questions and answers about the Bible as heard on the "*Open Forum*" program, and who desire the same for others.

Martin E. Lee
1070 S DeAnza Blvd #372
San Jose, CA 95129
Phone: 408 741-5342
Email: MLee@USStepper.com

Gerald D. Mittelstadt
2850 Sagittarius Drive
Reno, Nevada USA
Phone: 775 786-1665
Email: gdmitt@prodigy.net

FAMILY RADIO

The following information was copied from the Family Radio Web site:

The Ministry of Family Radio
Broadcasting Christ-centered programs to the United States and around the world!
Committed to the Person and Work of Jesus Christ

Family Radio is committed to the Person and salvation work of Jesus Christ as revealed in God's divine Word, the Bible. We are a nonprofit, nondenominational, educational organization dedicated to obeying our Lord's command to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). Family Radio programs include no commercial advertisements. Air time for other Christian broadcasters on Family Radio is free of charge. The ministry relies solely upon God working through listeners for the financial support of day-to-day operations. We as a ministry desire to be entirely faithful to God's divine, infallible Word, the Bible. Every effort is made to accurately present the Gospel of the Bible. In purpose and belief, we stand out from other radio and TV ministries in our faithful reliance on the Bible as the ONLY infallible authority.

First Broadcast in 1959

Family Radio was organized in 1958 under our official name, Family Stations, Inc., and began to broadcast February 4, 1959, over KEAR FM in San Francisco. Since then, God has enabled the ministry to purchase a number of powerful AM and FM stations and several smaller educational facilities and translators around the country. Our domestic broadcasts reach metropolitan areas such as Birmingham, Charleston, Chicago, Cleveland, Jacksonville, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New York, Omaha, Philadelphia, Sacramento, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C.

International Broadcasts

An important addition came in 1973 with the purchase of an international short-wave station, which we called WYFR, in Scituate, Massachusetts. With the use of many transmitters and antennas, the Gospel is proclaimed in ten languages from thy WYFR facility, now located in Okeechobee, Florida. In 1982, our international outreach was expanded to India and the Far East with the use of powerful transmitters in Taiwan. Family Radio has become a worldwide ministry; our broadcasts now span the globe so "That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else" (1 Kings 8:60).

A Diversified Outreach

In addition to the broadcasts, Family Radio offers Bible-based pamphlets and tracts to teach and exhort and other diverse means of spreading the Gospel, including the following.

Family Radio School of the Bible

Primarily a correspondence school, Family Radio School of the Bible courses are designed to help laymen and professionals to minister in the church, on the job, and at home through the study of various subjects and certificate and degree programs. The school operates on the principle of Matthew 10:8, "freely ye have received, freely give." In accordance with this principle, the FRSB does not charge tuition; it is dependent upon the generosity of students and friends.

Missionary Tours

Family Radio sponsors "Missionary Tours" which provide opportunities for staff members and listeners (at their own expense) to help spread the Gospel through tract distribution. Our ambassadors for Christ have visited cities in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia (every continent except Antarctica).

On the Internet

Our Christ-centered programs are now available worldwide, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on the Internet. Access to the Internet may be via computer or television (with the proper equipment). In addition to the programs on the Internet, Bible studies such as "The Glorious Garden of Eden" and "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9" are on our Home Page. Downloadable books include "What God Hath Joined Together" and "God's Magnificent Salvation Plan." The Internet also has our program guide, short-wave schedule, and The Bible. Tell your friends and family that they can find Family Radio on the Internet at: <http://www.familyradio.com/>

Supporting Family Radio

If you believe God would have you financially support Family Radio you can send your tax-deductible gift to:

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End of Web site information.

For biblically based answers to your questions, you can listen to the **Open Forum** on Family Radio stations in many locations in the USA on Monday through Friday evenings at 8:30-10:00 p.m. Eastern Time (5:30-7:00 p.m. Pacific Time) or call 800-322-5385 (from within the USA and Canada) during the program to ask a question or make a comment. You can also listen to live broadcasts on Family Radio's Web site at <http://www.familyradio.com/> during those hours. There are also recordings of past programs available on this Web site.

The Open Forum is translated from English into nine other languages and broadcast by short-wave radio around the world. You can also listen to prerecorded short-wave broadcasts on the Web site. Write to Family Radio at the above address to obtain a short-wave broadcasting schedule for your area or call these numbers:

Toll Free: 800-543-1495 (from within the USA and Canada)

Toll Call: 501-568-6200 (from outside the USA and Canada)

CHAPTER 1 -- BAPTISM

GENERAL

Why Did Christ Go to John the Baptist to be Baptized? (146A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I would like to ask you a question and I'll just take the answer over the air. My question is, Why did Christ go to John the Baptist to be baptized? Was there any certain reason for it? And if there was, should there be today also a proper administrator of baptism, and who has the authority to baptize?

HC: The question is relating to the whole matter of baptism. And it begins with the question of why did Jesus leave the area of Galilee and go all the way down to Jericho, along the Jordan River, where John the Baptist was baptizing?

First of all, we have to understand why Jesus was baptized. He was not baptized in the same sense that we are baptized when we believe. It was somewhat related, but it was also quite different. In the Old Testament, before a priest went about his priestly duties or, in fact, before he even could become any kind of a priest, he had to be washed in water. Aaron and his sons were washed in water. And each time they went into the temple to go about their priestly duties, there was a laver of water in the temple, and they washed their hands and their feet.

Now this ceremonial washing indicated that they had become ceremonially cleansed, and therefore could now offer sacrifice. Now Jesus came as the Great High Priest. He also came as the Sacrifice. He was the Lamb that was going to be killed. But He was the High Priest who was to offer this sacrifice. And before He could officially begin His role as the Great High Priest, it was necessary that He, following in the shoes of the Aaronic priesthood, the Levitical priesthood, had to be ceremonially washed.

Now John the Baptist was eminently qualified to administer this cleansing water. Both his father and his mother were direct descendants of Aaron. And so John was in the priestly line himself. And he certainly could administer this water. And so when he baptized Jesus, it was as if Jesus was in the temple and was washing in the laver of water, preparatory to administering the sacrifice. Now this is Old Testament baptism, an Old Testament ablation that was looking forward to the cleansing that would be provided in Christ.

Now our baptism is a similar sign, and it also relates to cleansing. But our baptism has a higher and a greater significance, because it not only officially recognizes that we have been saved, that we have been covered by the blood of Christ and our sins have been washed away. But it also officially recognizes that we have become identified with the Holy Spirit in His program to evangelize the world. In other words, beginning with Pentecost, every born again believer is filled with the Spirit at the time that he is saved. And this is simply language to indicate that he has been qualified to become a witness.

And so when we are baptized in water, all of this is in view. Our sins have been washed away, and we have become identified with the Holy Spirit in His work of evangelizing the world. That's why the Bible speaks of this as being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Now in the Old Testament there were other ceremonies that pointed to cleansing. There was the offering of a burnt offering. There was the offering of the blood sacrifice. There was the rite of

circumcision. All of these were performed by the proper authorities in the temple, by the priests. Just anybody couldn't do these things. This was a very holy observance that took place.

Now by the same token, in the New Testament there is the congregation. In the Old Testament there was the congregation, headed up by the priests. And anyone who was circumcised became a member of the congregation. And so in the New Testament there is the congregation, and it's headed up by rulers who are called elders and deacons. And so therefore the pastor is the one that ought to do the baptizing.

CALLER: OK. So today, too, we still need a proper administrator to administer, right?

HC: Just anybody can't baptize anybody.

CALLER: So if a person just took it upon himself to baptize other believers, their baptism would not be scriptural, would it?

HC: I'm not really certain that I understand all the implications of the question, but think of it this way. When we are saved, we are to affiliate with a body of believers. And in baptism we are announcing to the congregation, "We have become identified with the body of Christ. Our sins have been washed away, and we are joining with you." And so an individual just doesn't go around willfully baptizing. Baptism has to do with becoming a part of the body of Christ, a member of the congregation, a lively stone in the temple of God.

CALLER: If it has to come through a proper administrator, then would it not have to come through a succession of proper administrators? For a baptism today to be scriptural, according to the Bible, would it not have to have been succeeded directly from the apostles down to now?

HC: I don't think so. I don't really think we have to think in terms of apostolic succession. The Bible does teach that as the apostles sent out missionaries, they laid their hands on them, and then they in turn laid their hands on others. But the Bible teaches, in Matthew 18, where God is talking about the church, that wherever two or three are gathered together in His Name, He is in the midst of them.

Now let's suppose that you were in a community, way off somewhere, or let's say you're a soldier in the battlefield, or in a strange country, and there is no church. There is no pastor. And now you want to find other believers, and you want to belong to a church. Well, you find whatever other believers that you can. And maybe you find a handful of them. And now you've got a church.

Now the Bible teaches that you are to have those who rule over you. And someone of your number is to be an elder or a deacon. And if someone is qualified, he is to be called to be the pastor of that little congregation. And then you have a church indeed.

Now ordinarily, of course, you don't have to follow that kind of a situation. Ordinarily we can go from one congregation to another. A congregation can send its roots out to other communities. And if you are a little body of believers in a little community somewhere, you can ask another congregation in another city, "Would you be a sponsoring congregation? Would you help us begin? Would you call for us a proper pastor?" And so on.

CALLER: Is there any place in the Bible where someone was baptized by someone who did not have direct authority from, let's say, the apostles, or from a church?

HC: There is no evidence of that in the Bible.

CALLER: That's really why I was asking the question. It would seem from the Bible then that you would have to

have some sort of authority to baptize, rather than just anybody doing it.

HC: Yes. The Bible teaches that it was Peter and John who baptized, it was Paul who baptized, it was Philip who baptized.

CALLER: But if someone had not been baptized by any of the apostles but was just saved by himself, through the Bible, and gathered a group of believers together, would they themselves have the authority to baptize?

HC: I don't think they would have any authority to baptize until they had organized as a church, so that there is church authority, so that there are elders or deacons who rule. You must have a congregation.

CALLER: If this group of, say, 15 people or so had banded together and named one of their group a pastor or an elder, could they then give this man the authority to baptize?

HC: I think so. I'm not absolutely certain of this, but I think so. I think ordinarily they would ask a neighboring congregation to assist them in establishing that this man who was called was properly called and qualified to be the pastor, and so on. And the other congregation then would take part in the activity also, of ordaining this man.

CALLER: What about some churches that just sprang up from certain people, and they did not at the beginning have any authority to baptize? And they've just carried on, and they've grown into quite a denomination. Would not their baptism be unscriptural?

HC: No. You see, we're dealing with a technicality. Finally we have to find out what is going on in the hearts of men. That's why, in a certain sense, your questions are hypothetical, and in a certain sense they're very technical. Finally what it turns on, in any congregation, is the question, "Is someone called of the congregation?"

Here's a congregation of a hundred members. Is the man who is standing as their pastor a man who has been called of the congregation to be their pastor? And is he faithfully bringing the Word of God? I believe then that he has a God-given call, and he would be qualified to administer baptism.

Now it is more ideal, I believe, that a congregation like this, in calling its minister, if it has never called one before, if it works through another congregation so that things will be done decently and in good order. But I'm not confident that that's an absolute requirement.

I could think, for example, of a Bible being sent to Russia, or to China, or some place where they don't have the Scriptures. And a nucleus of believers begins to develop. Now there's no way that there could be any kind of a succession, or whatever. But yet they can form together as a congregation, and they can properly baptize, and so on.

CALLER: But it seems to me in that case, because God knows all things and is in control of all things, that He would still make it possible for a duly authorized person to be there and to make the scriptural baptism available to these people, if this was to be a New Testament church.

HC: It could be. It could be.

CALLER: OK. Well, thank you.

HC: Thank you for sharing. Good night.

In Whose Name are We to be Baptized? (149C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question. In Acts 2:38 Peter was talking, and he said that everyone needs to be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, "and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Again, in Matthew 29, I believe in verse 28, Jesus is talking to

the disciples and tells them to go into all nations, baptizing in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I was wondering, someone has told me that the only baptism is baptism in Jesus' Name. Do you have any ideas about that?

HC: The question is: How are we to be baptized, in the Name of Jesus, or in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?

In Matthew 28 Jesus said, "Make disciples, baptizing them into the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." But when we get to the Book of Acts, there we read of baptism in the Name of Jesus Christ two or three times. When Cornelius and his family was baptized, we read in Acts 10, in verse 48: "And he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ."

Now first of all, the phrase "in the Name of Christ" has to do with the authority of Jesus Christ. Remember, Jesus said, "If you ask anything in My Name, the Father will do it," that is, on My authority. It's as if you are an ambassador of the United States to a foreign country. Then you will perform certain actions in the name of the United States. You are the representative, and you are doing it on the authority of the United States. And I believe this is the primary emphasis on this phrase "in the name of."

And so when someone is baptized in water, it's on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, because he has become a child of God. In Acts 2, in verse 38, where it's speaking of what salvation is, we read, "Repent (that's our action, we turn away from our sins) and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ." Now the baptism that's referred to here, incidentally, is not water baptism. That's not the subject of Acts 1 and 2. It's baptism in the Holy Spirit. You've got to have your sins washed away and you have to be identified with the Holy Spirit in His work of evangelizing the world, which is going to be true of everyone, beginning with Pentecost. And this happens to you on the authority of Jesus Christ, "for the forgiveness of your sins. And you shall receive the Holy Spirit as a gift."

Now when Jesus said in Matthew 28, "Be baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." He used a different preposition there. In the Name, the preposition would be "en." But in Matthew 28 the preposition is "eis" which ordinarily is translated "into." And so when we are baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, it means that we have entered into God. He has become our eternal dwelling place.

It's typical of what we read, for example, in Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." When we have been saved, we have entered into the Triune God. This is a concept that really boggles our mind. How can we be so intimately identified with God? But nevertheless, this is what God teaches us. So really there's no contradiction. We are baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ, that is, on the authority of Jesus Christ, into the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, into God Himself. We actually enter into God Himself in a mysterious way.

CALLER: OK. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

The Nature of John the Baptist's Baptism (251A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I have a question about the nature of the baptism of John. In the Gospel according to Mark, in verse 4 it says, "John did baptize in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Since Christ

had not died yet and since there is no atonement without blood, what kind of forgiveness was he talking about? And I would ask the same about Christ, before He died. And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: Thank you very much for calling. Good night.

A question is raised which is a very logical and a very good question. Since there is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood, and yet John the Baptist was baptizing the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, what kind of a baptism was this?

Let's enlarge the question. How did the Old Testament believers become saved? What kind of a salvation did they have if Christ did not go to the cross until AD 33?

Actually, you see, the Bible teaches that the efficacy of the atonement, the impact, the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, is timeless. Remember in the Book of Revelation it says that His blood was shed from the foundations of the earth. The Old Testament believer was saved exactly as we are saved, by the shed blood of Christ. It's true that in time Christ went to the cross. But the impact of the cross reached all the way back to Adam and Eve and all the way forward to ourselves, because Christ is outside of time. He is the great "I AM."

And that is why we can read of Noah that he found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and he lived five thousand years before Christ. That's why we can read of Elijah that he was caught up in a whirlwind into Heaven. He could go into Heaven only because his sins had been dealt with. Otherwise there would be no way that he could go into Heaven.

That is why we read of Abraham, who lived two thousand years before Christ, that he is called the father of all believers. Those people were saved like we are, by placing their trust in the Messiah. Now they looked at Him as the coming one. We look upon Him as the one who has already come. But their salvation was the same.

And so someone who trusted in God and in the coming Messiah - this was evidenced by the fact that he was baptized by John. The baptism of John actually was an Old Testament ablution. It was typical of that which was utilized by the Old Testament laws, when they were told to wash for certain situations.

Well, I hope this will help.

Word Study on Baptism (456A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Brother Camping. I've been studying baptism again, and I've noticed some things on it, not particularly the mode, but the different uses. Are you familiar with the word used in Luke 16:24, where it talks about Lazarus dipping his finger, the word *bapto*?

HC: Yes.

CALLER: There are several words I found: *baptisma* and *baptismos* and there's *bapto*, and there is *bapto*. Three of those are nouns, and I think a couple of them are verbs. I'm not sure. But the thing I'm asking is, in relationship to, would it be safe to say that *bapto*, the way it's used in that connection, that is, dipping, as a noun it means to wash or to cleanse, but it depends on how you wash or cleanse? In other words, it could be dip or it could be another form. Would that be safe to say that?

HC: I don't think so. The word *bapto* is used about six times in the New Testament, if I remember, when I made a study of this. And it's translated to dip, like Jesus said in connection with the betrayal by Judas, "whosoever dips his sop." That's one place. While it is a cousin word, while it may have the same root as *bapto*, the fact is, in its usage in

the Bible (and the Bible is its own interpreter), it's never used in connection with any part of salvation.

Now the word *bapto*, or *baptizmus*, which very frequently is simply translated "baptize," which is in a sense a transliteration of the word, where it is translated as any word besides *baptize*, is always translated to wash or to purify. It's never translated dip, it's never translated immerse. It's always translated wash or purify or cleanse, because that's the way the sentence would call for it. This has to be the meaning of it.

And when we study the nature of salvation, and we realize that frequently the Bible talks about washing or cleansing, using other words, synonyms to *bapto* for this, we see how naturally that fits into place. It talks about the washing of the Word, in Ephesians 5, or it talks about the washing of regeneration in Titus 3:5. So *bapto* definitely has to do with washing or cleansing or purifying.

CALLER: Would it be safe to say that in the particular verses you mentioned it would be ceremonial usage of the term, or mechanical use of the term?

HC: You mean where *bapto* is translated wash?

CALLER: Yes.

HC: Yes. For example, in Mark 7 it talks about the Pharisees and all the Jews, "except they wash their hands eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash they eat not. And many others there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, of brazen vessels and of tables." Now in these verses the word wash is *bapto*. And the whole context is just washing, or purifying, or cleansing.

CALLER: I thought that word was *baptismos*.

HC: All right. But that's the same word. That's simply a different tense, but it's actually the same word.

CALLER: How would the word be used, say, in I Corinthians 12, where it says we are all baptized into one spirit, and then in Romans 6, where it talks about being baptized into Jesus Christ?

HC: You see, in our baptism, when we have been washed of our sins, we have been altogether identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now let's look at this passage in Romans 6. There it says, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Know ye not that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ." That is, our sins have been washed away, and we have entered into the Lord Jesus Christ, or Jesus Christ has been altogether become our substitute. . . . "were baptized into His death." That is, by the washing of our sins we were identified with Him in His death. Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that is, by the fact that our sins have been washed away, and we've been identified with the Lord Jesus Christ in the atonement. We have entered into His death "that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Now some of course read this, and they say, "Well, you see, as Jesus went into the tomb and then was raised from the tomb, so we go down into the water and come up." Well, that's a beautiful idea, but that's not the sense of this passage. Jesus was not buried in water. Jesus was buried in a tomb. Jesus came up out of the tomb. And the word *bapto* in this context is simply indicating that when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit we are altogether identified with Christ in the atonement. He became sin for us. It is like we hung on the cross, and God poured out His wrath upon us. It is like we entered the tomb, and it is like we

were raised from the grave. All of this is involved in baptism in the Holy Spirit.

CALLER: You're using these verses in a metaphorical sense, in other words?

HC: Yes. If we understand what baptism in the Holy Spirit is. Let me go back to Ezekiel 38. Maybe that will help us, because there God tells us what salvation is, and He doesn't use the word baptism. But He speaks about water. In Ezekiel 36:25 we read, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness. From all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. And I will take out the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes. And ye shall keep My judgments and do them."

Now this is what's involved in being baptized in the Holy Spirit. That is, we become born again. We become a new creature. Now in order for this to be accomplished it's necessary that our sins be paid for, that Christ become sin for us, and that He bear the wrath of God for our sins, that He endure not only physical death but eternal death, damnation, and that He experience the resurrection as the proof that He has done all of these things and has become victorious. All of this is included in this idea of baptism.

And so in Romans 6 God is identifying baptism with these various aspects. We're baptized into His death, because in His death He paid for our sins. It's not only a physical death but an eternal damnation. It's eternal death, the second death that we are baptized into, and from which we are saved.

CALLER: Sometimes when I'm listening I get a little bit confused. It sounds, when you're talking about baptism and you're referring that to the Holy Spirit, that the death of Christ is merely making possible salvation on the basis of an inward transformation rather than actually Christ's work on the cross actually being our salvation.

HC: Well, both are involved, you see. Christ didn't go to the cross and become sin for me, and now I stand on the outside and somehow try to relate to that. The fact is that when Christ hung on the cross my sins were there, He became sin for me. But then God the Holy Spirit applies that salvation to my heart and actually makes me born again. He actually gives me a new soul. And the work of Christ on the cross then becomes not just a judicial reality, but it actually becomes a reality in my life, a living reality. I have eternal life not just in a hypothetical sense, but in an actual sense, because I have been given my resurrected soul. And that's what baptism, in the Holy Spirit is all about, you see.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling.

What Does "Baptized for the Dead" Mean in 1 Corinthians 15:29? (585A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi. My question is concerning I Corinthians 15:29. It says, "Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" What exactly does that mean, baptizing for the dead? And is it mentioned anywhere else in the Bible?

HC: The question is, what does I Corinthians 15:29 relate to, where it talks about being baptized on behalf of the dead? The word for here really means on behalf of the dead.

Now nowhere in the Bible does it teach that we are ever baptized on behalf of someone else. Therefore we know

that in trying to understand what God is saying here we cannot go in that direction. However, when we understand the nature of salvation, then we can see what God means.

You see, before we are saved, both in body and soul we are spiritually dead. We are estranged from God and we're heading for hell. When we are saved, in our spirit existence, or in our soul, we are born again. We experience the resurrection. And of course our baptism, which is an outward action of water, is pointing to the cleansing that has taken place within our soul, the fact that we are a new creature, that we have become saved.

But we're more than just a soul. We're also a body. And that body is as real a part of us as our soul. Our body, however, was not saved at the moment we became born again. Our body still lusts after sin, our body is still going into the grave to return to the dust, at the time we separate our soul from our body, that is, at the time of physical death. Our soul doesn't go down into a place of silence. It goes into Heaven, to be with Christ, because it already experienced the resurrection when we were saved. But in our body we still must be saved. We still must experience the resurrection. So our body is still dead, spiritually, in that sense.

So therefore our baptism not only is recognizing that in our soul or in our spirit essence we have become saved, but it also recognizes that our dead bodies will also become saved, that is, will experience the resurrection from the dead. And so we are being baptized on behalf of our own dead body. And if there were no resurrection from the dead, then that all also would be vain. That would be futile. That is of course the context of I Corinthians 15 right here, where God is giving various reasons why it is important that Christ rise. Otherwise there could be no resurrection of the dead.

CALLER: OK then. Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

INFANT BAPTISM

What Does the Bible Teach About Infant Baptism? (006B)

CALLER: Hello. Could you tell me what the Bible teaches about infant baptism?

HC: OK. Let me say at the outset, first of all, that nowhere in the Bible does it say that infants are to be baptized. This is not something that is laid out that plainly. But the Bible does say something about how God intends salvation to be accomplished. And the Old Testament believers were saved just as we New Testament believers. Now in the Old Testament, God gave a sign to those who became involved with the kingdom of God, and that sign was circumcision. And so when Abraham was circumcised, back in Genesis Chapter 15 or 16, he not only circumcised his children, that is, his son Ishmael (he then only had one son, who was 13 at the time), but he also circumcised all of his servants in the house, and from that time forward, any boy baby 8 days old was circumcised, to indicate that he became a member of the kingdom of God, or the church of God. Now this did not guarantee salvation for that youngster, but it simply indicated the parent's desire for that child to be a citizen of the kingdom of God, which they belonged to.

Now in the New Testament, the sign of circumcision was set aside. It was part of the ceremonial law, and God did not want it to be used anymore. But He gave a New Testament sign to indicate we belong to Christ, and that is the sign of baptism, that is, water baptism. And so many believers believe that children

ought to be baptized just as parents. And they look at a passage like Acts 16, where the jailer of Philippi was saved, and immediately all his household was baptized. Or, in the same chapter, we read about Lydia, and she was saved, and her family was baptized, the same as Abraham and his family were circumcised when that sign was used in the Old Testament. And so this becomes a very heavy reason why some believe that infant baptism ought to be employed.

What is Your View on Infant Baptism? (006E)

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I'd like to have your view on infant baptism, and the Scripture that says, "Baptism does not save us."

HC: You're thinking of First Peter, Chapter 3. Let me look at that a second, so we'll get the right context. First Peter 3:21: "Baptism which corresponds to this now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." I think that is the verse that you're thinking about.

Well, first of all, what is baptism? Baptism, in its ultimate sense . . . the word baptism means to wash, or to cleanse, or to purify. And the Bible teaches that there is one baptism, and that's the baptism that occurred when our sins were washed away by the Holy Spirit, at the time that we were saved. And so God has given water baptism to the New Testament Church as an outward sign that we have entered the kingdom of God at the time that we were saved.

Now in the Old Testament they used a number of outward signs to identify with the fact that their hope was in the Messiah. There was the activity of bringing offerings: a burnt offering or a blood sacrifice. And there was also ceremonial ablutions of one kind or another. But the sign that was particularly emphasized in every family was that of circumcision. And when Abraham was circumcised (and that was really the official beginning of the nation of Israel) he had his whole household circumcised—his slaves, his servants, all the male children—everyone, as well as himself, was circumcised, because Abraham's household had entered corporately into the kingdom of God. And this was the sign of identification, to indicate that they had entered the kingdom of God.

Now when Christ came, the sign of circumcision was invalidated. That was not to be used anymore, probably because it was so totally interrelated and integrated into the Old Testament ceremonial law. But Christ did give the New Testament a sign indicating membership in the kingdom of God, or the fact that we were looking to the Messiah for the washing away of our sins, and that was baptism. Now the question is, "Do we baptize infants like they circumcised infants in the Old Testament?" Now we know that the Old Testament believers are saved like the New Testament believers; we know that. They're saved by repenting of their sins and throwing themselves on the mercies of Christ. Their salvation is identical to ours in that regard.

Does God expect us now to baptize our little children? The Bible doesn't give us specific detail. In the Old Testament they were told to circumcise a son at the age of 8 days. Nowhere does it say to baptize a youngster at any particular day, or even to baptize a youngster. But the circumstantial evidence points to the fact that they did baptize children. We find in Acts, Chapter 16, for example, when the jailer of Philippi was saved, that he was baptized at once, with his household. And we read in Acts 16 of Lydia, that when she was saved, then she also was baptized, with her household.

And so we begin to see that even as God employed circumcision in the Old Testament as an evidence of trust that our children too are in the kingdom of God, because God has declared, "I will be a God to you and to your children," so in the New Testament He has given baptism as the outward sign or seal. This close relationship between circumcision and baptism is strongly suggested in Colossians, Chapter 2. There we read, in verse 11: "In Him also you were circumcised." Now that's an Old Testament rite, you see, and yet he's talking to New Testament believers: "In Him also you were circumcised with the circumcision of Christ," indicating that that Old Testament rite was pointing to what salvation was.

And then the next verse: "And you were buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God Who raised Him from the dead." And this baptism, of course, is the baptism in the Holy Spirit—the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit when He saved us—the water baptism just being a sign of this, even as the circumcision was the sign. And so there are churches, therefore, who practice infant baptism, and on the basis of what I read in the Bible, I would say that this is not unscriptural. There are other churches that only baptize people upon their profession of faith, and every church does that, if they have not been previously baptized, even those churches that practice infant baptism.

But I must say this. Here I am, a parent, and I'm saved; I am born again. I can't know, when that baby is born, whether at that moment it's born again. It could be, because babies can be born again. The work of salvation is God's work. All I know is that God promises that, or asks me to bring up that child in the fear and the nurture of the Lord. And He has promised that salvation is very close to my child: "You and your household will be saved." And so I am delighted that I can employ a sign that will show my trust that God will save my child, too. And so I have had my youngsters baptized, even as I was baptized as a youngster. Therefore, I am declaring that our whole household, hopefully, is in the kingdom of God. Corporately we are. We pray that individually we may all be, if not presently, some day.

CALLER: Does that go hand in hand with the prayer of a believing parent? It talks about this in First or Second Corinthians.

HC: First Corinthians 7 . . . yes in verse 14 or 15. If one parent is a believer, the children are made holy. That is, they are brought very close to the kingdom of God. Whatever promise accrues to believing parents in regard to their children becomes effective. Now of course, if the parent baptizes the children, and then makes no effort to train that child in the fear and the nurture of the Lord, it indicates that he did not mean business with the Lord at all when he had his children baptized. By this action he is showing that he doesn't . . . this was just a form that he was going through, a ritual. And the odds of his children growing up as being saved are very minimal.

CALLER: OK, but one final question. I always thought, as in the scripture, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." That's why it's a little hard for me to understand about infant baptism.

HC: Well, you see, here is a nation that doesn't know God. Now they first become acquainted with the Gospel by the hearing of the Word, don't they? But once a parent is saved, then the promises also flow to the children. And God can save at any age because salvation is from God. Actually, faith and hearing are the response to the Gospel, or are the response to the fact that God is working His salvation power through us.

CALLER: I was thinking, too, that there was a scripture: "The baby jumped for joy in the womb."

HC: Yes, that is Mary's experience with Elizabeth. Elizabeth was six months pregnant with John the Baptist. Now John the Baptist, we read, was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, and there are two wonderful, truths that become evident when we read this in Luke 1:41: "Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary. The baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." Verse 44: "For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy." And there are two wonderful truths that are found here.

First of all, that a baby in the womb, at six months, is aware of what's going on outside, and mothers should realize this. Already they're beginning to form the character of that baby. When that baby is even six months old in the womb, it's a personality; it's a real person.

Secondly, the fact that this baby reacted to the presence of Mary, who had just become pregnant with Jesus, indicates that John the Baptist, in the womb of Elizabeth, was already saved. This is a second proof on top of the fact that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb.

Does the Bible Have Anything to Say About Infant Baptism? (336A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I want to thank you for all the help you have been to me. My question is, does the Bible have anything to say concerning infant baptism? And I'll hang up and listen to you.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. Good night.

The question is raised, Does the Bible have anything to say about infant baptism?

The Bible does not say anywhere, "Thou shalt baptize infants." But by implication it has quite a bit to say of it. In the Old Testament, in Genesis 17, when Abraham was given the sign of the covenant, that God would be a God to him, we read that he was circumcised with his whole household. We read in verse 10 of Genesis 17: "This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee. Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin. It shall be a token of the covenant between Me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you. Every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money, or any stranger that is not of thy seed, he that is born in thy house and he that is bought with thy money, must be circumcised. And My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant."

And so on this day we read that Abraham, in verse 23, "took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin, the very same day as God had said unto him."

Now circumcision, you see, was the outward sign that was used to indicate that someone had become identified with the Kingdom of God. Abraham was the head of his household, and because he had become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ (to use the New Testament language), he had entered the Kingdom of God. Now as the head, having entered the Kingdom of God, what about the rest of his household, whom he ruled over?

They had not necessarily become saved at all, but they certainly now corporately were to be identified with the Kingdom of God. Inasmuch as Abraham as the

head had entered the Kingdom of God, therefore everything he ruled over was to be identified with the Kingdom of God. And this was done through the rite of circumcision.

And you'll notice that circumcision was done with any male child that was 8 days old or older. Incidentally, when a proselyte, that is, a Gentile, would become a member of the Jewish faith in the Old Testament, the rite that was employed was circumcision. He was circumcised, and this was the sign that he also had become identified with the kingdom of Israel, or the Kingdom of God.

Now this rite of circumcision was an Old Testament ceremonial rite. It took its place alongside the other ceremonial laws. And therefore, it was not to be used once Christ went to the cross.

But Jesus did give two New Testament signs which indicated identification with the Kingdom of God. One was that of baptism. Anyone who was saved was to be baptized in water, even as in the Old Testament someone who became saved and wanted identification with the kingdom of Israel, or the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament Jewish law was to be circumcised. So the New Testament declares that if anyone becomes saved, he is to be baptized in water. And this again is an outward sign to indicate that such identification with the Kingdom of God has occurred.

But now what about children? Well, we read, very interestingly, in Acts 16, that Lydia, a seller of purple (which is not important to our discussion at this point), was saved. And we read in verse 15 of Acts 16, "And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If we have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there."

We're surprised, aren't we, that she was baptized with her household. Actually, the verse before declares that her heart the Lord opened. "So she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." But when she was baptized, her household was baptized. We have exactly a parallel situation to what occurred in Abraham's house when he, as the head of the house, entered the Kingdom of God, was identified with the covenant of God. His household was circumcised.

And by the same token, when Lydia was saved, she was baptized, the New Testament sign of identification with the Kingdom of God. And her household was baptized. Now as if to make sure that we would not misunderstand this, we read in the same chapter of the family of the jailer of Philippi. He also was saved. The promise was given to him in verse 31 of Acts 16, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." This is a restatement of the Old Testament promise, "I will be a God to you and your children." This is the way God has always worked in salvation - through families.

If the head of the house is saved, if he would bring up his children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord, then he could also expect that they in turn would begin to give evidence of having been saved. At least to a very high degree this would occur. And therefore they were to be raised, or trained, reared as citizens of God's Kingdom.

Well, then notice what the jailer of Philippi did in verse 33: "He took them [that is, Paul and Silas] the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway" [or he and all his household]. That same night, you see, when he was baptized, after he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, he was the head of the house, and his family also was baptized directly parallel language to Genesis 17, where Abraham was circumcised along with his household, all that he ruled over.

And so we see here, therefore, that there certainly is strong implication in the Bible that children of believers ought to be baptized. I am a believing parent. I am in the Kingdom of God, according to everything the Bible states. I have a family. I have children. Do I want them identified with the Kingdom of God? Absolutely I want them identified with the Kingdom of God. I'm praying for their salvation. I'm going to bring them up in the fear and the nurture of the Lord. I'm going to trust God's promise that if I bring them up in the way that they should go, in their old age they'll not depart from it. So I'm going to rear them, faithfully, carefully, diligently, as citizens of God's Kingdom. I'm going to be obedient to all that the Bible says, in order to bring up my children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord.

But I want my family identified with the Kingdom of God, too. And therefore, I want them baptized. Now this baptism of my family is not going to save them. Water baptism does not guarantee salvation in any sense whatsoever. God is the one who has to do the saving. But I know that He will work through my faithfulness in bringing up my children in the fear and the knowledge of the Lord, even as He works through my faithfulness in witnessing, so that there will be others who will be saved. Or He will work through my (and when I say my, I'm talking about yours, also, and all faithful believers) prayer on behalf of others, that they might be saved. God in His providence, God in His mercy, makes us human instruments in His hand, so that we carry out His program to bring the Gospel to others, to our own family, as well as to those who are outside of our family.

I feel that infant baptism is on very solid Biblical ground, based on what I read in the Old Testament concerning salvation, based upon what I read in the New Testament concerning salvation. There's only one salvation in the Bible. Let's never forget this. There is only one kind of salvation in the Bible. The Old Testament Jew was saved exactly as the New Testament Gentile. There are not two kinds of salvation. There's only one kind of salvation, and that's through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is through coming with a broken and a contrite heart to God, trusting in Christ as the Savior, or as the one who would forgive our sins.

The Old Testament believer looked forward to the atoning work of Christ on the cross, and the New Testament believer looks back on the cross as an accomplished event. In both cases the efficacy of the cross is the same... it is by Christ's shed blood. It reaches back to Adam and Eve, and cleanses all the Old Testament believers from their sins. And it reaches forward to you and me as we experience salvation.

Therefore we are not surprised to see the parallel language in Genesis 17, when Abraham and his house were circumcised, to that of the language in Acts 16, where we read of Lydia and the jailer of Philippi and their respective households being baptized.

Should Babies be Baptized? (346A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: Hi, Brother Camping. I was wondering about infants. I was wondering, should babies be baptized? I'll take my answer over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Good night.

The question is, should babies be baptized? Actually, I'm well aware that this is a question where there is a wide difference of opinion. There are many churches that do baptize infants, and there are many churches that do not. I really believe that we can only look to the Bible to try to find some kind of an answer.

Now in the Old Testament, we read in Acts 17, when God came with His covenant to Abraham, God said, "I will be a God to you and your children." And the sign of this covenant is that he was to be circumcised, and all of the children in his family or under his control were likewise to be circumcised. We read in Genesis 17:10: "This is My covenant which ye shall keep between you and thy seed after thee. Every man child among you shall be circumcised. Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generation, he that is born in the house, bought with money, or any stranger which is not of thy seed."

And so we read in verse 24: "And Abraham was ninety-eight years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, and Ishmael, his son, was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised and Ishmael, his son. And all the men of his house, born in the house or bought with money of a stranger were circumcised with him."

Now it is at this point in time that God began the kingdom of God in its corporate fashion with the nation of Israel, because Abraham was the father of Isaac and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of twelve sons who became the heads of the tribes of Israel. And the sign of belonging to the kingdom of God corporately, or in an organizational way, was circumcision. And notice when they were circumcised, when they were babies, when they were little infants.

Actually, this circumcision did not guarantee salvation for any of these children. Ishmael was circumcised, and there is no evidence in the Bible that he was saved. The slaves that belonged to Abraham were circumcised, but there's no evidence in the Bible that they were saved.

But because Abraham was the head of that household, and ruled over them, and God had made a promise that He would be with him and his family, all of his household was circumcised as an outward sign that Abraham's house had become identified with the kingdom of God. The Gospel was present with the family of Abraham. Those in that family who would believe that Gospel could become born again.

Now in the New Testament we find that God did away with the sign of circumcision. That was particularly related to the nation of Israel as the outward sign of the covenant. And the nation of Israel, from the time of the cross on, ceased to be the recognized official corporate body of Christ. Beginning with the cross and Pentecost, God set up another recognized corporate body, consisting of the congregations and the churches and denominations and groups of believers that would be formed from every nation. And therefore God set aside the sign of circumcision, because it was identified particularly with the nation of Israel.

But in Acts 16 we have the account of the salvation of Lydia, and we have the account of the salvation of the jailer of Philippi. And it's very interesting what we read here. We read in Acts 16:14: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple in the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened." Incidentally, you notice how it is God who does the salvation: "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there."

Now that's interesting, isn't it? She was saved, and at the time she was baptized her household was baptized. It's parallel, very parallel, to the situation that we read about in Genesis 17. Now as if to make certain that there would be no misunderstanding, we also read on in Acts 16 about the experience of Paul and Silas with the jailer of Philippi. The jailer asked in verse 30, "What must I do to be saved? And they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Now that's a parallel promise to the one given to Abraham, "I will be a God to you and your children."

And then it goes on: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." Interesting, isn't it?

The fact is that God is really indicating here that New Testament baptism is the outward official declaration that someone has become identified with the kingdom of God. Now if I as a parent become saved, I am to be baptized in water, to indicate that I have entered the kingdom of God. But it would seem to me that if when Abraham was given the promise that God would be his God, God told him to circumcise his children, because, after all, he ruled over his children, and there was a promise given to his children that God would care for them, and so they were to be circumcised, to indicate that they too were now associated with the corporate body of Christ, they too had come close to the kingdom, it seems to me therefore that we ought to baptize our children, to indicate that they too have become identified with the kingdom of God. This does not guarantee their salvation. This simply is a matter of identification, of claiming God's promise, where He declares, "I will be a God to you and your children."

Now our task is to bring up our children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord. And we have the promise of God: "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and in his old age he'll not depart from it." You see how this all begins to knit together in a beautiful picture.

Now if we claim God's promise that He will be a God to us and to our children, if we have entered the kingdom of God, and we know now that our children too are corporately in the kingdom of God, we should not be surprised, if we're training them in the fear and the knowledge of the Lord, if our children at a very young age begin to show to a high degree, a high percentage of the time, that they love the Lord, and there is evidence that they too have become saved.

Are We to Baptize Infants? (358B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I was wanting you to speak on baptism, due to the fact that a lot of my friends have been quizzing me, myself coming from a sprinkling baptism viewpoint as opposed to their viewpoints of immersion, and also the area of infant baptism. Maybe you could just share some things along that line, what the Scriptures teach.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you.

The question that's raised is concerning the question of baptism. And actually, there are two aspects that are frequently of concern. One is the mode of baptism. The other is the timing of baptism. Let's talk about the timing of the baptism first.

There are those who believe in believer's baptism. That is that when a person becomes born again, then they are to be baptized. Now that is very scriptural. That is very scriptural. If anyone is born again, and has not been previously baptized, then they ought to be baptized, whether they're a young person or whether they're an adult. They are to

be baptized. It has its Old Testament antecedent in circumcision. If anyone wanted to become identified with Jehovah God of the Old Testament, he was circumcised because that was the sign of becoming identified with the Kingdom of God. And so it is true that if someone becomes a believer, then they ought to be baptized.

The knotty question, however, arises in the matter of infant baptism. Are we to baptize infants? In the Old Testament it is very very clear that infants were circumcised. Beginning in Genesis 17, anyone who was a member of a family in which the father or the mother were believers was to be circumcised at eight days. It was the outward sign that declared that this child too was to be identified with the Kingdom of God.

Many churches in the New Testament see in this a very parallel relationship to baptism. In Acts 16 we see this, where it speaks of the family of the jailer of Philippi. At the same time he was saved, he was baptized, of course, because he now had entered the Kingdom of God in a very real way. But at the same time, his household was baptized. The same was true of Lydia, in Acts 16. At the time she was saved she was baptized, and so was her household.

And this directly parallels what we read in Genesis 17. At the time that Abraham was circumcised, his whole household was circumcised. The problem frequently arises, however, that those who believe in the Old Testament that they had been circumcised felt that this guaranteed salvation for them... "I'm a circumcised Jew, and therefore I'm one of God's chosen people. Therefore I can depend upon it that Jehovah God will bring me to Heaven." The same kind of thinking is very prevalent today amongst those who have been baptized as an infant. They believe they have been baptized, and this guarantees that they are saved, guarantees that they will go into Heaven.

Now the Bible does not teach this at all. The Jews who were circumcised as infants had no guarantee of salvation. It was simply an identification to indicate that they had become identified with the Kingdom of God. The fact that the children of Lydia or the children of the Philippian jailer were baptized was no guarantee that they were saved. But it did indicate they had become identified with the Kingdom of God in a corporate sense. Their father, in the jailer's case, and their mother, in the case of Lydia, had become born again believers. Therefore all that were of their families became corporately citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Only, however, if they became born again would they really enter into the Kingdom of God in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Someone in the Old Testament who was circumcised could go to hell just as readily as any unsaved person. Someone in the New Testament who is baptized as an infant can go to hell just as readily as anyone else.

In the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, however, God did give promises to families. God said, "I will be a God to you and your children." Along with that promise God also gave mandates. He declared that you are to bring up your children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord: "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and in his old age he will not depart from it."

Now you can see immediately that when you tie all these verses together God does work through families. In practice, of course, we see this. The children of believing parents who have made a determined effort to bring their children up in the fear and the nurture of the Lord will see a great number of their children saved in time. Those who are careless in rearing their children, regardless of the fact that they themselves are believers, will not see their children saved, because

they are repudiating, setting aside the promises that God has made toward them and their children, by virtue of the fact that they're not training their children up in the fear and the nurture of the Lord.

Now this, I believe, is the biblical teaching. I know this is not understood by a great many because, unfortunately, a great many people do not read the Old Testament carefully enough. They do not understand that the promises that were made to Abraham concerning the fact that in his seed the nations would be blessed, and that he would be a father of a multitude of nations, and he would be given the land as an everlasting possession, were not given to national Israel. They were given to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether they are of national Israel or whether they are of the nation of the United States or Argentina, or whatever. This is the way God works, through His believers, through parents and their children.

Now in reference to the mode of baptism, there is much confusion on this matter also. There are those who insist that the Bible teaches immersion. The fact is, Young's Concordance, which is a very excellent concordance, a very accurate concordance, defines baptism as immersion. Now the definitions found in Young's Concordance are not Biblical. Young's Concordance is a marvelous concordance in that it gives us all the words of every kind in the Bible, and the places where they are found. And that is a great help. That is without any commentary whatsoever.

However, when Young's Concordance gives definitions of words, then we know we have the work of a man rather than the work of God. When we search out the word baptism, which is the Greek word baptizo or baptizmus, in the New Testament, we find that never is it used in the sense of immersion.

It's used in the sense of washing or purifying. Any time it's used and it's not translated baptize, it's translated to wash or to purify. We find, for example, in Mark 7:3, "For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they washed their hands, oft eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not." And this word wash is baptizo: "And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups." It's baptismos again. It's the word baptize. It means to purify or to cleanse. And we find other places in the Bible where the same word is translated wash or purify.

Secondly, we don't find anywhere in the Bible where immersion is used as a description of salvation. The word immersion is not found in the Bible used in that sense whatsoever. When the Bible talks about salvation, it talks about being cleansed of our sins, being washed of our sins, being purified from iniquity, as well as a lot of other expressions, like being covered by Christ's righteousness, and so on. But we never find the word immersion featured. All the synonyms of salvation have to do with cleansing or purification.

And so the idea that baptism must be by immersion is not found in the Bible. That is a foreign idea to the Bible. It doesn't say anywhere that it would be wrong to immerse. It doesn't say, however, either, that it would be wrong to pour water on or to sprinkle water on. The fact is, the word sprinkle is far more often found in connection with salvation. It is the word that is used very frequently in connection with salvation.

In the Old Testament we find the sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat. Sprinkling is used constantly. God Himself said, "I will sprinkle many nations." In Ezekiel 36:25 it says that God would sprinkle water upon them, and they shall be cleansed of all of their

uncleanesses. And so those who hold in for sprinkling as one mode, one valid mode of baptism, have very good Biblical basis for it.

It isn't wrong to immerse, but nowhere does the Bible insist on immersion. That just is not found in the Bible. Now there are those who say, "Well, Jesus was immersed. Didn't He go down into the water, and didn't He come up out of the water?" Well, He did go down into the water, and He did come up out of the water. That's Biblical language. But under no circumstance does it say that He was immersed.

The fact is, God gives us further information, in Acts 8, which gives us real reason to believe that He was not immersed when He was baptized, because when the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized we find that it says that both he and Philip went down into the water. We read in verse 36 of Acts 8, "As they went on their way they came unto a certain water, and the eunuch said, See, here is water. What doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch And he baptized him."

Now if to go down into the water means to be immersed, then Philip immersed himself as he baptized the Ethiopian eunuch. And that of course doesn't make any sense whatsoever. To go down into the water simply means that they saw a little pool of water, or stream, or whatever, and they went down the bank, and they entered into the water. They may have gone ankle deep, or knee deep. It doesn't say how deep. And he baptized him, the Ethiopian eunuch. And then it says in verse 39, "And when they [that is, both of them Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch] were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip [indicating again that to come out of the water does not mean that someone has been immersed]."

Now immersion is a perfectly satisfactory way to be baptized, but it is not insisted upon in the Bible. If you really believe that it is, then you are going to have real trouble. Some people look at Romans 6, where it speaks about the fact that we have been, in verse 3: "Know ye not that so many of us that were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

And so they say immersion is a picture of going down into the grave and coming up again. Now that's a very beautiful picture to describe. But the fact is, Jesus was not buried in water. Jesus was buried in a grave. And He came up out of a grave. He didn't come up out of water. He came up out of a grave. And so the picture loses its significance to some degree.

This is not what God is talking about in Romans 6:3. He is simply saying that in our baptism, in the fact that we have experienced this. And actually, the substance of our water baptism is in what the Holy Spirit has done, in cleansing away our sins. When the Holy Spirit baptized us in the Holy Spirit, He identified us with the death and burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is altogether God's action. The water baptism is an outward signification of this.

The Scriptural Basis for Infant Baptism (403A)

CALLER: Good evening, Brother Camping. I have two questions that I would like to ask this evening. One refers to baptism, and the other to

marriage. The first one has to do with infant baptism as opposed to being baptized after one is saved. In my tradition we normally will baptize a child within a Christian family when the child is an infant. And I was in a discussion with a young man the other day who said that definitely one had to be baptized after one had been saved. So I had a few questions in my mind about that. Could you go into some detail about whether or not it is more fitting to be baptized as an infant according to what Scripture says, or to be saved first and then be baptized? I've noticed in Acts 10:47 that Peter baptized after salvation had taken place. I noted also in Ezekiel 35:25 God indicates that He sprinkles water to cleanse those who believe.

HC: All right. Let me see if I can get into this a little bit. Obviously there are two major schools of thought on this. There are the churches that do practice infant baptism, and there are those who do not practice infant baptism, baptizing only after a confession of faith.

Let me say that in one area there is unanimity altogether between most churches, whether they practice infant baptism or not. And that is, if someone is grown, that is, an adult, and has not previously been baptized, then baptism will not take place until after there is evidence of conversion. Even in a church where there is infant baptism going on, if a family comes into that congregation and begins to become interested in the Gospel, if they have never been previously identified with a congregation, have never been previously baptized, then the church will only baptize the parents after there is the evidence of conversion, which is exactly the same situation in a church that does not practice infant baptism.

But then what to do with the children. That is where the division occurs. There are those who say no, we must wait until the children grow up enough so that we know that they are saved. Then they will be baptized. And there are those who say no, the parents are baptized. Therefore we ought to also baptize the children. And so we wonder what is the more Biblical?

Now in my personal judgment, as I study the Bible, I find that baptism, that is, water baptism, has no substance in itself. I think again that both churches would agree with this, basically. There is no substance in the act of water baptism. Actually water baptism is a symbol or sign or reflection or shadow of something else that is going on in the heart of that person.

Now if we go back to the Old Testament, to the first clear articulation of the covenant that God made with mankind, God came to Abraham and said, "I will be a God to you and your children." And God commanded that Abraham and his family be circumcised. That is, all the males in his household, including his slaves, his servants, and his children, were circumcised. And the rule was that they were to be circumcised on the eighth day after they were born. In other words, they were to be circumcised as babies.

Why did God ask them to be circumcised? The Bible declares that this was the sign of the covenant. This was the evidence that God had made a covenant of grace with Abraham and his family. Essentially it was like this. Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him as righteousness. He became a born again personal member of the Kingdom of God. He had become identified as a citizen with the Kingdom of God, by God's grace. The covenant of grace really was that covenant, that contract that God had made with Christ, whereby Christ, in His obedience to God in paying for our sins, would make possible the fruit of that covenant, that is, grace, to be bestowed upon those who were to be saved. This in a nutshell is

really what the covenant of grace is all about.

And as a recipient of that covenant of grace, Abraham became saved. Now because he was saved, and he was the head of his household, therefore corporately his whole family, as well as all of his slaves and servants, came under the roof of that Kingdom of God. This did not mean that they were saved, but it did mean that because he as the head of his family had entered into the Kingdom of God personally, and also corporately, of course, therefore at least corporately all of his family had entered into the Kingdom of God.

It was much like a family that moved from one country to another. The parents become citizens of that country, and then automatically the children become citizens of that country, even though they have not given any particular assent to the country. The parents have, but not the children. But they automatically also become citizens because the parents are.

And so the act of circumcision in the Old Testament was the act whereby it was signified that this whole family had become identified with the Kingdom of God, in view of the fact that one or both of the parents had personally entered into that Kingdom as a child of God.

Now if a man from another nation, or a woman from another nation wanted to become identified with Jehovah God, he would indicate the fact that he had placed his trust in Jehovah God by becoming circumcised. This placed him in a bona-fide relationship, or it was an indication that he had become a member of the covenant of grace also. He also was entitled then to all the privileges of a Jew insofar as the sacrifices were concerned, and so on.

CALLER: In this sense, though, we're talking about an initiation into a nation, or a group, or something.

HC: Yes, absolutely. We're talking about an initiation or a signification that.

CALLER: I understand that. But what kind of gets me is Romans 6:4, where Paul says, "By baptism we were buried with Him."

HC: All right. Now we'll come to that in just a moment. Now let's look at the New Testament. First let me read from Genesis, so that we'll have this plainly before us. In Genesis 17 we find the time when the account of the circumcision of Abraham takes place. And we read in Genesis 17, where God says in verse 7, "And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generation for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee."

The promises therefore were coming to Abraham and his family, the promises inherent within the covenant of grace. Then He said in verse 10, "This is My covenant which ye shall keep between Me and you and thy seed after thee. Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you."

CALLER: What is a token actually?

HC: That's a sign. That's the signification.

CALLER: It has nothing to do necessarily with salvation, though.

HC: No. It simply is a sign. It's the outward evidence or the outward signification really that the whole family of Abraham now has become identified with the Kingdom of God. Only Abraham so far, or Abraham and Sarah, are born again. But the fact is, the whole family and all the slaves, everything under his rulership, have entered corporately into the Kingdom of God. And they are all circumcised, as a token of this identification with the Kingdom of God.

And notice: "He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generation, he that is born in the house or bought with money of any stranger which is not of thy seed, he that is born in thy house and he that is bought with thy money must needs be circumcised. And My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant." It's the sign that God has made an everlasting covenant with this family.

Then we find therefore in verse 26, "In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son [Ishmael was 13 years old at the time], and all the men of his house born in the house and bought with money of the stranger were circumcised with him," all the very same day that God established this covenant with Abraham.

Now we go to the New Testament, and we find in Galatians 5 that the sign of circumcision has been done away with. That became so totally involved in the Old Testament ceremonial law, for whatever reasons God had decided, that God set that aside. But when the apostle Paul is preaching to the family of Lydia, in Acts 16, we read there in verse 14, "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple in the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household." Now that's interesting, isn't it? "She besought us saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there." In other words, she's following in the footsteps of Abraham. She believes. The Lord opened her heart. And she was baptized. But it's interesting that it says, "and her household" was baptized. She was the head of her house. She had corporately and personally entered into the Kingdom of God.

And therefore the same sign was applied to her household, to her children, that they too were thenceforth to be identified with the Kingdom of God. Now this didn't mean they were born again. But it did mean that corporately that family had become identified with the Kingdom of God, as it was in the case of Abraham with circumcision.

Now in Acts 16:31 we read about Paul's encounter with the jailer of Philippi. And the jailer says, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Now notice how that parallels what we read in Genesis 17:8: "I will establish My covenant between Me and thee, and thy seed after thee."

CALLER: May I ask at this point, does that mean that if my wife and I are saved our children also are saved?

HC: No. I haven't said that yet. I've only said that corporately your family becomes identified with the Kingdom of God.

CALLER: So we're talking about identification then.

HC: Just identification, so far. So far we're talking about identification. But in verse 31 of Acts 16, as well as what I was just reading in Genesis 17:7, God is saying, however, that salvation will also come to your children. Now there are certain conditions insofar as this covenant relationship is concerned. There are no conditions insofar as salvation. We're saved by God's grace, not because of any condition.

But God gives a promise to parents. He says, "I will be a God to you and your seed," or to your children. I will save you and your children. But we must read that in the light of some other things the Bible teaches.

God teaches, for example, in Ephesians 6, "Fathers, bring up your children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord." The Bible says in Deuteronomy 6, "When

you walk by the way, when you lie down, when you rise up," you are to teach your children these things.

The Bible says in the Book of Proverbs, "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and in his old age he'll not depart from it." So you see, God with this promise is also saying to parents, "But be sure that you are accepting this promise. Be sure that your acceptance of this promise is seen in the fact that you diligently will endeavor to bring your children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord, because My hand is with your family. You are saved, and My blessings will come to your family. If you bring them up as a child of the world, then you will repudiate this promise, because the other side of the coin is that your children will follow the pattern in which they have been trained. And if they have been reared as citizens of the world, then they will live as citizens of the world. If they have been trained as citizens of God's house, if they have been trained to love the Lord and have been taught the Word, when you lie down and when you rise up, and so on, then you can expect that My grace will also extend to them."

And in the case of the jailer of Philippi, we read the same thing as with Lydia and as with Abraham. In verse 33 of Acts 16, "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." He and all his, the same story all over again that occurred back in Genesis 17, and which happened to Lydia

We must remember that the salvation of the Old Testament is the same as the salvation of the New Testament. The covenant of grace is the same. Our God is the same. His condescending love is the same.

In I Corinthians 7:14 God speaks about a situation where you have one saved parent and one unsaved parent. There God explains that because there is one saved parent, therefore the children are holy. Now that doesn't mean that they're born again. But it does mean that they have been set apart. God looks at the children of saved parents in a different way than He looks at the children of unsaved parents, because God's promise works through families. That is the way God has ordained.

In addition, of course, He in His sovereign good pleasure can reach into the most unsaved situation, and save an individual here and there. And indeed He does do that. But the usual way of salvation is as God works through families.

Now on the other side of the coin, we have this fact. And that is even the very finest of Christian parents still do a poor job of rearing their children in the fear and the knowledge of the Lord, obviously. And it's only God's grace that any of our children are saved. I'm always amazed to find that in families where the Gospel is really emphasized, and seriously the parents do try to rear their children in the fear and the knowledge of the Lord, I'm always amazed that a high percentage of their children eventually show that indeed they have been saved, frequently already when these children are only babies. There's evidence that they've already been saved, because of course God does His saving at any time in a person's life.

Now this is the reason that churches that do practice infant baptism should practice infant baptism. I don't believe they necessarily understand all of this. These practices sometimes can become very ritualistic. And certainly they can become very misunderstood. I know lots of people who have been baptized as infants, and are quite convinced that this guarantees their salvation. And that is so far from the truth that nothing could be further from the truth. There is absolutely no guarantee of salvation.

Infant baptism, if it's practiced, is simply a signification that that child corporately

has become identified with the Kingdom of God, because the parent hopefully has personally become a child of God. And if he has become a child of God, and he claims the promise that God gives him, "I will be a God to you and your children," and as a result of claiming that promise he uses every means possible to be faithful to the law of God to bring up his children in the fear and nurture of the Lord, then he can also expect that a high percentage of his children will be saved.

CALLER: That's quite clear to me now. What happens to the child or the person who is unsaved? What happens to those who are never exposed to the Gospel, never are saved?

HC: Your question is, what happens to those who have never heard the Gospel, and die unsaved?

CALLER: Yes.

HC: The Bible teaches that the whole human race is destined for hell. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Whether they have heard the Gospel or not heard the Gospel, God has revealed sufficiently of Himself in creation so they ought to repent and cry out to God for mercy, and they will not. He has revealed sufficiently of His law upon their hearts so that they know that they are sinners, and yet they will not. And so the whole human race is destined for hell. Only by God's sovereign grace does He reach down here and there and the other place, to save those whom He has chosen from before the foundations of the world.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: Yes. And you made reference to Romans 6, and I don't want to turn away from that.

CALLER: Okay. And Titus 3:5 and onward, being saved by washing and renewal.

HC: Of course Titus, where it speaks about the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, is talking about what salvation is. We are regenerated. We are given a brand new soul. We are born again in our soul, not in our body, but in our soul we are born again. Our sins have been washed away. This is what salvation is.

And this is really what Romans 6 is talking about. The baptism that has substance is the baptism that is done by God Himself. We are baptized in the Holy Spirit at the time that we're born again. This is not an act of water baptism at all. This is the fact that our sins have been washed away. We have been cleansed of our sins, and the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us. This of course occurred because Christ became our substitute in going to the cross, in being buried, and in rising from the dead. Therefore we are in Him in His burial. We are in Him in His death. We are in Him in His resurrection. And this is the baptism in the Holy Spirit, to be totally identified with Christ in the atonement.

This is what provides the washing away of our sins. This is what's in view in Romans 6.

CALLER: Of course later on then, after this identification with Christ through baptism, there has to be an acknowledgment, a confession of faith after that.

HC: Yes. Now in the case of the person who grew up in an unsaved environment, who becomes baptized in the Holy Spirit and becomes a child of God, as one evidence of this he is baptized with water. And it is the congregation, under the proper authority, that does this. He identifies with that congregation. He now signifies that he is not only corporately but personally an eternal member of the Kingdom of God.

Now if he has been baptized as a child, if his parents had corporately identified him with the Kingdom of God but he had never become born again, later on, as a young person or as an adult, or

as an old person, he may become born again. This would not be unexpected, in view of the fact that he had come from a Christian home, from Christian parents, and in all likelihood they had given him Christian training. They had claimed God's promise that He might be a God to them and to their children. And so we would not be surprised then when this person also became born again.

Thank you so much for sharing that. Good night.

WATER BAPTISM

Is Water Baptism Necessary to be Born Again? (034D)

CALLER: Good evening. I've got a couple questions on water baptism. Does it alone make one born again? And is water baptism necessary to be born again?

HC: Water baptism has no substantive value at all in itself. Water baptism is simply an outward shadow or reflection or sign of the baptism that has taken place in our hearts by the activity of the Holy Spirit.

You see, baptism means to be washed or cleansed, to be purified of our sins. In Ezekiel 36, we read that God says, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you." Now this is not physical water, because God doesn't use physical water. He is using the water which is the Word of God, which is the Gospel.

And we read in Ephesians 5 where it speaks about the washing with the Word. And so He will sprinkle—utilizing this Word—He will cleanse us from our sins. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you will be cleansed of your sins." Now this is baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is to be washed of our sins and to be identified with Christ on the cross, and to be qualified to become a witness. All of this is embraced in the phrase, to be "baptized in the Holy Spirit."

This is the kind of baptism that is being spoken of in Acts 2, where it says in verse 38: "Repent of your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of your sins." This is not water baptism that's in view here, but to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, to have our sins washed away by the application of the Word of God to our lives by the Holy Spirit.

Now to officially recognize this and to declare to the congregation, and to the world, if you will, that we have become saved, we are baptized in water. The water can be sprinkled or poured on, or we can be immersed. The Bible doesn't give any suggestion or any mandate concerning quantity of water. But the water baptism is the official recognition of what has already taken place in our lives.

It is not a requirement for salvation, therefore. We are saved completely apart from water baptism. Now water baptism can be simultaneous with salvation, as occurred in the case of the conversion of the apostle Paul. Water baptism can be after salvation, as it occurred in the case of the family of Cornelius, that you read about in Acts 10. Or water baptism can be before salvation, as occurred in the case of the Samaritans in Acts 8. But water baptism simply signifies that we have become identified with Christ.

What is the Nature of Water Baptism? (149D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question about the baptism of a Christian. I've been a Christian for some time, and I enjoy witnessing. But over the last couple of days, I've come under the influence of some teaching that teaches that you must be baptized with water, or in water, in order to be a Christian. And yet I was also under the impression, previous to

that, that all you had to do was accept the Lord Jesus Christ. And I know that baptism is a commandment that comes after you are saved, using in particular John 3:5 and 6. I don't understand what it's talking about when Jesus says to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Can you explain that?

HC: First of all, your question really is: What is the nature of water baptism? Now we know, for example, from Acts 10 that those who became born again, the family of Cornelius, they were saved and then they were baptized in water, after they were saved. The baptism in water did not add anything at all to their salvation. We read in verse 44 of Acts 10: "While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who had heard the Word. And the believers from among the circumcised, who came with Peter, were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out, even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 'Can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' And he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ."

And secondly, we know that there is only one salvation. Now the Old Testament believers, they believed without being baptized. Water baptism does not add anything at all to our salvation, but it is commanded of God, the same as Old Testament circumcision was commanded of God. It is actually an outward sign officially recognizing the fact that we have been saved.

Now in John 3:5, where it says that no one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless he is born of water and the Spirit, there we have to look into the Old Testament to find out what God means by this. And God Himself guides us to look into the Old Testament, because right in this context Nicodemus says in verse 9 (Jesus is conferring with Nicodemus, who is a Pharisee): "How can this be?" And then Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand this?" In other words, the implication is, "Look. You have the Scriptures. Don't you know what I'm talking about?" And that means that we ought to find some answers in the Old Testament, because those were the Scriptures that Nicodemus had.

Now when we search the Scriptures (the Old Testament Scriptures), we find in Ezekiel 36 this statement in verse 25: "I (that is, God) will sprinkle clean water upon you." Remember that Jesus said in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, we have to be born of water and the Spirit. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you." In other words, this is the washing that takes place by the Holy Spirit in our life when we are born again.

In Ephesians 5 it speaks about the washing of the Word. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit. By it the Holy Spirit cuts away the old nature, or cuts down our old soul, and gives us a new soul. We are born again, and therefore we are cleansed of our sins. And then it goes on: "A new heart I will give you, and a new Spirit I will put within you. And I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to observe My ordinances."

Now you see how that relates to being born of water and the Spirit. The water is really the Word of God, or the act of the Holy Spirit as He washes away our sins. And the Holy Spirit not only is performing this act within us, but He also indwells us after we are saved. And this is prerequisite to our entering into the Kingdom of Heaven. When this has happened, we enter into the Kingdom of

Heaven. We become a child of the King, King Jesus.

Immersion or Sprinkling for Baptisms? (197B)

CALLER: With reference to the subject of water baptism, the ordinance, I hear different opinions on this. The particular church I attend says that the correct way is to be immersed in water, because they believe that Christ Himself gave this example. There's a Scripture, I think, that says He came up out of the water, etc. Does this make any difference? Or what would be your thinking on that? Does the Bible teach that the local congregation should use this method? I know that some congregations sprinkle people. I know it doesn't have anything to do with the actual act of being saved, but that it's the commemoration of it, passing from death into life. What's your thinking on this?

HC: The question is raised concerning the mode of baptism, whether we are to be immersed or whether we are to be sprinkled, or whether water is to be poured on us. Actually, the Bible does not give us any instruction. First of all, when we examine the word baptism, we find that it means to wash or to cleanse, or to be purified. For example, in Hebrews 9:10, we find that it says, "According to this arrangement gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper, but deal only with food and drink and various baptisms." Now in our English Bibles that is translated "ablutions or washings." But the word is BAPTISM, the very same word that is used, for example, when God speaks about baptism in the Holy Spirit.

In Mark 7 we read, in verse 4, "And when they come from the marketplace [speaking of the Pharisees], they do not eat unless they baptize themselves [in other words, they purify themselves]. And there are many other traditions which they observe, the baptism of cups and pots and vessels of bronze." And that's translated washing.

The word baptism, the Greek word baptizo, if it isn't translated baptism, is translated washing or purifying or cleansing. And that of course is the figure that is repeatedly used when it is speaking of salvation. The Bible speaks of the washing with the word. The Bible speaks of the washing of regeneration. Or, "Arise, wash away your sins." This identifies totally with the idea of baptism.

Now that's the first important point, that the word baptism does not mean to immerse. It's used in the sense of washing or purification.

CALLER: In the Dictionary of New Testament Words it says that baptizo means immerse. That's only the Greek definition, but we have to let the Bible define it.

HC: Yes, we first let the Bible be its own interpreter. Now there is a cousin word, baptō, that is used in a few places, or em baptō. It has the same root. And it means to dip. But interestingly enough, in every place where the word baptō or em baptō is used, it is never used in connection with salvation. It's used, for example, a number of times in connection with the Last Supper, where Jesus talked about the sop that He would dip in His cup, when He was referring to the one who was going to betray Him. That word dip there is baptō. But that has nothing to do with salvation, you see.

CALLER: But then when He was baptized, did He go under the water there?

HC: The Bible says that He was baptized, and He came up out of the water. Now we have to let the Bible again be its own interpreter. What does it mean to come up out of the water? Well, God helps us out.

In Acts 8 we have the baptism of the

Ethiopian eunuch. And interestingly enough, we read: "As they went along [verse 36 of Acts 8] the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What is to prevent my being baptized?' And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch. And he baptized him."

Now that's interesting. Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water. Now that isn't the end. "And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip." In other words, whatever the eunuch did, Philip did. Now if going down into the water and coming up out of the water means immersion, then we have the interesting picture of Philip going down under the water to baptize someone. And that doesn't make any sense at all. That would be fairly awkward.

And so God Himself is teaching that going down into the water and coming up out of the water, as Jesus did, is not signifying immersion. It simply means that they went down the bank of the river into the water. And Jesus was baptized. He may have been immersed. Water may have been poured on His head, or He may have been sprinkled. Then He went up out of the water.

Now the one place we do have a word that is used in connection with baptism, the word sprinkle is used, of all things. And it's not a surprising word, because sprinkling is a very common word in the Old Testament. The blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. The blood was sprinkled on the base of the altar. Sprinkling was very common.

And in Ezekiel 36:25 we read, where God is speaking now about what salvation is, "I [and this is God speaking] will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be cleaned from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

Now this indicates the spiritual washing that takes place when we are saved. And God uses the figure of sprinkling. And on this basis, many churches today also use sprinkling as the mode of baptism, although immersion is a perfectly Biblical way to baptize also. The Bible is silent insofar as an expressed command concerning the mode.

CALLER: That's clear. Thank you.

The Relationship Between Water Baptism and Salvation (240A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I have a friend here, and I've been explaining to him the necessity of being baptized. He has made public profession of his belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, but he has not been baptized. And I would like for you to answer his question in the best way you can - the necessity of being baptized, that he might be born again. And I'll take your answer on the air.

HC: Now let me ask you this. Are you talking about water baptism?

CALLER: Yes.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. Good night.

The question is raised concerning the importance of the necessity of water baptism, and how that relates to our salvation. First of all, let's define what the word baptism means. The word baptism, as it is used in the Bible, means to be washed, or to be purified, or to be cleansed.

Now this may come as a surprise to many, but this is the way the Bible uses the Greek word baptizo. And we find a number of verses where it's not translated baptism, but it's translated into this English equivalent. We find, for

example, in Mark 7, that God teaches in verse 3, "For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands, observing the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they baptizo themselves [that is, purify themselves]. And there are many other traditions which they observe, the baptizmus [that is, the washing] of cups and pots and vessels of bronze."

Or again, in the Book of Hebrews, in Chapter 9, verse 10 (I'm going into this because all of this relates to the nature of water baptism) we read, let me begin with the last part of verse 9: "According to this arrangement gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot affect the conscience of the worshipper [talking about Old Testament ceremonial law], but deal only with food and drink and various baptizmos [that is, ablutions or washings], regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation."

Wherever the Bible uses the word baptizo, and it is translated in some other way than baptize, it's always translated washing or purifying, or cleansing. And of course this is the way God speaks about salvation. We are cleansed of our sins. We are washed by the washing of the Word, by the washing of regeneration, as we read in Titus 3:5.

Now when we are saved, the fact that we are saved means that God has washed away our sins, and identified us with the Holy Spirit in His Work of evangelizing the world. This is what is in view when the Bible talks about being baptized in the Holy Spirit, that we are to have our sins washed away, and we are to be identified with the Holy Spirit in His task of evangelizing the world. This is the phrase that God employs beginning with Pentecost.

Before Pentecost the phrase, "baptized in the Holy Spirit," was not used, although the Old Testament believers were washed of their sins just as we are. However, there was a distinction in that they had no mandate to evangelize the world, as we do following Pentecost. And so God uses the phrase, "Be baptized in the Holy Spirit" to indicate that we must have our sins washed away. And at that moment we become identified with the Holy Spirit in evangelizing the world. We are qualified, by being filled with the Spirit, to be a witness ourselves.

Now this baptism in the Holy Spirit in itself is not dependent in any sense upon water baptism. It stands all by itself as the substance, as the meaning, as the content of our salvation. We are not born again unless we are baptized in the Holy Spirit. We're not a child of God unless we are baptized in the Holy Spirit. We do not have eternal life unless we're baptized in the Holy Spirit. Only then are we saved, when we have received the washing of the Word, when God the Holy Spirit has washed away our sins, and we are identified with Him in His task to evangelize the world.

Now where does water baptism fit into the whole picture? Water baptism is an outward sign, or official declaration, that we have become identified with the Kingdom of God, that is, that we either anticipate the washing away of our sins, or that indeed our sins have been washed away. In the Book of Acts, Chapter 8, when the Samaritans were baptized in water, it anticipated their salvation, because in that particular instance they were not saved until afterwards.

However, in the case of Cornelius, in Acts 10, the Roman Centurion, in that case they were saved, and then they were baptized in water. Now in Acts 2:38, where it speaks about the nature of salvation, we read there, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Christ for the remission of sins. And you will receive the Holy Spirit as a gift." That is not talking about water baptism. Water baptism in no sense is a

condition for salvation. That is talking about being baptized in the Holy Spirit. We are baptized in the Name of Christ. That is, on the authority of Christ. That is, our sins are washed away by virtue of what Christ has done for us on the cross. Thereby our sins are forgiven. And because we have become a child of God, God the Holy Spirit Himself takes up His abode within us. This is the baptism spoken of in Acts 2:38.

Incidentally, not only does the water baptism look back upon the fact that we have been born again, but it also anticipates the salvation of the future in our own personal lives. At the time that we're saved, we're not saved as a total personality. We're saved in our soul. It's in our soul that we experience the resurrection from the dead. But we still must experience the resurrection of our bodies. Our bodies are still dead, spiritually. They still lust after sin. But water baptism anticipates the resurrection of our bodies. It anticipates the eventual salvation of our bodies also.

But the water baptism in itself has no substance whatsoever. Therefore, if a person were saved, actually born again, we must declare that he has been baptized in the Holy Spirit. This so far has nothing to do with water baptism. But if this has really been the case, then if he has not already been baptized, God asks that we do become baptized in water, so that we use this as an outward declaration that we have indeed become identified with the Kingdom of God, that we indeed have become born again.

Thank you so much for that call.

Sprinkling or Immersion? (358B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I was wanting you to speak on baptism, due to the fact that a lot of my friends have been quizzing me, myself coming from a sprinkling baptism viewpoint as opposed to their viewpoints of immersion, and also the area of infant baptism. Maybe you could just share some things along that line, what the Scriptures teach.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you.

The question that's raised is concerning the question of baptism. And actually, there are two aspects that are frequently of concern. One is the mode of baptism. The other is the timing of baptism. Let's talk about the timing of the baptism first. There are those who believe in believer's baptism. That is that when a person becomes born again, then they are to be baptized. Now that is very scriptural. That is very scriptural. If anyone is born again, and has not been previously baptized, then they ought to be baptized, whether they're a young person or whether they're an adult. They are to be baptized. It has its Old Testament antecedent in circumcision. If anyone wanted to become identified with Jehovah God of the Old Testament, he was circumcised because that was the sign of becoming identified with the Kingdom of God. And so it is true that if someone becomes a believer, then they ought to be baptized.

The knotty question, however, arises in the matter of infant baptism. Are we to baptize infants? In the Old Testament it is very very clear that infants were circumcised. Beginning in Genesis 17, anyone who was a member of a family in which the father or the mother were believers was to be circumcised at eight days. It was the outward sign that declared that this child too was to be identified with the Kingdom of God.

Many churches in the New Testament see in this a very parallel relationship to baptism. In Acts 16 we see this, where it speaks of the family of the jailer of Philippi. At the same time he was saved, he was baptized, of course, because he now had entered the Kingdom of God in a very real way. But at the same time, his

household was baptized. The same was true of Lydia, in Acts 16. At the time she was saved she was baptized, and so was her household.

And this directly parallels what we read in Genesis 17. At the time that Abraham was circumcised, his whole household was circumcised. The problem frequently arises, however, that those who believe in the Old Testament that they had been circumcised felt that this guaranteed salvation for them. . . . "I'm a circumcised Jew, and therefore I'm one of God's chosen people. Therefore I can depend upon it that Jehovah God will bring me to Heaven." The same kind of thinking is very prevalent today amongst those who have been baptized as an infant. They believe they have been baptized, and this guarantees that they are saved, guarantees that they will go into Heaven.

Now the Bible does not teach this at all. The Jews who were circumcised as infants had no guarantee of salvation. It was simply an identification to indicate that they had become identified with the Kingdom of God. The fact that the children of Lydia or the children of the Philippian jailer were baptized was no guarantee that they were saved. But it did indicate they had become identified with the Kingdom of God in a corporate sense. Their father, in the jailer's case, and their mother, in the case of Lydia, had become born again believers. Therefore all that were of their families became corporately citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Only, however, if they became born again would they really enter into the Kingdom of God in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Someone in the Old Testament who was circumcised could go to hell just as readily as any unsaved person. Someone in the New Testament who is baptized as an infant can go to hell just as readily as anyone else.

In the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, however, God did give promises to families. God said, "I will be a God to you and your children." Along with that promise God also gave mandates. He declared that you are to bring up your children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord: "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and in his old age he will not depart from it."

Now you can see immediately that when you tie all these verses together God does work through families. In practice, of course, we see this. The children of believing parents who have made a determined effort to bring their children up in the fear and the nurture of the Lord will see a great number of their children saved in time. Those who are careless in rearing their children, regardless of the fact that they themselves are believers, will not see their children saved, because they are repudiating, setting aside the promises that God has made toward them and their children, by virtue of the fact that they're not training their children up in the fear and the nurture of the Lord.

Now this, I believe, is the biblical teaching. I know this is not understood by a great many because, unfortunately, a great many people do not read the Old Testament carefully enough. They do not understand that the promises that were made to Abraham concerning the fact that in his seed the nations would be blessed, and that he would be a father of a multitude of nations, and he would be given the land as an everlasting possession, were not given to national Israel. They were given to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether they are of national Israel or whether they are of the nation of the United States or Argentina, or whatever. This is the way God works, through His believers, through parents and their children.

Now in reference to the mode of baptism, there is much confusion on this

matter also. There are those who insist that the Bible teaches immersion. The fact is, Young's Concordance, which is a very excellent concordance, defines baptism as immersion. Now the definitions found in Young's Concordance are not Biblical. Young's Concordance is a marvelous concordance in that it gives us all the words of every kind in the Bible, and the places where they are found. And that is a great help. That is without any commentary whatsoever.

However, when Young's Concordance gives definitions of words, then we know we have the work of a man rather than the work of God. When we search out the word baptism, which is the Greek word baptizo or baptizmus, in the New Testament, we find that never is it used in the sense of immersion.

It's used in the sense of washing or purifying. Any time it's used and it's not translated baptize, it's translated to wash or to purify. We find, for example, in Mark 7:3, "For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they washed their hands, oft eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not." And this word wash is baptizo: "And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups." It's baptizmos again. It's the word baptize. It means to purify or to cleanse. And we find other places in the Bible where the same word is translated wash or purify.

Secondly, we don't find anywhere in the Bible where immersion is used as a description of salvation. The word immersion is not found in the Bible used in that sense whatsoever. When the Bible talks about salvation, it talks about being cleansed of our sins, being washed of our sins, being purified from iniquity, as well as a lot of other expressions, like being covered by Christ's righteousness, and so on. But we never find the word immersion featured. All the synonyms of salvation have to do with cleansing or purification.

And so the idea that baptism must be by immersion is not found in the Bible. That is a foreign idea to the Bible. It doesn't say anywhere that it would be wrong to immerse. It doesn't say, however, either, that it would be wrong to pour water on or to sprinkle water on. The fact is, the word sprinkle is far more often found in connection with salvation. It is the word that is used very frequently in connection with salvation.

In the Old Testament we find the sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat. Sprinkling is used constantly. God Himself said, "I will sprinkle many nations." In Ezekiel 36:25 it says that God would sprinkle water upon them, and they shall be cleansed of all of their uncleanness. And so those who hold for sprinkling as one mode, one valid mode of baptism, have very good Biblical basis for it.

It isn't wrong to immerse, but nowhere does the Bible insist on immersion. That just is not found in the Bible. Now there are those who say, "Well, Jesus was immersed. Didn't He go down into the water, and didn't He come up out of the water?" Well, He did go down into the water, and He did come up out of the water. That's Biblical language. But under no circumstance does it say that He was immersed.

The fact is, God gives us further information, in Acts 8, which gives us real reason to believe that He was not immersed when He was baptized, because when the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized we find that it says that both he and Philip went down into the water. We read in verse 36 of Acts 8, "As they went on their way they came unto a certain water, and the eunuch said, See, here is water. What doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou

mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch. And he baptized him."

Now if to go down into the water means to be immersed, then Philip immersed himself as he baptized the Ethiopian eunuch. And that of course doesn't make any sense whatsoever. To go down into the water simply means that they saw a little pool of water, or stream, or whatever, and they went down the bank, and they entered into the water. They may have gone ankle deep, or knee deep. It doesn't say how deep. And he baptized him, the Ethiopian eunuch. And then it says in verse 39, "And when they [that is, both of them Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch] were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip [indicating again that to come out of the water does not mean that someone has been immersed]."

Now immersion is a perfectly satisfactory way to be baptized, but it is not insisted upon in the Bible. If you really believe that it is, then you are going to have real trouble. Some people look at Romans 6, where it speaks about the fact that we have been, in verse 3: "Know ye not that so many of us that were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

And so they say immersion is a picture of going down into the grave and coming up again. Now that's a very beautiful picture to describe. But the fact is, Jesus was not buried in water. Jesus was buried in a grave. And He came up out of a grave. He didn't come up out of water. He came up out of a grave. And so the picture loses its significance to some degree.

This is not what God is talking about in Romans 6:3. He is simply saying that in our baptism, in the fact that we have experienced this. And actually, the substance of our water baptism is in what the Holy Spirit has done, in cleansing away our sins. When the Holy Spirit baptized us in the Holy Spirit, He identified us with the death and burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is altogether God's action. The water baptism is an outward signification of this.

BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

What Does it Mean to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit? (314B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like to talk about the baptism in the Holy Ghost. There's something special that comes after the initial conversion I believe, and I know that we receive the fullness of the Holy Ghost right at conversion, but I hear on TV, on Christian television and from some people at school, about certain people not being baptized in the Holy Ghost yet. And yet they're Christians. And they turn to Luke 4:1, where it says, "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan and went into the wilderness." One person I talked to said that he always had the Spirit but that at this one time he was filled with that Spirit, for the work that he had to do. Now I just would like to know if you can make this clearer for me.

HC: The question that is raised is concerning the nature of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, or becoming filled with the Holy Spirit. Are we saved, and then later on baptized in the Holy Spirit?

Are we saved, and later on filled with the Holy Spirit?

Actually, the Bible teaches, in Ephesians 4, I believe that there is one baptism. There are not two or three baptisms. There's only one baptism. And God speaks of this baptism (Ephesians 4:5 is the verse I'm thinking of). Actually, this baptism is the baptism we receive in the Spirit at the time that we are saved, at the time we become born again. That's the only baptism the Bible knows about.

Now it's true the Bible speaks of water baptism. But water baptism is merely a shadow or a reflection of the Spirit baptism, of the washing of our sins. Baptism means to be washed or to be cleansed, or to be purified.

Now the phrase, "baptism in the Holy Spirit," really finds Biblical emphasis beginning with Pentecost. The reason for this is that back in the Old Testament God used other signs and figures than this in emphasizing who were really saved. He did use baptism, but He also spoke of circumcision. He spoke of burnt offerings and of blood sacrifices, that were pointing to the coming Messiah. But circumcision was really the sign that someone received to indicate that they had become identified with the body of Christ.

But when the Old Testament believer was saved, he was saved exactly as we are saved. The Holy Spirit came into his life. The Bible says in Romans 8:9 that unless we have the Holy Spirit we are none of His. When they were saved, they received the Holy Spirit just as we do. But they were not mandated, nor were they qualified, to be a witness. Only occasionally in the Old Testament do we read of someone who was filled with the Holy Spirit. That is, this is language to indicate that they had been qualified to be a witness.

Now John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. His mother Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit as she exclaimed concerning the Messiah. And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit. All of this happened before Pentecost.

But that was the unusual kind of thing. Ordinarily a person was not filled with the Holy Spirit. That is, God did not use this language when He spoke about the ordinary believer. But when we come to Pentecost, two things have happened. First of all, all the Old Testament signs have been completed in Christ. Never again is there to be circumcision, never again is there to be a blood sacrifice, is there to be a burnt offering.

But God did pick out of the Old Testament signs the idea of baptism, and highlighted that as the sign to be employed that showed that we had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. But the bigger piece of information was that beginning with Pentecost, every born again believer was qualified to be a witness, because you see, at Pentecost God began His program to evangelize the world. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit, which we read about in Joel's prophecy and in Isaiah, and other passages in the Old Testament, and which was fulfilled at Pentecost, was speaking of the time when God would begin to evangelize the world.

Now in evangelizing the world two things would happen. Number one, God would begin to draw believers out of every nation. Satan had been conquered at the cross, and it was God's program to begin to draw believers out of every nation. That's the first big thing that happened. And we see this dramatically of course on Pentecost afternoon, as three thousand are saved from eighteen different nations.

Secondly, every believer from now on is qualified to be a witness, so that the work of bringing in the saved from all of the different nations would be accomplished through the testimony, through the witnessing of believers as

they're found throughout the world. And God referred to this qualification as being filled with the Spirit.

So you see, our salvation is the same as in the Old Testament, but now we're all like Old Testament prophets. We are filled with the Spirit from the moment we're saved. That is, this is speaking of the fact that we have become qualified to be a witness.

There is no such thing as a second baptism. There are blessings, of course, that keep coming if we're saved. You can speak about a second or third or fourth or a ninth or a twelfth or a nineteenth blessing. Every day God's blessings are renewed. But insofar as baptism is concerned, that occurred at the time we were saved, and only then.

There are a lot of gospels around today. The Bible tells us that there would be a lot of other gospels. But there can only be one true Gospel. And the true Gospel is circumscribed by the Bible. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (the revelation of this Gospel) is given to us in the Word of God, the Bible. The Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word.

Now today there are lots of gospels that talk about the Lord Jesus, that talk about baptism, and talk about the blood of Christ, and all of these things. But any gospel that looks to some other source for divine truth than the Bible by definition must be another gospel, because the moment you say the Bible is the Word of God, and then you say, but there's also the Word of God here or there, in a vision or a voice or a tongue, or an angel confrontation, or whatever you think it is, the moment you say that that, too, is the divine Word, then obviously you've got a different sourcebook. You've got the Bible plus this other information. And therefore, by definition it's another gospel.

And of course, if you have another gospel, then you're going to come to a lot of different conclusions about what the Bible teaches, because you'll evaluate, you'll interpret the Bible not only by the Bible itself but also by the information you received from these other sources.

CALLER: There's one TV show on . . .

HC: Yes, but I don't like to talk about any names or movements or churches, or anything like that. If you just want to mention the TV show and not mention any names . . .

CALLER: No, I wasn't going to mention the name. They just really push the baptism of the Spirit. The people that they have on they let on are all Christians, but they prefer that they have this emotional thing which they refer to as the baptism in the Holy Spirit, where they've all spoken in tongues, and that is the evidence of their being filled with the Holy Spirit. They had been saved a long time before that, probably.

HC: Now, you see, the definition of the true Gospel has to do with what the Bible is. Now if you hold that divine truth comes from another source...in an unknown language like a tongue, or from a vision, or whatever... then you have a gospel, that's true. And you can believe you're saved, and you can call yourself a Christian, and you can talk about the blood of Christ. But you're saved on a different basis than the Bible. You've got a different kind of a gospel than the Gospel of the Bible.

We cannot decide what the Gospel is by the lives of people. We can decide what the Gospel is by the Bible. And so the thing you have to listen to is the Word of God, the Bible. That is the only authoritative source of truth.

CALLER: Okay, I believe that. I know that's true. At times I had been wondering if there was something from God that I hadn't received. And at the same time I knew that that wasn't true. I knew that I had the Holy Spirit right in the beginning. But still, you know,

hearing some of my friends say this and that, and telling about their church, where some of these things happen, some of these movements of the Spirit, I was getting kind of shaky about it, wondering why it hadn't happened to me.

HC: Yes. The Bible indicates that the just shall live by faith. The Bible indicates that we don't walk by sight. The Bible indicates that signs and wonders were done when Jesus was on earth, before the Holy Spirit was poured out. Signs and wonders continued for a little while after the Holy Spirit was poured out. But whenever the Bible talks about signs and wonders near the end of time, it always speaks of it as events that do not come from God.

We're living in a day when we really have to place our trust only in the Bible. We have to be more careful than ever. God warns, in Matthew 24:24, that false prophets and false Christs will arise with signs and wonders, to lead astray if possible even the elect.

CALLER: This one church I went to looked so real. I mean, it was full of people. And a couple of people stood up, and God supposedly spoke through them. It all looked so real. And I still don't know if it was or not . . . or what.

HC: The only source of divine truth is the Bible. And anything else, any gospel at all that looks outside of the Bible for divine truth, by definition it's another gospel. And God warns about this in Revelation 22:18: "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein." And so we live in a free land, where we can hold any kind of a gospel that we would like. And that's a wonderful thing, that we live in this kind of a land.

CALLER: But at this church they proclaim the Word of God.

HC: Yes. But you see, if I would have a gospel where part of the divine truth that I regard as my authority is the Bible, then of course I'm going to talk about the Bible, and I'm going to use the language of the Bible. And I may have some correct information, to some degree, from the Bible.

But if I have more than the Bible as my source of divine truth then obviously my authority is wider than the Bible, isn't it? And God warns that we're not to listen to anything outside of the Bible as divine. We're not to add to the words of this book. If I read the Bible and I say, "That's the Word of God," fine. If I have a vision and I say, "That's the Word of God," then I have added to the Bible, haven't I? I've got two sources now. I've got the Bible, and I've got the information that came to me from the vision. And God says if that's the case, then I'm still subject to the plagues that are written in this Bible.

More than that, you'll remember in Matthew 24:24 Jesus said that these false prophets will deceive, if possible, even the elect. Now the elect are the born again believers. They're in the church where the true Gospel ought to be proclaimed, and yet other gospels will look so much like the true Gospel that even the elect would be deceived, if that were possible. And so this indicates how careful we have to be to make sure that the gospel we follow is circumscribed by the Bible.

CALLER: Okay. Now just one more little thing. Do you think I should stay away from this church then?

HC: All I can tell you is that if you want the true Gospel, you should go where the true Gospel is being proclaimed.

CALLER: I do go to a church like that.

HC: All right. Then that's where you ought to go. And the Bible says in Second John 10 that if anyone brings another gospel or another doctrine, you're not to give them any greeting.

CALLER: Okay.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

How Can There Be Only One Baptism? (501A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I was reading about baptism, and it seems to be a little bit complicated, and there seems to be a lot of confusion among some people. Maybe you could shed some light on the subject. The problem is that John the Baptist, in Matthew 3:11, said that "I baptize with water, but He that is greater than I shall come after me and shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." And then we read that there's only one baptism. By the Holy Spirit we are baptized into one body. And in Mark 16:15-16 we find that it says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Does that mean by water or by the Holy Spirit and the baptism that Christ was talking about?

HC: All right. Let me see if I can unscramble this for you. First of all, let's talk about John's baptism. What was it? John's baptism was really part of the Old Testament ceremonial law. In the Old Testament there were at least 4 signs that demonstrated or pointed to the washing away of our sins. There was the killing of a lamb, that is, the shedding of blood of a lamb or an oxen, because Christ would shed His blood on the cross. That was one sign that they employed to show that their sins would be washed away by the coming Messiah.

A second was to offer a burnt offering, whether it was a meal offering or a turtle dove offering or a meat offering. And that was pointing to the burnt offering that Christ was.

A third sign was circumcision. The foreskin was cut off, symbolizing the fact that through the coming Messiah their old sins would be cut away. And a fourth sign was water ablutions or baptism. The priest, for example, before he went about his priestly duties, washed in a basin or a laver of water that was in the temple area. And you'll recall at the Wedding at Cana of Galilee, in John 4, the water that was in the six stone jars was water of purification. It was water used in the Old Testament, pre-cross, ceremonial rites. And that was the nature of the baptism of John the Baptist. It was really part of the Old Testament ceremony.

Now when Christ speaks of baptism, that we are to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, that is speaking of the New Testament or after-cross baptism. The word baptism means cleansing or washing. And the baptism in the Holy Spirit means that we've become born again and that our sins have been washed away through the blood of Christ. It's a description of what occurs when we are saved. And every born again believer experiences this. This is what Mark 16 is talking about, those who believe and are baptized, not baptized in water, but baptized in the Holy Spirit, that is, who have had their sins washed away.

CALLER: Why do so many people baptize in water?

HC: Christ gave an outward sign, after the cross, to show that we had joined the Kingdom of God, just as before the cross there were 4 signs. There was the offering of a blood sacrifice, there was the offering of a burnt offering, there was circumcision, and there were washings of various kinds. All of these were signs to indicate that they had placed their trust in the coming Messiah. Now after the cross, all those 4 signs were done away with. They were completed in Christ. They're not to be used again. But after the cross Christ introduced one sign, namely, water baptism, as a sign that we have entered the Kingdom of God, or become identified with the Kingdom of God.

CALLER: How do you get this, because it says there is only one baptism?

HC: You see, there's only one burnt offering, too, that has any merit. The

burnt offering that they offered in the Old Testament had no substance in itself. It could not wash away their sins. It was merely a shadow. It was merely a reflection of the burnt offering that would be the Lord Jesus Christ.

CALLER: The Bible says there's only one baptism, which is by the Spirit into the body of Christ. Now are you talking about two baptisms, one of water and one of the Spirit.

HC: No. I'm talking about one baptism. Let me explain that. The baptism that is efficacious, that actually involves the saving of us, is the baptism in the Holy Spirit. That's something that is done within our hearts, which we cannot see. God does that.

The water baptism has no substance in itself. It has no merit, it has no grace. It is a shadow. It is a reflection of what the baptism in the Spirit is. Let me use this analogy. If you have a tree, and the sun is shining, it will cast a shadow. Now the tree is what has substance. The shadow has no substance. If you took the shadow away, the tree would still stand.

CALLER: You know, that's poor reasoning on your part, because the slaying of the lamb was the shadow of the coming of Christ.

HC: Yes.

CALLER: Now according to you, then we should slay the lambs every time and sacrifice them, because that proclaimed something to come.

HC: No. Now remember, we have the before-cross laws which God laid down, and the after-cross. Let's again talk about before the cross. Before the cross the substance was in the Lamb who was the Lord Jesus Christ. When John the Baptist saw Him, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." That's where the substance was.

The shadow was in the sacrifice of the lambs or the oxen, and the burnt offerings and the circumcision, and all these other things. These were shadows. They had no substance. They could not cleanse anyone from their sins or free anyone from their sins.

CALLER: You didn't say anything about water baptism.

HC: All right. Now let's go after the cross. After the cross the substance is in the activity of the Holy Spirit in washing away our sins. That's the substance. The shadow is in the water baptism, which merely is a sign to indicate that we have had our sins washed away.

CALLER: That doesn't bear out. For one thing, a person can be baptized and not be in the body of Christ. He can be baptized with water and not have his name in God's Book of Life.

HC: You're correct. You're absolutely right. You could be baptized a hundred times in water, and it wouldn't mean a thing, because water baptism has no substance.

CALLER: Why bother with it?

HC: Because Christ commanded it.

CALLER: He commanded?

HC: Yes. It's just like the Old Testament believer. He could offer a thousand sacrifices, and that didn't save him in any way whatsoever. Well, why did he do it? Because God had commanded that he should do it, that he should offer these sacrifices. And through these sacrifices he would be able to see the nature of the Messiah who was coming.

Now through our water baptism we get a picture of the nature of the cleansing that was provided by the blood of Christ.

CALLER: Where did Christ command us after the cross to use water baptism?

HC: We find it both in the statement of Matthew 28, where He said, "Make disciples, baptizing them into the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit," and we also find it in at least three or four instances, maybe more than

that, where someone did become saved. We find, for example, when the Samaritans were saved that they were baptized in water. When the family of Cornelius was saved, they were baptized in water. When the 12 Ephesians were saved, they were baptized in water. When the family of Lydia was saved, they were baptized in water. When the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 was saved, he was baptized in water. You see, we have all these examples.

CALLER: If you use that kind of reasoning, why don't you carry it out throughout the whole Bible? They also spoke in tongues, and they received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. And there were other things. Now you say that was carried over and done away with. So was the water, because there was one time when Peter went to preach to people, and they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Then why didn't he baptize them with water, too? God was showing him right there and then that he could be baptized with the Holy Spirit, and if he was baptized with the Holy Spirit, then why bother with the water? It doesn't make sense.

HC: Well, only because Christ has commanded it. You have to read the Bible very carefully. You'll find that to be baptized in the Holy Spirit means that we have become saved. And if we have become saved, then we are to be baptized in water. That's why the Ethiopian eunuch said, "Here is water. What is to prevent me from being baptized?"

CALLER: That water baptism baptizing the eunuch was just like people laying their hands on, and they receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, which they don't do now. Now when Christ said, "Go baptizing them," He meant to go and preach the Gospel, and that's the way you get them baptized. That's the way that Christ is going to baptize, when they hear the Gospel, and Christ will be able to baptize them with the Holy Spirit. The only things that counts is Holy Spirit baptism. The water baptism doesn't mean anything.

HC: Well, it has no substance in itself. But why then do we find five or six illustrations where after people are saved, they are baptized? You see, look at the Philippian jailer, for example. When he was saved, straightway he was baptized. And we find Lydia and her family were baptized.

CALLER: If you're going to use that kind of reasoning, then why use that same kind of reasoning about the laying on of hands and speaking in tongues, too?

HC: Because other scriptures apply to that. You see, tongues, for example, was a legitimate phenomenon in the church at Corinth of that day, by which certain individuals did receive information from God in an unknown language. But later on God specifically said that we're not to add to the words of this book. So that set aside that possibility.

Now if later on, let's say, in Revelation, God used language to indicate that water baptism was no longer employed, then I would agree with you. Then we would set it aside. But God has not given us a revelation like that. And so we have to continue using it.

CALLER: He has given that, because He told Peter, when Peter went to the Gentiles He said to the first Gentiles he preached to, "Did you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?" Now there's only one baptism in the Bible. There's one baptism, one Christ, one faith. And this Cornelius received it. Peter went on his own to baptize him with water also. He goofed over there.

HC: No. You see, that's why I was using the analogy of the tree and the shadow. Think this out a second. The tree has a shadow. The shadow has no substance, but it's totally identified with the tree. If you move the tree, the shadow moves.

And yet the tree can exist without the shadow. But the shadow cannot exist without the tree.

And so it is with water baptism, which is the shadow of baptism in the Holy Spirit. The water baptism has no substance in itself. The baptism is the baptism in the Holy Spirit. There is one baptism. The water baptism is simply reflection of that baptism in the Holy Spirit.

CALLER: I just told you that Peter went and preached to Cornelius, and Cornelius was baptized, so the water baptism didn't have to precede it. God could baptize in the Holy Spirit without the water baptism.

HC: Of course. You're absolutely correct. The water baptism is no guarantee of salvation, nor is it a requirement for salvation. You're absolutely correct. But Christ commands us. It's the same as when we partake of Holy Communion. We don't derive any grace from Holy Communion. It again is a shadow. "Do this in remembrance of Me." In the Old Testament they had the Passover. Now when they partook of the Passover, they didn't receive any grace because of that. That is, there was no substance in that. It was pointing to the broken body of their Lord, who was going to come.

And in the Holy Communion we simply remember what Christ did for us on the cross. It is a shadow of what Christ did on the cross in paying for our sins. But we observe Holy Communion because God has commanded it. We can't argue that it doesn't make sense. The question is, are we going to be obedient to what God has stated?

CALLER: Well, are you going to interpret it right or not? That's the thing, because Christ did not command water baptism.

HC: All right. Well, we've covered this pretty well in our discussion together, and so I want to thank you so much for calling, because it gave us an opportunity really to look at this question of baptism. Thank you very much. Good night.

REBAPTISM

Do I Need to be Rebaptized? (357A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I was wondering. I'm a born again Christian. And since I became a Christian, I haven't been baptized. But now I understand that you said that if you've ever been baptized. When I was about eighteen or nineteen I was baptized, and I thought I was a Christian, but I wasn't. And so now I don't know if I should be baptized, since I have become a Christian. Anyway, I would like you to comment on this, and I'll take my answer over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you.

The question is, if I was baptized in water at some time in the past, and now later on I discover that I was not a child of God at that time, but now I've seen the light, I've surrendered my heart to Christ and I am born again, should I be baptized in water again?

Let me give you two illustrations. In Acts 8 the Samaritans were baptized by Philip. They were not saved. The internal evidence of Acts 8 indicates they were not saved at the time, but they were properly baptized in water, in the Name of Christ. Philip had just misjudged their true condition. But the Bible indicates that they had not received the Holy Spirit. And if we do not have the Holy Spirit, we are not saved, according to what salvation is.

When Peter and John came there, they did become born again, the Bible indicates. They were not re-baptized, because they had already been baptized in water, anticipating their salvation,

actually. In Acts 19 we have the account of the approximately 12 Ephesians. The evangelist Apollos apparently was the one who preached to them, and he was not as well versed in the scriptures as he might have been. So he preached to them more or less from an Old Testament vantage point. And when he thought they had been saved, he baptized them with John the Baptist's baptism.

Later on, when Paul came there to examine the situation, Paul discovered they were not saved. They did become born again, and they were re-baptized in the Name of Christ, that is, with New Testament baptism. Now what was the difference?

The difference is that the baptism of John was Old Testament ritualistic ceremonial baptism. It was anticipating the cross. It had a different meaning to it because it was still looking for the coming of the Messiah. The New Testament water baptism looked back on the cross as an accomplished fact, and this is the baptism that the New Testament believers were to be baptized with.

How can we bring this then to bear on a modern day situation? If the baptism we were baptized with in water was legitimate, Biblical baptism, that is, those who baptized us had a proper view of the Scriptures, insofar as water baptism is concerned, even though we were not saved at the time, it would still stand as a valid baptism. On the other hand, if we were baptized by a church or congregation or denomination, at a time when we were not saved, and it was not a valid Biblical baptism, that is, it had connotations or meanings that were contrary to the Word of God, then it would seem to me that you would want to be baptized again, now that you have become saved, as the experience of the twelve Ephesians in Acts 19 would indicate.

If we did not know, in other words, we may have been an infant or a child when we were baptized, and we have no idea what the church we went to taught concerning infant baptism, we had no recollection, no suspicion even that it was a superstitious kind of a thing, or whatever, then it would be far better to be baptized again.

I hope this answers the question.

Should I Be Rebaptized When Joining a New Church? (433C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I have a question regarding baptism. I'm in the process of changing churches, and the new church says that I have to be rebaptized. And I just wanted to get your views on this.

HC: The question is, if I go from one church to another and I've been previously baptized, should I be rebaptized?

Now it depends. There is some baptism which, in my judgment, is not Biblical baptism. For example, there are those who baptize infants under the theory that this cleanses them from the sin with which they are born. And that is foreign to the Bible. That is not taught in the Bible. And therefore, if a person was baptized that way, and then they did become a born again believer, I would recommend that they be rebaptized.

On the other hand, there are churches who baptize infants, and from everything I can read in the Bible, it would be a valid, Biblical baptism. And now they join a church that does not recognize infant baptism, and they want to rebaptize that person. Now in this case, rebaptism is not necessary. It's not required in the Bible. I don't suppose it would be sinful to be rebaptized, if you believe that in all other points that church is in accordance with the Word of

God. Perhaps it would not be wrong to be rebaptized.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you so much.

CHAPTER 2 -- THE BIBLE IN GENERAL

Why Do Biblical Accounts Sometimes Differ? (029B)

CALLER: I've always been curious. In comparing passages in the Old Testament and the New Testament, they don't come out exactly the same. For example, in Psalm 45, which is speaking about Christ as well as David, it says in verse 6: "Your divine throne endures forever. Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity." Then we're told by Paul in Hebrews (if Paul was the author, and I believe he was) that "Thy throne, Oh God, is forever and ever. The righteous scepter is the scepter of Thy Kingdom." It's the same type of statement, but it seems as if the New Testament author writes it down differently.

Well now, there are two reasons for this. One is that the job of the translator is to take the most authentic copy that he can find and translate it as carefully as he can. But sometimes he doesn't do a perfect job of translation. More probable, however, is the fact that God frequently says something in the Old Testament, and then He further develops it when it is quoted in the New Testament.

Now a clear case of this is the prophecy of Joel 2, where God prophesied through Joel that "Afterwards I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh." And then Peter, when he quotes this, doesn't use the word afterwards. He uses the words "in the last days." Now this simply means that God the Holy Spirit has given us a further commentary or interpretation of what He intended by the words in Joel's prophecy.

Both the Old Testament, therefore, and the New Testament are to be read, and the new information in the New Testament helps us to further understand.

Read the Bible! (142E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Mr. Camping. I'm a born again believer in Christ, but I wondered if you could give me some information on good Bible studies, ways that I should study the Bible to get more out of it, or some material that I should get from the Bible, I mean from a Bible book store.

HC: Well, the question that you're really asking is, How can I, in the shortest possible time, really become acquainted with the Bible as possible? This is really our desire, isn't it? We really want to know God's Word.

You know, we always wish that there was some quick way that we could become really acquainted with the Bible. I don't know of a quick way. I begin to tell people more and more that the first thing and the big thing that they ought to do is read the Bible, and read the Bible and read the Bible. I say this again and again, because I believe it's so tremendously important. In other words, you've got to become totally acquainted with the Bible. And there's no way to become acquainted with the Bible except by reading it.

Now when I read the Bible, I just spend lots of time reading it. Whenever I have spare time, I can't be more delighted than just to read the Bible. And I always read it with a pen or a pencil in my hand, so that if I find a verse that's important, or which I want to remember, I can underline it. Or if a thought comes to me, I can put a little note in the margin.

Now if you would spend several hours a week just reading the Bible, the same as you easily spend several hours watching a TV program, or watching a ball game,

or reading the Reader's Digest, if you would spend several hours a week just reading the Bible, and reading and reading and reading, and then, when your pastor is preaching, you'll pretty soon begin to recognize some of the things that he's talking about. When he talks about Abraham, or when he talks about John the Baptist, you can say, "Oh yes. I read about him." And you'll be able to sense increasingly whether your pastor is on the right track or not. He may be saying things that sound just like what you read in the Bible. And so you'll listen more eagerly than ever. And this will help you to learn.

Or he may be saying, occasionally, something that doesn't quite sound like what you read in the Bible. And then you'll be on your guard, "Maybe my pastor isn't so accurate on this particular point." And again, you can call up on a program like the Open Forum, when you find questions.

In other words, I think that as a basic groundwork, you've got to just do a whole lot more Bible reading. And then we'll know how to ask questions. And as you ask questions, then truth will begin to flow.

CALLER: Thank you.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Personal Bible Study (182D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I know you say many different times that people should read the Bible a great deal, as just general reading. But what I wanted to know is, how would you go about studying a particular book? And where should someone start studying, as opposed to just reading? I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you very much. Good night.

The question is raised concerning this matter of studying the Bible. Actually, when you are reading the Bible, you are beginning to study the Bible, because in order to really become acquainted with the Bible, you have to take the time to read it.

For example, when you read about Abraham somewhere in the Bible, if you have not ever read Genesis 12-20, or thereabouts, where God gives us a lot of information about Abraham, then when you read about Abraham in Romans 4, you can't really appreciate why God is saying what He is saying.

When you read about David, in Acts 2:31, this won't really mean anything to you unless you have ever read about the life of David in the Old Testament. More than that, as you read the Bible you become sensitive to the way God speaks. You become increasingly sensitive to the demands of the Word of God on your life. And you're not really wasting your time a bit. You really are studying.

Now for another way of studying, I would suggest that you do this. Get a concordance. And there are a number of them that are available. I would suggest that you invest in a good concordance, one that covers all the words of the Bible. It may cost you a bit more, but it would be a very worthwhile expenditure. There is Strong's Concordance, there is Young's Concordance, and there's one that is not quite as complete, Cruden's Concordance.

Now take a verse, or if you want to, take a word. Take the word faith, for example, or take the word sin, or transgression. Pick out any word that you would like. And look in the concordance for the word faith, if that's the word you're studying. And you will find there all of the verses in the Bible that have the word faith in them. And look up these verses that are named, and see what the verse says.

Now some of the verses that you will

read do not really help very much. You won't be able to tie them in with anything. But if you look up all of the verses with the word faith (and this takes time, studying always takes time), you will find that pretty soon a pattern will emerge. You will see how God uses that word faith, again and again and again. Or whatever word.

Or do this. Find a verse that you're wondering about, and look up key words in that verse. If it has the word death in it, look up other references to death in the Bible. If it has the word sea in it, look up other references to the word sea. If it has the word kingdom in it, look up other verses that have the word kingdom. And in this way you're going to find related passages that integrate into the verse that you are studying. This is just another way of reading the Bible in a way, although in another sense it is a directed kind of reading, where you are focusing especially on certain aspects of Bible truth.

Whatever you are doing, whether you're just reading, with a pencil in your hand, or whether you are looking up key words, or examining a verse, trying to find other verses that have similar phrases in it (and you can do these things through a concordance), you will be getting more and more acquainted with the Word of God. The main thing that I want to underscore is that there is no short-cut. There is no short-cut. You have to spend time.

And don't be bashful. Don't feel too heroic if you spend a few hours some night. Do this again and again. Now one of the things you can do is, when you hear a question answered, for instance on this program, write down the verses referred to (and I do try, when I answer a question on this program to give proof texts), if you're interested in the subject at all. Write them down. And then, in your spare time, in your private study time, look those verses up. And examine what they say. Don't trust me, what I say. But examine what these verses say, and see if they indeed teach what you have been told. And this is another way to get deeper into the Word of God.

The Nature of the Gospel (203A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I'm writing a paper, analyzing the content of the Gospel. And I wanted to discuss a few points with relation to my study. Under the content of the Gospel, I was wondering if you felt that it came through the apostles. You know, Christ came preaching the Gospel, and then the apostles also preached the Gospel, which was Christ crucified, dead, buried, risen and exalted. And what was the content of Christ's Gospel?

HC: In other words, your question is, did the apostles have one Gospel and Christ another Gospel? Now that's putting it pretty crassly, of course.

CALLER: Well, I wondered if . . .

HC: If there was a change in the Gospel, to put it a little more kindly.

CALLER: Yes.

HC: No. There's only one Gospel. There is only one Gospel, and that is the Gospel of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. And whether you read the Old Testament or read the New Testament, and whether you're reading the Law or the Prophets or the Psalms, or the four Gospels, or the Book of Acts, or Revelation, or Ephesians, it's always one Gospel.

However, sometimes chapters or verses would emphasize certain aspects of the Gospel to a higher degree than others. And therefore in one paragraph you might find that the blood of Christ, the fact that there is no remission except through the shedding of blood, is particularly in view. You see this particularly when you read Leviticus and

read about the blood sacrifices, or read the Book of Hebrews, where we have commentary on the Book of Leviticus. The blood sacrifices are in view.

In another place it may stress the washing away of our sins. This is seen very beautifully in the Gospel of John in a number of places. In another paragraph the wrath of God against sin is particularly in view. The Book of Romans is replete with this.

In another place the depravity of man shines through with great clarity. You see this, for example, in Ephesians 2, or in Romans 3. But none of these passages, none of these sentences or paragraphs stand alone. We may never say, "Well, this is what Peter said," or "This is what Paul said." Now I know we do that once in a while, because we find it in a book that Paul wrote. But we have to be careful with that, because Paul was not really the author of that statement. Neither was Peter. It was God who was the Author. And Paul and Peter and Isaiah and Moses were simply the instruments in God's hand to write the Bible. They wrote, of course, out of their own personality and their own personal experiences, and so on. But what they wrote was exactly, down to the very letter and the very word, what God wanted them to write.

And so God wrote through Luke about this salvation. And it was the identical salvation that God wrote through Moses about, or that God wrote through the apostle Paul about. It was the identical salvation that Jesus Christ spoke about, when we find the quotations of what He declared.

CALLER: Would the statement be correct to say that the Gospel is the proclamation of a Person, and that when Christ came He, in a sense, presented Himself? And then the apostles presented the facts about Christ, before Christ died and was resurrected, although Christ did say that this was what He was going to do. Was that then part of His Gospel. His saying that He was going to die and rise again?

HC: I think you might be somewhat proper in saying that the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter and the prophet Isaiah, and so on, were instruments in God's hand to write about the Gospel (or Good News, which the word Gospel means) that God was giving to mankind, but that the Lord Jesus came to be the Gospel. He is the one who is the very Personality of the Gospel, because He went to the cross, and so on. He is the Word become flesh, as we read in John 1. I think yes, you could make that kind of a distinction.

CALLER: Also we were discussing how the Gospel is communicated. And I don't know how broad to make it, or how broad the New Testament presents it. But the comments I have written down so far are, "verbally, through preaching and teaching, and also personally. A person is a witness, telling what happened to him." But how broad should it be, when I discuss how the Gospel is communicated?

HC: One of the nicest verses in the Bible that speaks beautifully to this question is I Peter 2:9 and 10: "Ye are an elect race, a holy nation, God's own people, that ye may declare forth the wonderful excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not people, but now you are God's people," and so on.

God's program was that born again believers would be the custodians of the Gospel, would be the vehicles of the Gospel, to get it out into the world. Now Jesus put it, in Matthew 28, "Go ye into all the world and make disciples." He said it in II Corinthians 5 that we are His ambassadors, "Christ as it were making His appeal through us." This is the means that God has established.

Now the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, and we must remember that

the Holy Spirit is Eternal God, and the Holy Spirit has always been present in the world. The Bible is not suggesting that at Pentecost in AD 33 the Third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, finally put in His appearance on the earth. There are all kinds of references throughout the Old Testament concerning the Holy Spirit, and the fact that He was active in the lives of the born again believers, as well as in the lives of the prophets, and in the creation, and so on.

But when the Bible speaks about the Holy Spirit being poured out, it means by that, that at Pentecost in AD 33, this was the moment in time when God began His task to evangelize the world. And this would be the task of God the Holy Spirit, to take that Word that is brought by born again believers throughout the world, and apply it to the hearts of men, so that Christ would build His church, which He had already begun, of course, way back with Adam and Eve, and Abel, and so on. But now He's going to expand it. He's going to build it, so that it is a complete temple of God. And He said in Matthew 16, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. . . I will build My church."

CALLER: In this proclaiming of the Gospel, it doesn't carry with it the connotation of arguing or persuading, but more of just presenting the facts.

HC: Yes. You made an interesting observation about witnessing. Actually, witnessing is witnessing of what the Bible teaches. The message we have is not "me." I'm not the message. I'm not the subject of the message. Oh, I can tell someone, "I was a sinner. Now I'm saved." But having said that, now let's get on with the main message.

The main message is the message of the Bible. This is a mistake that a lot of people make. I think. They spend all their time talking about themselves, and how ugly their sins were, and how they were in this and that and the other thing. And now look what a glorious salvation God has given me. And really, effectively, they've put themselves as the center of attention. The glory is going to themselves, and they're giving a very incomplete message of salvation, because our life is not the Bible.

The message of salvation, the witnessing that we are to do, is concerning the Word of God. This is what we are to send forth into the world. And so we read the Bible, read about God's wrath and His justice, about His love, His grace, His mercy. And this is what we declare forth to the world as witnesses.

Now it is God who does the saving. It is God who is going to apply this Word. Now the Bible does indicate, through the apostle Paul, that we persuade, we counsel, yes, we might even debate just a little bit. But we must always remember that we can never argue someone into the Kingdom of God. We can never open somebody's eyes. We can never convert somebody into the Kingdom of God. And at various times all of us try to do these things. We cannot do that.

What we have to do is be faithful as possible to the whole counsel of God, that is, to the Word of God itself. And God will bring the increase. Isaiah 55 is so pertinent. God's Word will not return void, but will accomplish the purpose for which it was sent. This we can absolutely depend upon.

CALLER: Some of your statements would make the content of the Gospel very broad, then, bringing in the wrath of God. . .

HC: How can you present the Gospel of salvation without talking about the wrath of God?

CALLER: Well, I agree.

HC: You see, this is a very important aspect of bringing the Gospel. We have to bring the whole counsel of God. If we are only going to talk about the love of

God, then we have no way of telling somebody about salvation, because if we say, "God loves you," and now we're going to talk about salvation, what do they have to be saved from? God loves me. I'm already under the love of God. And I'm living in adultery, I take my drugs, I . . . But God loves me. And now you tell me that I have to be saved, that I ought to accept Jesus Christ as my Savior. Well, God loves me. Yes, I'd like to accept Jesus as my Savior. I think that's a pretty neat idea. God loves me, and I'll accept Jesus as my Savior.

But now if someone came to me a half-hour later and said, "Now Jesus is your Savior, but what are you saved from?" "Oh, I don't know. I don't know. I feel a lot better, because Jesus is my Savior. I've got a purpose in my life now. I've got a goal to live for. Jesus is my Savior. And so I've been saved out of some of my misery."

Well, that's not the Gospel, is it? That's not the Gospel a bit. This man, before he's saved, and I don't care who he is (he could be the mayor of the city, or the preacher in the church, or he could be anybody else), if he's not born again, he's a sinner. And he's under the wrath of God. And he's heading for hell. And if he died tonight, he'd spend eternity in hell. And so he's in a precarious position. He's in a terrible situation.

And here I am, the custodian of this Gospel, and I'm not going to tell him that. I'm going to just kind of meekly say, "God loves you. God loves you." And so he doesn't realize at all that he's going to be destroyed at any moment. And so I better tell him the whole Gospel. I better tell him, "Look, the Bible says that all men are sinners, and if we're not born again we're under the wrath of God. And hell is going to be our lot. And we're only one breath away from eternity. But wonderfully, wonderfully, there's another side to this story. We can know the love of Christ, if we'll only see our sins, if we'll only repent of our sins and cry out to God for mercy, and cast our lot with Him, and trust in Him as Savior and Lord, surrender our will to Him. He will be our Savior. He then will be the one who has taken our sins and has paid for them, so that we'll never have to endure hell for our sins.

Now we're beginning to get at the whole counsel of God, you see.

CALLER: I think then what I put under "Content of the Gospel" is I Corinthians 15, beginning with verse 3, where it says that Christ died according to the scriptures, He rose according to the scriptures. And then Peter's sermon in Acts 2, and then Paul's sermon in Acts to the people of Lystra and Athens, where he again presents the historical facts about Christ. But this would be the remedy. And the first part, the people being under wrath.

HC: Quote from Romans 3:10-20, or from Ephesians 2:1-3. And in fact, Ephesians 2 is tremendous because after declaring what our sad condition is, it indicates that by grace we have been saved. Or you might quote from II Corinthians 5:21: "For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." That shows the justice of God being worked out.

CALLER: We would have to give the predicament part of the Gospel then. God came with the Good News, declaring Christ.

HC: Without declaring the predicament, we have no Gospel. Now you read the Book of Jonah, because there you find a man who was a reluctant missionary. He brought the Gospel, and there was the greatest revival, there was the greatest outpouring of blessing that's recorded anywhere in the Bible, because the whole city of Nineveh repented. And from the language of the New Testament, we may assume that these people in the city of Nineveh became born again.

Now what was the content of Jonah's message? "Repent, because God's wrath is upon you, and in forty days He's going to destroy you." He didn't use the word love at all. He talked about repentance.

The wrath of God, that is the chief content of the Gospel, incidentally. That is the chief content of the Gospel, that man is in trouble with God, that he's under the wrath of God. And once we understand that, once that has been imbedded in our sin-bound minds, then we're going to begin to ask questions: "Well, what do I do now? What do I do now?" Like the jailer of Philippi in Acts 16: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He knew he was in trouble. He was ready to commit suicide.

CALLER: I had noted Paul's remedy: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But I hadn't related it back further to his statement. That's very good.

HC: Okay?

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: When you get your "A," send it to me.

CALLER: You really helped me clarify my thinking. On some papers you can find all the information right there, but this one I have to do a lot more of my own thinking.

HC: I was very glad to help you, because you are asking some very pertinent questions about the nature of salvation.

CALLER: Yes. Once I started, I realized how unclear things were in my mind, even though I've been taking this class in communicating the Christian faith. Still, on my own I had not thought through what the Gospel was. I think that's probably when you really learn it, not when you just take what other people say, but you have to work it through for yourself. So thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

The Composition of the Bible (217A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I have a question, but I don't know whether it's in your province or not. I've been given an assignment to look up what the Carthage Tribunal did about reaching the verdict of the sixty-six books of the Bible. Do you know anything about that? Do you know any of the details of how it came about that these particular books were selected for the Bible? Do you know anything about that?

HC: First of all, let me rephrase your question. Your question really is, how did it come about that we have the present sixty-six books in the Bible?

In the scriptures themselves we read in Luke 24, for example, where Christ makes reference to the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the writings, or the Psalms. This is Luke 24:44. And so throughout the Bible we find this kind of reference, indicating that our Old Testament, which is the scriptures referred to, has the stamp and seal of approval of Christ Himself.

And so we know that however the Old Testament books were selected, they are the holy scriptures, because we have the commendation of Christ. Now in the New Testament we do not have any evidence within the scriptures as to how they were selected. We do not have any secular evidence that clearly indicates when the books of the New Testament were selected. But we do know this, that by the Second Century there wasn't any question that these were the Holy Canon.

However, we do know this. There are certain limitations, or there is a certain framework in which we have to work in thinking about the books of the New Testament. First of all, we know that any writing that came after the writing of the Revelation, the last book of the Bible, could not be the work of God. We

know that, because nothing could be added to it. And since Revelation was written approximately AD 95, we know that any writing after that would not be part of the Bible.

Secondly, we can examine the internal evidence of any writing for the period from, let's say, John the Baptist until AD 95, and it won't be long before we discover what is the Bible and what is not the Bible.

CALLER: Another thing they were asking about, and which I have to make a report on (because I'm teaching a Bible Study) is how come Christianity changed from the simple form in which Christ had it and in which Paul taught it? How come there was such a turning away, and all the ritualism became part of it? When did that start? Was that the time of Carthage, or was that farther along in time? I know about the Reformation and the Dark Ages and the Apocrypha. But I don't have anything that shows anywhere how Christianity, in the simplistic form which it was and which it is, became so ritualistic. In what year was it, and when did it happen? You know?

HC: The Bible already indicates that before the Bible was completed, there was a watering down of the true Gospel. Paul, for example, warned the church at Galatia, in the Letter to the Galatians, "You have turned away from the true faith, and you have begun to add certain ceremonial laws to your worship."

We find in the 7 churches of Revelation 2 and 3 that there were heresies coming into the church. In other words, the Bible teaches that from the very beginning of the Gospel the seeds of heresy, the seeds of bringing other things in, already was present. And so it isn't surprising, therefore, that we see this multiplied through the centuries that followed.

CALLER: It actually took place in Rome, did it not?

HC: Well, I don't think that it just took place in Rome. I think it took place in many many areas. For example, in II Timothy 3, we read in verse 1, "In the last days there will come times of stress." Now we know from Acts 2:17 and from Hebrews 1:1 that the last days are the whole period beginning with the cross all the way up to Judgment Day.

And it says, "In the last days, men will be lovers of self," and so on. And then finally it says in verse 4, "treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of godliness (or piety) but denying the power of it." Now that is typical, of course, of any liberal church today, or ritualistic church, that has lost the true meaning of the Gospel.

Now II Timothy 4:1-5 indicates that during the last days there will be this running after a gospel or a religion that looks like the true Gospel, but it denies the power of it.

CALLER: This coming away from the original church was a long time ago. And I went through a great big Bible, through the back of it, where they had all the descriptions of Rome and Greece, Athens, all different places. And it tells a lot. But it doesn't give any specific ways in which the church turned from its simple form. Where can I find that information?

HC: Well, I'm not sure that you can find it very clearly demonstrated, because you can't trust the secular record altogether. Again and again the true Gospel, wherever it has its origin in a particular situation, a group of believers begin to gather together, and they begin to faithfully serve the Lord, after a while there are those within that congregation who begin to insist on adding other things. And that's why I suggest that you read about the seven churches.

For example, the church at Ephesus, in Revelation 2:4: "I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love that you had at first." All right. Now the

moment you abandon the love you had at first, that leads the way open for another kind of a gospel to enter. And that other kind of a gospel might take a whole variety of forms.

And what the Bible is insisting, therefore, is that this potential has existed all the way from the beginning. Realizing, of course, that the Old Testament church was very ritualistic, in view of the ceremonial laws, therefore it is very easy for a New Testament church to begin to copy some of the ideas from the Old Testament, because that seems to be from the Bible, you see.

CALLER: This is wonderful. Now I've got the 3 chapters in Revelation, and II Timothy 3, Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:1, II Timothy 4:1-5. Now do I look any place else?

HC: Oh, I would look at I Corinthians 5, all of it.

CALLER: You have no idea how I thank you.

HC: I hope this will help you a little bit.

CALLER: I really appreciate your help. Thank you so much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

God Speaks to Us Only Through the Bible (225B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I got the idea that you feel that God doesn't speak to anybody except through the Bible. And I was wondering if you would like to enlarge on that.

HC: Yes. Your observation is that you understand that I am suggesting that God only speaks through the Bible. And I am very convinced that this is so. Until the Bible was completed, it is true that God spoke through visions and dreams and personal confrontations. Angels came to bring messages, and so on. This is because the Bible was not yet completed.

But then finally God finished His book, and He declared in Revelation 22:18 that if anyone adds to the words of this book, "I will add to him the plagues written herein." This meant that now God has given us His Word. It is the complete Word that God wants, and we'd better start studying it now and becoming acquainted with it. It is the Living Word. It is the Sword of the Spirit. And there is no possibility of some other kind of a divine revelation. And so for that reason I would not believe that anyone could receive a message from God through a vision or a voice or whatever.

CALLER: The reason I'm calling is that I can't believe that there aren't situations in which God can speak to a person through a friend, or through a book someone has written, for amplification of something they have learned from the Bible. For instance, a situation in which a person believes in God, and they have an area in their life that they don't want to face. And God is trying to work them into the position where they will face this situation. Okay. But they fight it, and they won't talk to certain friends because they know what's going to be discussed. They won't read certain parts of the Bible because that section speaks to them. They won't read certain books because they speak to them. Don't you think God might possibly speak to them in a voice or in some way, to get them to listen, if they refuse to listen in any other way, to set the problem straight?

HC: What does Luke 16 say? In Luke 16 we read about the rich man and Lazarus. Now the rich man is in Hades. He's in hell, in torment, and he's concerned about his five brothers on earth. And so he said to Abraham, "I beg you. Send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them lest they also come into this place of torment."

And then Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets [that's another

name for the holy scriptures]. Let them hear them." And he said, "No, Father Abraham. If someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead." In other words, God is emphasizing that we go to the Word of God for our truth. And if you're not going to believe the Bible, then forget it. We're not going to find truth. God has given us His Word.

And that's exactly the situation that is developing in the world today. People have the Bibles, but they're not reading their Bibles. Oh yes, they read certain parts of the Bible that relate to their own experience. But insofar as just sitting down and letting the whole Bible be the final authority, that's a very arduous task. And it's an ugly task, too, because the Bible has some very detrimental and ugly things to say to mankind. It's far more exciting to let God come to them through a vision or a voice of some kind. And besides, that proves that they personally are in contact with God. It gives a real sense of power, a real sense of belonging. This is the way it's happening today.

But that isn't God speaking. God speaks through His Word. And if we really want to know His Word, let's take time to study it.

Bible Footnotes and Paraphrased Bibles (227C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. You commented on being careful of the footnotes, and so forth, that are at the bottom of the pages in your Bible. And I assume that what you're doing is admonishing us not to consider that as part of the scripture. Is that correct?

HC: Your observation is concerning footnotes that are found on the bottom of the pages of the Bible. Are we simply to understand that they are not part of the scriptures?

Yes. I want to emphasize that, but I'm distressed by Bibles that have these at the bottom of the pages. And there are a number of them that do. The Jerusalem Bible does, the Berkeley Version of the Bible does, the Scofield Bible does. There are a number of them that do. You see, invariably the person who reads the Bible is going to check the footnotes to get the opinion offered there, and then immediately he'll begin to understand what the Bible says in the light of that footnote. And without realizing it, he will put as much weight to that footnote as to the Bible itself. And that cannot be.

Now if he had to go to another book, called a Commentary, and found that information in the Commentary, because it's in that Commentary he knows without question that it's not the Bible, that this is the work of some men. And therefore he's very much more apt to take it with a grain of salt – maybe it's true or maybe it's not true.

But when it's on the page itself, and particularly when you find certain notes like the headings of the Psalms, which are also on the page itself, and which are a part of the Holy Canon, there is great confusion. What is the Bible and what is not the Bible?

CALLER: With respect to, let's say, the Living Bible, which is an acknowledged paraphrase, what opinion do you have?

HC: In my judgment a book like the book that's called the Living Bible is no more the Bible at all than anything else. It has no regard at all for the individual words that were used in the original autographs. It fails to realize altogether that in a particular phrase, that may appear rather awkward in the Bible, God may have some very deep spiritual truth. And when the paraphraser puts that into his own language, if he guesses right he might get at least a little part of the

meaning God wanted. But he'll close off some deeper meaning. And it he guesses wrong, he'll turn that phrase into a lie.

And God, you see, could have written the Bible to be very easily read and understood, because God is infinitely wise. But God didn't write it that way. He wrote it so that it would be very difficult to understand. This was God's purpose, that it had to be received by faith, not because we understood it. And so I personally do not want to have anything to do with a paraphrased Bible.

I'm distressed enough to see the small amount of paraphrasing that creeps into some of our translations, which I sometimes even find in the Revised Standard Version. That's bad enough, the way that is.

CALLER: Which do you think are the best of the more recent translations?

HC: One of the best translations that ever came out is the King James translation. Amongst the more modern translations, the best one is the American Standard. It also tried to be as faithful as possible on a word by word basis. The New American Standard and the Revised Standard may still be considered to be good translations, but I don't think they are nearly as superior as the American Standard or the King James.

CALLER: All right, sir. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Is the Bible Missing Any Information? (231C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Did the original version have more details than what we read in, say, the King James translation? In other words, how do we know how tall Jesus is, and his age, and so on. Somehow all the pictures of Jesus are the same. There must be more detail in the original Bible than I can find in the Bible we read today.

HC: The question that was asked concerns the data concerning the history that is recorded for us in the Bible that might not be in the Bible. When the translators of the Bible worked, did they actually pick and choose from a great abundance of data and then collate what they thought was pertinent, and thus we have the Bible?

Well, the fact of course is that that is not at all the case. The translators worked from very exact ancient copies of the Bible, and faithfully they translated every single word into what we call the Bible today. There was no other information.

Now that doesn't mean that there were no other writers at various points in history. The New Testament, for example, was written after around AD 30. And there were other writers of that period. There were writers who wrote particularly during the period around 100 to 200 BC. There were writers like Josephus, who wrote about the same time that the New Testament writers wrote.

We can read their works and discover quite a bit of information about the situation that existed at that time. But these secular works such as the writings of Josephus are not trustworthy because they're like any history book. They carry the bias of the writer and the mistakes of the writer, the lack of proper research that the writer may have been guilty of. All of this is found in any of these secular writings.

This is not the case with the Bible. The Bible is the infallible Word of God. It is altogether trustworthy and dependable. Under no circumstance would there be any mistakes found in it.

Now when we talk about the person of Jesus, how tall He was, what did He look like, we of course have no idea at all what He looked like. The Bible doesn't tell us. These pictures that we see of

Jesus are absolutely a fabrication. They are simply the imagination of man, of an artist. They no more represent the Lord Jesus than they represent my uncle Harry, or your uncle Tom. They don't represent Jesus at all.

In fact, I personally believe that they should not even exist, because the Bible indicates that we should not make any appearance of God Himself, and the Lord Jesus is God.

What is the Tenach? (285B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I have something I'd like to ask you. I notice when you give the daily scripture reading, you sometimes refer to the Tenach. I don't know what that is. Could you explain that to me?

HC: The question that is raised is, What is the Tenach? The Tenach is the equivalent of our English Old Testament. It is the Bible that is actually used in the Jewish synagogues today, and it is identical to our Old Testament, except that the order of the books is somewhat different. It is the same Bible that Jesus would have used in His day.

Really, when you read the Tenach, you are reading exactly the same Bible as that part of the Bible that we call the Old Testament.

How Do We Know that God Authored the Bible? (290B)

CALLER: I have a friend at work that I get talking to about the Word every once in a while. And one time she asked me a question that just threw me off, and I couldn't answer it. I like to use the Word as a reference to what I'm saying. But one time she asked me, "How do you know that the Bible was actually written by God?" You know, "How do you know it's actually God's Word?" And I know that there are verses in the Bible that actually say that the Word will last forever, and so on. Isaiah 40:8 says, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of God shall stand forever." And I could show her these things, where God is saying that the Word is going to last forever, that it is the Word of God. But if she doesn't believe it's the Word of God in the first place, then showing her these verses wouldn't actually prove that to her. And I just wondered if you might have an idea of a way that I could convince her that the Bible is the Word of God?

HC: For example, you could show her Isaiah 53. Now Isaiah 53 was written hundreds of years before Christ came. And no one in the Old Testament had any idea, no human being could have known about the character of the Messiah who was going to come. If they were just ordinary human beings, how could they ever know anything about the Lord Jesus?

But you read Isaiah 53 and see how literally it relates to the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And He made His grave with the rich in His death.

Now none of these statements could make any sense, or there's no human being that could have penned those words without being inspired by God, because they identify so closely with Christ. There are many many statements in the Old Testament, and in fact the Old Testament is replete with statements that carry the message of salvation, even though in their historical context it may not be apparent.

Let me give an illustration. Recently I've been working in the Book of Ruth, in the Sunday School class that I teach. And I've found that the Book of Ruth (and actually, I think that the Book of Ruth is just illustrative of the whole Old Testament – As we become better and

better acquainted with the Old Testament, I think we would see this pretty much throughout the Old Testament) is a very short book, a little book in the Old Testament, with only eighty-five verses, a beautiful love story of this Moabitish widow, Ruth, who eventually marries Boaz, who is a rich man in Bethlehem. And it's just a lovely love story.

But it has any number of statements in it that are odd, that on the surface don't make any sense. And they only make sense when we understand that they are figures. They're true historical statements, but they're figures of the Gospel, or of the salvation that God is going to provide through the Lord Jesus Christ. Now let me give one illustration. I can give many out of the Book of Ruth. I'm only going to give one.

The Book of Ruth begins with the sad ease that there's a famine in the land of Bethlehem. And this man, Elimelech, an Israelite, with his wife Naomi and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilean, leave Bethlehem and go to the land of Moab, which is a very unwise thing because Moab is a land composed of unbelievers. And lo and behold, Mahlon and Chilean take Moabitish wives. And this is a dreadfully negative, terrible thing for them to do because the Moabites were cursed by God, and they were not to take wives like this. But they did it anyway. They violated God's rules, and they took wives anyway.

Well, that's all very rational history. Finally, Elimelech dies, and then Mahlon and Chilean die, and so now Naomi, the wife of Elimelech, is left with her two Moabitish daughters-in-law. And so the whole thing has become a great tragedy. So far, historically, it just sounds very rational.

Well, then she says in verse 8, "Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go. Return, each of you, to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.'" Now that makes sense, too. It's Naomi's desire to return to Bethlehem, to her own people, and she is encouraging Ruth and Orpah to remain in Moab with their families, because they would be aliens, they would be foreigners in Israel. They had never been to Israel. And so she says to them, "May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me."

And then in the next verse she said something very strange. She says, "The Lord grant that you may find a rest, each of you, in the house of her husband." Now that doesn't make any sense. What person ever told someone who was hoping to be married sometime, "Could it be that you will find a rest in the house of your husband?" You might say, "The Lord grant that you might find a home in the house of your husband," or "that you might find happiness in the house of your husband." But to find a rest, that doesn't make sense, until we realize that Naomi is making a statement that embraces the whole Gospel.

You see, when we study this in the light of the rest of the Bible, we find that the word rest has to do with salvation. Canaan was the land of rest. It implies a rest from our labors, of our desire to go into Heaven by our works, to become right with God by our labors, by our own efforts. We rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the desire of anyone that is saved is that his friends and loved ones might find this rest.

Now what does that have to do with the house of your husband? Well, who is our Husband, if we have really found rest? Our Husband is the Lord Jesus Christ. We are the bride. What is the house of our husband? Well, we become members of the temple of God. The house is actually God Himself. We enter into God Himself. There is no condemnation, for example, for those who are in Christ Jesus. So we find rest in Christ, who is

our Husband, who is the Groom and we are the bride.

And so in this brief statement, which is one of many in the Book of Ruth, we find the whole outline of salvation. Now any author penning the Book of Ruth, just a human author, would never have been able to put these statements so beautifully into this love story. He just would not have used this kind of language. It wouldn't have made sense. And if we would go on in the Book of Ruth, we would find many other phrases of a similar nature. They don't make sense standing alone.

But when we understand they are outlines of the whole message of salvation, and they are brought into sharp focus when we look at the words in the light of how they're used elsewhere in the Bible, then we see that God has hidden in the Book of Ruth the whole message of Christ's going to the cross.

And then we can see that it had to have a divine Author. No man could have written this.

CALLER: I'm going to have to study those verses you gave me. That's really interesting.

How Do We Read of Unseen Events in the Bible? (328C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. In the Gospel of Luke, he gives us quite a descriptive account of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before He was crucified. And he describes Him lying prone in prayer to God, and talks about Him going back to the inner circle and asking them to pray with Him, and of course they fell asleep. And also he describes Jesus sweating drops of blood. And the question came to my mind that this was so very descriptive of everything that was going on there that evening. And yet it would appear that no one was really sitting up with Jesus. So how would this account be able to be put down in so precise a manner as Luke wrote? Would it be by divine revelation by God, or do you think that Jesus had a chance to speak to them. His disciples, before He was crucified? Or just exactly what is your comment on that?

HC: A very good question has been raised. There are account of events in the Bible where no eye, no human eye, was present. And yet these are very descriptive accounts. The example was given of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. The three disciples who went with Him had fallen asleep, and yet we have a very descriptive account of what is going on in the Garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus is sweating great drops of blood into the ground, and He is crying out to God, "Oh Father, is it possible for this cup to pass from Me?" and so on.

We must remember that the Bible is written by God Himself. "All scripture," the Bible says, "is given by inspiration of God." When anyone wrote in the Bible, they wrote out of their own human knowledge, and their own environment, and their own personality. But when they finally formed their words and their sentences, it was precisely what God wanted.

Now if any human being, no matter how intelligent he might be or how knowledgeable he might be, writes an article about an historical event, he is not going to be absolutely accurate, because he can't know everything. He's going to misjudge motive, or he's going to misjudge many things. He's going to write to the best of his ability, and even though he may have been an eye witness and intimately acquainted with all the particulars, nevertheless what he writes is not going to be absolutely accurate. Someone else could come along and question, "But wait a minute. Are you

sure that he said it quite that way?" or whatever.

But when anything was written in the Bible, you can rest assured that what was written was absolutely accurate, not because the human being who wrote it was that intelligent or that accurate, but because God the Holy Spirit was the author. He guided that man so that what he wrote was absolutely accurate.

Now in certain cases we have statements in the Bible which were written down by the human scribe, whether it was the physician Luke, or whether it was the prophet Amos, or the prophet Isaiah, or whoever. And they wrote without realizing the import of what they wrote. You can read many of the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the coming Messiah, and those prophets did not really understand what they wrote. They simply wrote as God dictated to them, as God put it into their minds, what they were to put down in black and white.

The same therefore would be true of the experience in the Garden of Gethsemane. God gave the physician Luke the words to put down. And certainly Jesus might have talked about it. There's no indication that He did, however. The more likely situation is that the Holy Spirit simply guided Luke to fill in the missing blanks, so that it would be exactly what God wanted.

We can see that the same thing would be true of Genesis 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and 5. How did Moses, who is the one who finally put it down in the writing as we have it in our Bible, know about creation, which had occurred some 9,500 years earlier, thousands of years before the invention of writing? How could he detail what happened in the Garden of Eden? How would he know what Eve said, right to the very words? The only way he could know this is because God gave him the words to write down, so that what we have is absolutely trustworthy.

Thank you for that good question.

The Word "Forever" in the Bible (328D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: Brother Camping, I've been having difficulty with some of the Old Testament statements regarding admonitions that are made, and they use the word "forever." And also some of the prohibitions which are to be forever. What takes this away? There's so much of it in the Old Testament, this particular thing, forever and ever.

HC: Now you know why that is.

CALLER: No, I don't.

HC: The question is raised: Why do we find so frequently in the Old Testament, about this or that going on forever? The reason is that while God was dealing with national Israel in an historical setting on this sin-cursed earth, He was presenting through them God's eternal plan of salvation. He was speaking actually of spiritual truths that had everlasting consequences.

As an illustration of this, when He was talking to Abraham, He promised him the land of Canaan, did He not? He said, "Look to the north and south and east and the west. All of this land I will give you." How long was he given this land? Forever, forever.

Now that immediately tells us that God was not speaking about the literal land of Canaan insofar as this sin-cursed earth was concerned, because the rest of the Bible indicates that this universe, this earth, is to be burned by fire. It's to be totally destroyed at the end of time. Anything that exists today will be gone. And so God has to be talking about another kind of a land of Canaan, a land of Canaan that will go on forever, which can only be the New Heaven and the

New Earth, where we will live forever with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The proof of this, incidentally, in Abraham's case, was that he didn't make any attempts to buy any land. He didn't make any attempt to own any. He finally bought a piece of land when his wife Sarah died in old age. But we read in Hebrews that he lived here as a stranger and as a pilgrim. Moreover, it declares there that he was looking for a heavenly city, a city whose foundations were made by God.

He was looking beyond the physical land of Canaan, at an eternal Canaan, namely, the eternal salvation that God was providing. Whenever you see the word forever in the old Testament or New Testament, you can know that it is going beyond history into eternity. Therefore, it's not speaking of something that's relating to this sin-cursed earth. It's relating to the New Heaven and the New Earth, or to salvation itself, which is eternal in character.

The Original Languages of the Bible (346C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I have a question. I'm a born again Jewish Christian, very very young in the Christian faith, though. And every time that I listen to a pastor on television or radio, or even the pastors of the churches that I've attended, when they're interpreting something from either the King James Version or the Living Version, they usually relate back to what they call the original Greek. Could you explain that? I'm not at all familiar with when it was written, or anything, because I know Christ was in Israel, and I know there were Romans there, and Arabs, and Israelites. But Greeks?

HC: Actually, the Old Testament, that is, the part of the Bible that we call the Old Testament, which is the Bible that Jesus used, was originally written in the Hebrew language almost entirely. There was a little of it written in the Aramaic, but almost entirely it was written in the Hebrew language. And we call that the Masoretic text.

CALLER: Right. Those are the scripture that I was raised with.

HC: All right. Now that is the most accurate of the original, or the oldest copies that can be found. There was a Greek version of the Old Testament later on produced, which was called Septuagint. It was produced by "the seventy," and therefore it was called the Septuagint. But the Greek is a translation and is not nearly as accurate or as authoritative as the Masoretic. When the King James translation was made, and any good translation, it always is made from the Masoretic text.

Of course, we do not have the original document that Isaiah wrote, or that Moses wrote, or the scribes under the kings of Israel wrote. But we do have very ancient copies. For example, in the Dead Sea Scrolls they found a copy of the Book of Isaiah that dates by Carbon 14 (which dating at that time in history is quite accurate) about 150 years before Christ. So that means that that copy was quite close to the original, certainly within 300 or 400 years.

When they compare ancient copies with ancient copies, where these copies are several hundred years apart, they find that the copies are so close to each other, it really indicates how accurately they have been copied. The Jewish nation was just exceedingly careful in copying from copy to copy. In our day, when we have these paraphrased editions, and so on, which are not the Bible at all, not at all, there is just a woeful lack of the holiness of the Bible.

CALLER: You're referring to the Good News Bible, and the New Living Bible?

HC: Anything that all that's a paraphrased edition, it must not be considered the Bible.

CALLER: That explains why I get the terrible feeling I do when I hear people quoting from it.

HC: Yes, because it is so far from the original, and it has so much speculation in it, and it just denies what the Word of God is.

Now the New Testament was originally written in the Greek language, although a little tiny bit of it was in the Aramaic. But virtually all of it was in the Greek language. And again, we don't have the original autographs, but we have very ancient copies that are available for the translators.

And so this is the basis for a good translation, the Hebrew Bible in the Old Testament, the Greek New Testament.

CALLER: I see. Another question: In different places in the Bible, with reference to time, I see the little abbreviation cf. What does that mean?

HC: Compare. I don't know what that really means, but it's something the person who published the Bible has put there to indicate that we are to check with these other scriptures for cross referencing.

CALLER: It's usually in the King James version that I see it, because I only use the King James and the Masoretic text.

HC: Are you talking about something that's in the margin?

CALLER: No. I mean within the verses. In italics, c.f., and there's usually not another scripture verse, but it's actually within a sentence.

HC: I don't know what that is. I do know this, that in the King James Bible occasionally you'll find a word italicized. Now the reason for that is that in order to help make the sentence flow, the translator took the liberty of introducing a word that was not in the original, and he italicizes it so that the reader could know that it was introduced by the translator, and therefore is not part of the Holy Canon.

CALLER: Then if you were to read that sentence without that word, you would get the original.

HC: Yes. You'd be much closer to the original. There's a dramatic illustration of this in Daniel 8, where it speaks about the daily sacrifice being taken away, for example, in Daniel 8:11. Now the word "daily" is in the original. The word sacrifice was not in the original. It is a speculation of the translator that that is what is being referred to. And so they introduce the word sacrifice. Actually, in my judgment, in studying the context, I'm quite convinced that the translator introduced the wrong word. When God was talking about the daily, or the continual here, He had not in mind the sacrifice at all. But rather, He had in mind the candlestick that was burning in the temple. This is a word that's also used in Leviticus 24:4, where it's the identical Hebrew word used in connection with continual. And for a lot of reasons I believe it is the continual.

But because I see the word sacrifice in italics, I know that that is a suggestion by the translator, but it is not found in the original.

CALLER: I see. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Is the Apocrypha Authentic? (391C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: Yes, Brother Camping. Recently my wife gave me a Bible that had the Apocrypha in the middle of it. And I hadn't known anything about the Apocrypha before, and I began studying it. And according to what I read here, the books in the Apocrypha were incorporated in the Bible throughout

history, up until about the early part of American history, in 1600 or 1700, when there were dropped because of Puritanism, according to what Goodspeed says here. And the question I have in mind is, if the Apocrypha carried so much, was in the Bible for such a long period of time, up until early American history, could it be that the early American Bible scholars, who were Puritans, were mistaken in dropping it and that it is part of God's Word?

HC: The question is concerning the authenticity of the Apocrypha as being part of the Holy Canon. Now these books were written in the period between the last revelation that was given by God to the nation of Israel, about 400 BC, and the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, about 400 years later. This was a period of silence when there was no vision between God and man.

It's during this period that some of the history of the nation of Israel was written up, and so we have the Book of Maccabees, and some of these books that are called the Apocrypha or the hidden books.

Now in the Bible that Jesus used, and remember, He came after the Apocryphal books were written, in the Hebrew Bible, the Masoretic text that Jesus used, there was no Apocrypha. If you even go into a Jewish synagogue today and read the Jewish Bible, which is called the Tenach, you will find that it does not include the Apocrypha. That is not part of the Old Testament. It was not a part of the Bible that Jesus used. It is therefore not part of the Holy Canon.

Actually, I think, and I'm not absolutely positive of this, because I'm not too much of a student of history, I'm more a student of the Bible, but I think that the early Bibles did not contain the Apocrypha. But I believe that around the year 1400 or 1500 one of the churches decided that the Apocryphal books ought to be included. And it was from that period that they actually were included. The Puritans, of course, would have rejected it out of hand, because they recognized that these Apocryphal books were not part of the Holy Canon.

Now if you read the Apocrypha very carefully, and if you're a student of the Bible at all, so that you've really become sensitive to the way God writes, and understand the tremendous internal consistency and integrity and cohesiveness of the whole Bible, then when you read the Apocryphal books you will find that they do not have the same ring of authority. They do not present the truth, the Gospel, the same way the rest of the Bible does.

Now that doesn't mean that one cannot derive certain benefits from reading them. We for example have the writings of Josephus, an historian who lived about the time of Christ, or shortly thereafter. And his writings can be read. But when we read Josephus, or when we read the Apocryphal books, we have to realize that these are secular books. They are not authoritative. There are bound to be biases and prejudices and mistakes, the same as any history book would have these things. They are not the Holy Canon.

CALLER: I see. I felt that the fact that one large church (I won't name it) still uses the Apocrypha and do not necessarily separate it from the Old Testament and the New Testament, but interspersed in the Old Testament, the way it was originally handed down.

HC: No, it was not originally handed down that way. That is not possible. The Old Testament that we have today, the Bible that we have without the Apocrypha is the Old Testament as it was originally handed down.

CALLER: Okay. When I say handed down, I mean from the Greek translation. In other words, the Hebrew translation did not have the Apocrypha, but the Greek translation that the interpreters

had throughout the centuries did have the Apocrypha in it.

HC: Yes, but the Septuagint, or the Greek translation, was not the authoritative text. It was not the Bible. It's just like today. You can find a lot of translations today that have taken liberties with the original. Now that doesn't mean that they're correct at all, you see, just because they're translations today. If we're going to try to get the most authoritative Bible, we have to go back as close to the original as we possibly can. And the Masoretic text, the Hebrew text, did not contain the Apocrypha. There's no possibility that it is part of the Holy Canon.

CALLER: I see. And so for that reason the Puritans dropped the use of the Apocrypha in early American church history. But I'm wondering how authentic the Greek versions were as they were handed down through the centuries. In other words, I'm wondering if we're missing something by not including them in today's usage of the Bible.

HC: We're not missing a thing, not a thing. You see, the Apocrypha are not part of the Bible. The Septuagint was not the authorized text. It was simply a translation. And when translators, for example, the King James Bible or any good translation of the Bible, work, they do not use the Septuagint. They use the Masoretic text because it is more authoritative.

You see, the Jews of Jesus' day, when they began to countenance the Apocrypha (because they did, of course. It was part of their Jewish history), had added so much to the official, authoritative Bible text, they had added laws and rules of all kinds and shades and descriptions, which they were very careful to be obedient to, in their adding all of these things, they had so much emasculated the true Gospel that when Jesus, the Messiah, came, they did not recognize Him. They did not know that He was the Messiah. Their problem was that they had added all of these other things to the Bible. They had added not only the Apocrypha, but they had added the commentaries of various learned Rabbis of earlier history. And all of this became the official text. And as a consequence they lost all sensitivity to the authority of the Bible, and they did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. When He came on the scene, the Sanhedrin, the ruling body in the church of that day, the high priests, the highest religious officials, rejected Christ altogether, and refused under any circumstance to recognize Him as the Messiah.

Now the same is true today. There are lots of people who are adding to the Bible. They're adding this, they're adding that. And while they still talk about Jesus as the Messiah (because after all, they can't deny Jesus; He did live and He did do what He did), they have lost their sensitivity to the will of God. They no longer recognize what really is the will of God.

Now the Bible as it stands is a book that no man in ten lifetimes (and that's not too exaggerated a bit) could really plumb the depths of the riches of the Bible. But we're living in a day when men are scarcely scratching the surface of the truths that are found in the Bible. And yet they are desirous of finding a little more here and a little more there, and adding something else the other place. Instead of sitting down and reading the Bible and feeding on the Word of God, listening to God speak to them, they would rather add this and add that. And of course in that way they get farther and farther away from what is truth.

What is the Nature of the Bible? (410B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Brother Camping. I'm a beginner in Christ, and I do not want to be divisive. But I have a problem. The Bible, as I understand it, is a collection of writings. This King James Version has been in existence for a great number of years. Within the last about 100 or 150 years, perhaps less, there has come a new teaching which propounds its own version of certain basic fundamentals as contained in the King James Version. If it is, as Timothy says, approved for teaching, how is it that they do not accept, for example, the Trinity, or that they believe that the soul is nothing more than life force? It's got me confused.

HC: You see, we have to make a fundamental decision. Your question really is, what is the nature of the Bible? Or what is the Holy Scripture?

The Bible does not contain a collection of writings which are divinely inspired. The Bible is the divine Word. The Bible from cover to cover is the divine Word. It alone and in its entirety is the divine Word of God. Any Bible or any gospel which purports to be the true Gospel, but which denies that parts of the Bible are the Bible, or adds to the Bible with other writings, calling it also the divine Word, by definition is not the Gospel of the Bible, or it's not the Word of God any longer. The Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word.

Now the King James translation that we have is one of the finest translations that has ever been produced. It was produced over 300 years ago. It is not absolutely infallible, however. The original writings, which were chiefly in Hebrew and Greek with some Aramaic, are to the very letter and the very word absolutely infallible. However, the King James translation, as any good translation, is as accurate a translation as can be possible from the most ancient copies of these original autographs, so that we have in the King James Bible, to all intents and purposes, may be understood to be the infallible Word of God.

Do you see this distinction?

CALLER: Yes, I see what you're getting at.

HC: We read the Bible and we don't question, "Is this the Word of God?" We start out with the premises that this is the Word of God. God is speaking to me. Now the question is, am I ready to humble myself? Am I ready to accept what I read by faith? I may not understand a lot of it because the Bible of course is the revelation of the infinite mind of God. There is much that is very deep. It's very difficult to understand. But whether I understand it or not is not the question. The question is whether I receive it. Do I accept it as the Word of God, being ready to be obedient to all that I see there, insofar as I can understand it.

CALLER: I see what you mean. Would Revelation 22:18 apply only to the Book of Revelation, or to the entire Bible?

HC: Let's assume for the moment that Revelation 22:18 & 19 applies only to the Book of Revelation. The question that's being raised is, does this apply only to the Book of Revelation? Let's add a chapter to the Book of Revelation and call that also a part of the divine Word. Now effectively we have added that chapter now to the whole Bible, because the Book of Revelation is an integral, cohesive part of the whole Bible. Anything added to the Book of Revelation is added to the Bible.

By the same token, if you decided, "Well, I don't like Revelation 19 and 20. Let's take that out of the Book of Revelation," then immediately you have taken it out of the Bible, because the Book of Revelation again is an integral cohesive part of the whole Word of God.

So, effectively, whether you want to understand "the words of this book" of Revelation of 22:18 as meaning the

Book of Revelation or being the whole Bible, it really makes no difference. Effectively it becomes the whole Bible.

CALLER: All right. Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

The Veracity of the Bible (529A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I called earlier this week and suggested that we can hypothesize that the creation and the inspiration of the Bible were the work of the devil.

HC: Now let me ask you this question, I remember your call. Where does this idea come from, this hypothesis that you're speaking of, that Satan is the creator?

CALLER: Well, I think it's a natural question.

HC: I know, but it's important where it came from. In other words, it came out of your mind. It's a hypothesis that came out of your mind. And therefore it has no more authority than your mind. It is no more valid than your mind. And of course your mind is circumscribed by the way God created you. Your mind and my mind are exceedingly limited. We know very very little about this earth. That we know for sure. We don't have to hypothesize about that. We know very very little about this earth and about the universe. And certainly we know a lot less about who would have created this earth and this universe.

And therefore, any hypothesis that comes out of our mind immediately is rather worthless. Now that's the reason that it's so marvelous that we have the Bible, because the Bible didn't come out of my mind. The Bible exists.

CALLER: The act of accepting the Bible is an act of the mind.

HC: Yes, but the Bible however was not written by my mind. The Bible here stands and claims to be the Word of God, and it has stood the test of 2000 years. When I begin to examine the Bible and see its marvelous cohesiveness, when I see the fact that it has prophesied certain things would come to pass, and they did indeed come to pass, when you read, for example, a passage like Isaiah 53, which definitely was penned hundreds of years before it happened, and then you study the Gospels and see exactly what happened in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, you realize how marvelously accurate that prophecy was. You begin to sense that this is something else than the work of man. It is the work of God.

And again and again in the Bible you will find prophecies that were written hundreds of years before they took place, and later on in time they were fulfilled in exact agreement with the prophecy.

CALLER: Now you have said three important words here. You've said that when you examine the Bible, you said that when you study the Gospels, you said then when you sense these things to be true, aren't these processes of the mind?

HC: No. You see, when we look at one and one and it adds up to two, that is a fact. We can agree on that. There's no problem. There's no hypothesis there. That's a fact. And when we open the scriptures and we read one word following another, these are words that are facts that are before us, that can be examined, as any authority can be examined.

CALLER: But this is the problem. How do we know that these things in the Bible are facts and not illusions?

HC: Well, first of all because they have been proven again and again to be historically accurate. And any time the Bible has been attacked, let's put it in another way. Anything that the Bible has spoken of in history has never been

disproved. It always is a true fact of history. When you, for example, read your history book, and this is always very interesting to me. People, for example, will read a history book and they'll say that Columbus discovered America in 1492, because they read it in a history book. Now they accept that without any question. Columbus discovered America in 1492. Nobody questions whether that's an illusion or whatever. They just assume that is correct, even though the history book doesn't hold a candle to the Bible.

But when they read the Bible and God gives a fact of history there, then they begin to question. Well, can we trust the Bible? Is the Bible this or is the Bible that? But the fact is that the Bible is infinitely more accurate from every aspect than any history book is.

CALLER: But this isn't universally accepted. And people will read the Bible critically and say that there is some doubt for this, that this isn't necessarily truth.

HC: Yes, they can do that. But you see, we have to start somewhere. And I don't trust my mind at all. I do have a document in front of me called the Bible, and wherever I have been able to test it, it has always been proven correct. And it is the only book that's available in the whole wide world that has a definite straightforward presentation of the very beginning, the only book that really describes who God is and tells us why we have the conditions in the world today. And from whatever vantage point I test it, it always comes out and makes sense. And again it has made many prophecies that have literally been fulfilled.

For example, in Luke 21:20, to give you an illustration, it says there, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its desolation has come nigh." Now that's an interesting statement. The context, when you read it very carefully, cannot be talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, if you read the context carefully. We do know from history that Jerusalem was destroyed then, but here we see today that Jerusalem again is surrounded by armies who wish to destroy it. And this was predicted 1900 years ago. This can only be because it is the Word of God.

CALLER: People such as Erasmus and DaVinci have also made prophecies that have come true. Prophecies are the work of men, not necessarily God.

HC: No. These men never made prophecies like the Bible has done. They have never made those kinds of prophecies, not at all, where every one has come to pass. This just has not happened. And no one else has ever written like the Bible. There is not another book in the world that is written like the Bible, that has as many human authors as it has and yet has a cohesiveness that is just exquisite, being written over a period of 1500 years or longer, and yet it is just totally cohesive within itself. There is no book like it. Once you learn to respect the Bible, honor the Bible as the Word of God and really begin to study and surrender your will to it and let it speak to you, then you begin to see the power of the Bible as compared with any human book, any other book that you want to name in the world. There is no book in the world that even can hold a candle to the Bible.

Now my mind I don't trust for a moment. But when I read the Bible, I recognize, this has to be something very very special, and I'm willing to hang my life on it. There's nothing else that even begins to approach the Bible.

Now you can decide, well, Okay. I'm an agnostic. I don't trust the Bible. I don't know whether there is a God, or whatever. And you can try to find some other authority. You may do that. But I don't know where you're going to look. I have no idea where you're going to look.

You try to find another authority that even begins to approach the authority of the Bible. And I challenge you to find some other authority. You go into the largest library in the country, and they'll have hundreds of thousands of volumes. You pour through those, and you find one book there that has the authority of the Bible. And you won't find it. There is none that exists.

CALLER: We know, for example, from the Book of Job that God has given Satan dominion over the earth. Now in the case of Job, God, who had previously protected Job, no longer protects him and Satan has complete power over Job. Suppose that God has given Satan power over men such that it was Satan who has inspired the Bible.

HC: No. You see, your hypothesis is all mixed up. You're starting with the Bible and using that as your authority, and then you're saying that the Bible is written by Satan. That's circular reasoning. That'll take you nowhere. You are correct of course. You are correct that God has said certain things about Satan in the Book of Job. But God says certain things in the same Bible about Himself. And He's said a lot more about Satan. And so your hypothesis, if you're going to start with the Bible, disappears immediately, because then you have to continue with the Bible.

CALLER: Okay. I'm saying that you believe that Satan has dominion over the earth.

HC: Only as God allows him to. God didn't allow Satan to do anything he wanted to Job. He limited him. He said you can do anything you want but you can't take his life. And the same is true. Satan has authority over the earth to some degree. But he doesn't have complete authority. God is still the King of kings and Lord of lords. And as a matter of fact, Satan is a defeated foe. He is destined for destruction because he has been vanquished at the cross. And Satan's limitations are very severe, even though God does allow him certain freedoms.

CALLER: And you believe this as an act of faith.

HC: Oh, absolutely. I believe the Bible is the Word of God. It is the Word of God. And it gives me answers to the meaning of life, it gives me answers as to where things came from and where things are going. It is the only book that begins to look like absolute truth, because it is absolute truth.

CALLER: Would you admit the possibility that it is because your own psychology needs answers, needs to know why, needs to have a purpose, that you believe the Bible, that it's a psychological phenomenon that leads you to have faith?

HC: Oh, no, it's not a psychological phenomenon. It's a very definite spiritual phenomenon that God opens my spiritual eyes and ears so that I have the faith that the Bible is the Word of God. This didn't come of myself, because only God would be able to do that. Of myself I would not want to come to God. Of myself I would be in rebellion against Him. It is only because of what God has done that I have this faith. And it's this faith that begins to really give essential answers to life, essential answers to the nature of life and the kind of life that ought to be, and so on.

Now you've got to find yourself an authority. Let's get right back to that question. You've got to find an authority to live under. And either you're going to find a book somewhere that is your authority, and you can lay that alongside the Bible and check it to see if it has anything like the Bible's authority, or you've got to check your own mind and let it be the authority. Then you know how limited you really are in your authority. But you have to have an authority. And frankly, I don't trust my mind, I don't trust any other book.

But I do trust the Bible. And I'll lay the Bible alongside any book in the world. There's no book that even begins to sound like the Bible.

But thank you so much for calling. Good night.

Challenge to Mr. Camping's Teaching Style (555A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi. I wanted to ask you about your feelings about the Tribulation, and that we would be here and we would live through the Tribulation, and everything. And I was wondering if you were familiar with Renald Showers' feelings on that. He talks about how Christ's second coming is typified by a Jewish wedding ceremony. And I was wondering what your feelings are about this.

HC: I'm unfamiliar with that idea, and I'm unfamiliar with that book. So I'm not able to speak to that.

CALLER: Okay. Well, when the Jewish man wants to get married and he finds the girl that he is going to marry, he goes to the father, and they bargain for the daughter and he pays a price for her. And then the daughter and the groom drink a glass of wine together, and this kind of makes the marriage. They are really married then, but then he goes away for the year, and he prepares the house for his bride. And she doesn't know when he's coming, but it will be like in a year's time. And then when he does come, it's usually at night, and he brings his groomsmen. And they have lit torches, and they go down the street. And what happens is that the people in the procession come out and chant, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." And so this goes on down the street, until the bride hears this. And then she knows that he is coming.

And then when he gets there, he waits for her to come out. And then she comes out of the house and she goes back with him to his home, where all the guests are, the home that he has prepared for them. And then they go into the bridal chamber, and they consummate the marriage. And then the groom tells the guests that the marriage is completed now. And then she stays in there for seven days, and then he brings her out on the seventh day, and he shows everybody who his bride is. And this is a typology of Christ's second coming. When the bridegroom comes to get his bride, he takes the bride back with him, and she's in there for seven days, in the bridal chamber. And it's just like Christ's second coming. When He does come He will take His bride up for the seven years. And then at the end, when He comes, He will reveal His bride to all of the people.

I know that you feel that we're going to be here, and I was wondering what are your thoughts on this?

HC: I would say, first of all, that that whole idea, while it's very romantic and it seems to fit a program that some people think the Bible teaches, it has no Biblical validation. There is no program like that outlined in the Bible. It is true that God uses the picture of the bridegroom coming in connection with the ten virgins in Matthew 25. But in that parable He doesn't mention the bride. He just mentions the ten virgins. And you can't go beyond that parable and include all these other elements that are not there.

That whole outline does not agree with the Bible. It just does not agree with the Bible.

CALLER: Well, this man has been through a lot of schooling and has studied his Bible pretty thoroughly, and his ideas are that the Bible has types and shadows, that the Old Testament is a type and a shadow of the Lord.

HC: Yes, but you see, when the Bible has types and shadows, we have to

follow the Bible. Now if there were Jewish customs, let's say, that are not named in the Bible, we cannot look at those customs and say that those were types and shadows of something in the Bible. That is unwarranted. If we read the Bible and we find a type or a shadow, because it says that they had to sacrifice a lamb, or whatever it might have been — that they couldn't eat the unclean animals, or whatever the rule may have been — that is a Biblically warranted type or shadow.

But if we read the secular history and discover that there were certain customs that the Jewish people had, many people, for example, try to outline in great detail exactly the very steps that were in a typical Jewish feast. And they say all of this was a type or a shadow. Well, if it's not in the Bible, it's not a type or a shadow. It was just a custom that was developed. And you could romanticize this, and you can enlarge on this, and try to make it a type or a shadow. But you have no Biblical warrant for it. You have to stick with the Bible.

CALLER: What about Jacob and his bride? Not Rachel, but her sister . . .

HC: Leah.

CALLER: Yes, Leah. Now that was the same thing. He was in there for seven days.

HC: No, it doesn't say anywhere that he was with her for seven days.

CALLER: That they went into the bridal chamber?

HC: I don't think so. I think that they were married, and then in the morning he discovered that he had been deceived, that he had been married to Leah instead of Rachel. There's no suggestion there of seven days. I'm not aware of that in the Bible anywhere, where it talks about seven days.

CALLER: Okay. I'll have to look it up because I can't recall right offhand. But it seemed to me that that's what it had said. I'll look that one up and see what I can find. But I just can't help but feel that what Renald Showers said about it is right. He did put a pamphlet out on it, and it's just really interesting. I know a lot of people don't feel that we will be here during the Tribulation, and I just can't, you know, it's like the Jehovah's Witnesses. They come to your door, and they can use all kinds of scripture and say, "Well, this says this and this says that," yet that's their own feelings on it.

The one thing that bothers me, when you're telling people this, is that you say, "there's nowhere in the Bible." Now this really makes people feel like, "I'm all wrong and he's all right." I think if you said it at all, you should say, "Well, this is how I feel about it, and this is what I find in the Bible," because it seems like there's nowhere . . .

HC: You see, the problem is, I hear what you're saying, and I appreciate your comment very much. But the problem is this. If we're going to teach the Bible, and least this is my personal feeling about teaching the Bible, the first thing I have to do is to make sure that I've done my homework. And if I, for example, am going to talk about the Tribulation (or anything else), if I'm going to speak emphatically about it, I better sit down and spend the hours or the days or the months and really research the scriptures concerning it, everything I possibly can find that might be related to it. Otherwise I'd better not say, "Thus saith the Lord."

And so when I hear a person say something that is related to a subject that I've really worked on very very hard, and I'm acquainted with what the verses are in the Bible that relate to this, and they make a statement, and I know that is not in the Bible, that it just is not in the Bible, then I would be lying if I said, "Well, this is just my personal feeling," because it's not my personal feeling. I

know what the Bible says about that particular question.

Now I'm not infallible, of course. Supposing I said, "Well, that is not in the Bible," and suppose that someone a week later or a month later came up with a verse and said, "Wait a minute. What about this verse?" Then I would be the first and the happiest person in the world to acknowledge that I was mistaken. There is a verse that I did overlook. And I have to change my attitude toward that particular question. And there have been times when I have done this.

But on a lot of these things, for example, you hear someone speaking on the return of Christ, and he talks about Russia, that it's going to overwhelm Israel. And I say, well, Russia is not in the Bible. It just is not in the Bible. Now the word Rosh is. It's found over 500 times in the Bible, the word Rosh. But it always is translated top or head or chief. And so when someone comes along with Ezekiel 38 or Ezekiel 39, where the word Rosh is found, and says this is Russia, then I say, wait a minute. If you're going to do that, then what about the other 500 places where the word Rosh is found? How about putting Russia over there, too? That's not exegeting the Bible when you find a word that is similar to something you want to teach, and now you simply say that in this case it means something that I think it ought to say. That's not dealing fairly with the Word of God.

CALLER: There's a lot of people, a lot of scholars, who, you said one night that you had no schooling. And you don't have to have schooling. I don't think you do, either. But somebody I was speaking to the other night said that there was a person who flatly came out and said one night, "Well, Mr. Camping is wrong." He's studied Greek, and he knows what's he's talking about. Now I'm not saying you don't, but he's trained. He knows. If you can get right down to the Greek, you've gotten down to the brass tacks.

HC: Now let me say this. First of all, we are impressed by scholarship. This is the way we are schooled in our land. Someone who has a doctor's degree and someone who has a lot of other degrees, we are impressed by this. And if he is a theological professor, so much the better. We are deeply impressed by this.

However, the bare fact is this, that a great amount of scholarship today in church circles (and in the secular world it's totally true) is by people reading other people's books. And these books are read, and they're digested, and then they're passed on, and the professor passes it on to the students, the student goes into his pastorate and eventually he becomes a professor, and then it's passed on this way. And I don't put down this kind of knowledge, or this kind of scholarship. That's fine. That's wonderful that they have all of this scholarship. But the wonderful thing is that God has given us His Word. God has given us the Bible. And He's given us eyes to read, and He's given us minds to think. And if we're a child of God, then also the Holy Spirit will illuminate our minds, if we will do our homework. There's no shortcut.

And so we can start reading the Bible, and reading and reading and reading, and reading, and comparing scripture with scripture. Now it is true that if you are a Greek scholar, there may be that occasionally a word or a verse will be a little bit more meaningful because you know the original Greek. But wonderfully, our translations are accurate enough so that in 95 or 98% of all doctrine, or even 99% of all doctrine, you're going to find that your doctrines are going to be thoroughly trustworthy just from the English Bible. Once in awhile it is true that a Greek word might change your mind.

Now for example, I was doing a study on I Corinthians 9 in Family Bible Study. I came to the last verse, where Paul says,

"I buffet my body lest after saving others I become a castaway." Now just using the English Bible I had always concluded that this simply meant that he was very careful that he did not trip himself up, fall into some sin that would make him lose his right to be an apostle if he fell into the sin of adultery, or whatever. Many ministers have done this.

But in making a very careful study for Family Bible Study, I looked at that word in the Concordance to see how the Greek was used throughout the Bible, and I became convinced that that word had to be understood like becoming someone who was rejected or someone who was a reprobate, that this is the way it ordinarily is used in the Bible, and that verse has to be understood with that in view.

And so in that case the Greek word did make a difference. But wonderfully, in 98% of all cases in the Bible, the English Bible is adequate. But the problem is that people don't spend enough time in the Bible. Like the book that you started out with, now that may be very interesting, talking about Jewish customs, and so on, and how that parallels certain things in the Bible. But that isn't the Bible.

CALLER: No, but you've written books, too. Let's face it. I don't know if you've, had any Greek or anything, have you?

HC: Well, only as I've worked in the scriptures. In other words, I use an Interlinear Greek/English translation, I use the Concordance and look up how God uses words, Greek words. I'm not a Greek scholar by any means. But I don't think you have to be a Greek scholar in order to get most of what you need in the Bible. The biggest problem is spending enough time with what we have.

CALLER: I'm sure that this man has. I'm sure he spends a lot of his time. In fact, that's how he makes his living.

HC: I may be wrong in places, certainly I may be. But let's take a question like the Tribulation. Now you don't have to be a Greek scholar at all, not at all, to find the Biblical truth concerning the Tribulation and the timing of the Rapture. The Bible has just oodles of things to say about it, very plain things to say about it. All you have to do is take time enough to read the Bible and to put all these things out, and put aside all the speculations that are written about in books. That's the hardest pill to swallow.

CALLER: Then you'll tell people to write in for your pamphlets, telling your view. This is the thing.

HC: You see, the reason I do this is this. You've heard me say many times, "Don't trust me. Trust the Bible. Read the Bible." Now when I write a pamphlet, I do it for two reasons. I do it first of all because questions are raised on a doctrine, and I could spend a half hour answering that question. The next week the same question or a similar question is asked, and I could spend a half hour answering again. By simply saying, "Look. Here are two or three of the proof texts of the Bible, but if you're interested in this, write in, and I've prepared a little pamphlet on this so that you can study at your leisure," they can examine it with a view toward checking it out. Read the verses, check them out. Don't trust me. Trust the Bible.

And it's only a help. I'm not particularly anxious about books, and all of this. I wish people would read the Bible. But I do try, when I do write a pamphlet, to just stick with the Bible. What does the Bible say? Now others try to do this, too. And I wish that whatever people read, they would check out. I've read many books in which a certain idea is developed, and they'll offer a verse, and then they'll, well, let me just think of one as an illustration. In Romans 11:25, I'll read a book that is exegeting that verse. And in that verse God declares that a hardness will remain upon Israel until

the fullness of the Gentiles have come in, and "thus all Israel will be saved."

Well now, I've read these books and they'll say, "You see? Israel is in unbelief right now, but when the end of the Gentile period has come, then all Israel will be saved." And then they go on to develop this, that then all Israel will be saved. Well, they very neatly slip in this word then, which is not in the verse. That verse is not teaching then at all, it's thus or in this fashion all Israel will be saved. Well, you can read that book and never catch that. And that's why I ask people to read the Bible. Keep sticking with the Bible. Make sure you're reading the Bible very carefully.

CALLER: Okay. Just one other thing. You say that there's nowhere in the Bible that says that we won't be here during the Tribulation, but why are there other people like pastors and trained people who disagree? Now if there is nowhere in the Bible that says we will be gone, why are there so many people that teach this?

HC: Well, that's an interesting question, and I've puzzled over that also. How can a doctrine which is so clearly explicated in the Bible as the fact that the Rapture is the last day, the end of time, and there are so many, many proof texts of this, so very clearly put in there, how is it possible that such a large body of Christians, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, theologians and preachers, and so on, hold to the idea that the church will be caught up ahead of this? That's a mystery to me.

There is of course a very practical reason for it. One of the reasons is that one of the Bibles that have been pushed in the last generation or so is a Bible that has footnotes, and it is a Bible that was highly recommended by certain of the theological schools. And in the footnotes of this Bible the idea was fostered that the church would be raptured ahead of the Tribulation. Now the unfortunate thing is that those who use this Bible and this particular Bible is one that has as its text the King James Version, and it's a perfectly sound Bible. But the footnotes explain the text. And of course the footnotes are just the idea of a person. They may be true, or they may not be true. But many preachers and many theological professors insist that this is the Bible to buy, this is the one to buy, if you buy a Bible.

All right. Now what happens is that someone reads that Bible, and they come to a difficult passage, and so their eye goes down to the bottom of the page to read the footnote. And the footnote seems to make sense, it's written well and it seems to explain the verse. So now they think they understand this verse, and they go on in their reading.

Well then, a month later, if someone asks them, or six months later, a question about this matter, they say, "Well, I know I read it in the Bible. I know I read it in the Bible." Well, they did. They read it on the page of that Bible, but they didn't read it in the text. But their minds no longer can remember where they read it. They're just convinced they read it in the Bible. And I think in a very mechanical or practical way that has occasioned a tremendous amount of ideas that were not Biblical, but people are convinced that they did read it in the Bible.

Now the other thing is again a very mundane, practical kind of a thing. Where do seminary professors come from? Well, they started out as a student in a seminary. And when they went to seminary, they got their teaching from seminary professors, and they kept all those notes - their systematic theology, and so on. And then they went into a pastorate probably for a while, and they didn't really do any serious study because they were busy with the problems of the pastorate, and administration, and preaching two sermons every Sunday, and so on, and

eventually they began to be a seminary professor. Well, again, they've learned through seminary and through their pastorate what they have learned, and now this is what they teach. So whatever they have learned they continue to hand down. And very few people are doing any new serious research of the scriptures, really starting from the beginning again, let's examine the scriptures and see where are.

Now unfortunately, and of course this is the path of least resistance. All their fellow pastors believe this, they have many learned people in their denomination that believe this, and it's accepted. And so this is the way then that they preach.

Now I personally, while I have been in a denomination all my life, don't trust anything of anybody. I want to read it in the Bible. Even if I hear someone whom I highly regard as a teacher, and there are those whom I highly regard as teachers, if they tell me something that is a new idea to me, I don't trust that idea. I wait until I can be alone and make an independent search of the scriptures, to make sure that what I've been told is accurate, because I want to see it for myself in the Bible. And this is the kind of thing I'm trying to get our listeners to do. Sometimes the only way they'll do it is when they become angry with me. They don't like what I say. And then in their desperation, in their anger, they say, "Well, I'll go to the Bible and prove he's wrong anyway." And that delights me no end, because at least they're in the Bible.

Now you'll notice that when you hear the Open Forum program, I never never recommend a book. I never recommend John Calvin or Martin Luther or Harry Ironside or "so and so said this" or "so and so said that," because the only thing I recommend is the Bible. Now I have exactly the same Bible that anyone else has. It's a King James Bible. And so I'm reading exactly the same Bible that anyone else reads. And so this is our authority. This is what we have to work with.

CALLER: There's so many people divided. The only thing I can say is, we'll find out when it happens.

HC: Well no, we don't have to wait until it happens. We can read the Bible. This is what we have to do. We have to read the Bible. Involuntarily the typical Christian, when a question arises, let's say, concerning the coming of Christ, will go to a Christian bookstore to buy a book on the return of Christ. They want to find out what this man said, or that man said, or some other man. And I say why don't you read the Bible? Let the Bible tell you. Read it very carefully.

And when your pastor preaches a sermon on any question, whether it's on the doctrines of grace or on the return of Christ, don't be afraid to ask questions, "What about this verse or that verse?" And I think every pastor ought to be quizzed by the congregation, if they have been reading and they wonder about this or that, because this keeps the pastor on his toes, makes sure he's facing all of the scriptures. And it also is an encouragement to the church members to get deeper into the Word of God.

CALLER: You know, the people that do write books, good sound Christians that have written books, most always put their references in. They'll never say, "Well, I believe this, and I'm going to put in my own ideas," and not back it up with scripture. A lot of times they do. They have equally as much scripture to prove a point.

HC: Now let me speak to that just a moment. You say, "equally as much scripture." I don't know if you've ever read some of these books and really looked at the scriptures offered, and just really examined them. For example, I know of a very large book on the return of Christ. It's a classic on the return of Christ. And nowhere in it is there any

reference made to Romans 4, which has everything to do with Israel, and so on. How can that be? But look, we've run out of time. I'm sorry. But I would encourage you to just read the Bible.

Coping with Conflicting Interpretations (593A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Mr. Camping. I have a question that I wonder if you could comment on, please. It's kind of a predicament, actually. I sincerely wish to get into the Bible and understand the scripture both for my own use and also to witness to others. So I began reading on my own, and I didn't understand everything I read. And others advised me to look into other sources, like commentaries, to explain different passages. And I also began reading literature by people who say they are Bible experts. I mean they read it and studied it, and so forth. And I can't help but keep running into people who have conflicting interpretations on the same passages. And often they even use the same passages to espouse entirely different positions. And I really am getting to a point where I don't know how to proceed. I listen to you quite often, but how can I be sure that what you are saying, and your knowledge, is accurate, as opposed to what somebody else tells me that is quite different? I would like some guidance from you on how to proceed.

HC: I think that's a very good, practical question. We listen to various teachers and pastors, and so on, and we wonder, who is right? One thing that I want to say about what I teach is, don't trust me. Under no circumstance trust me. You are to trust the Bible. Now any teacher who is worth his salt, who is really trying to bring the Word of God, will try to back up what he is teaching with scripture. And he will try to do his homework in the scripture and show where he derives his teachings or his doctrines.

Now what you want to do is check out those verses, and see if they really say what the teacher claims that they say. And read those verses very, very carefully. Now a lot of times you'll read a commentary, and the writer will go along and be developing a particular interpretation, and then he will offer some proof texts. He won't quote them in what he is writing, but he will simply mention that you should look at those proof texts. Now it's very important that you look up those proof texts that he is offering, because a lot of times, and I want to say this very kindly, a lot of times we get the impression that a writer knows a lot about the Bible and is very very faithful to the Word of God because he is offering a lot of scriptural references. He'll make a point, and then he'll say, "Even as we read in Jeremiah 6:19 and Deuteronomy 28:13," and maybe he'll give a series of four or five verses. And then he'll go on to the next point. And if we're unwary, we think, "My, he has a lot of scripture to underscore what he is teaching. He must be right."

But what you have to do is take time to check out those verses. Look up those verses that he has offered as proof texts, and see if they really speak to the question. Now you might find one of two things. You might find that indeed they do speak to the question. And reading them very carefully, you will find that they indeed do reinforce the argument he is offering. And then you begin to have confidence in that particular doctrine he is offering. But, on the other hand, you may read those verses, and you'll say, "Now why did he offer this as a proof text? I don't see any relationship to the point he is making." And then you look up the next one, and you'll hardly see any relationship. And then you realize, "Now just a minute. Just because you listed a

lot of scriptures here, that doesn't mean you've developed your point."

And this is very necessary to do. In other words, just because a teacher comes claiming to have truth, and comes claiming to be able to say, "Thus saith the Lord," don't trust him. Check him out. Check me out when I offer scriptures. Read those verses.

Now a second thing that you have to do is to really read those verses carefully. Now a classic case of this is Romans 11:25 & 26. And I think these two verses are as good an example as anything I can find in the Bible. Now these two verses are used as one of the most dominant proofs of the fact that God still has a program for national Israel, that God intends to save national Israel, and God has a great and glorious future for them. These two verses, Romans 11:25 & 26, are the foundational verses that are used very very frequently by those that hold to that kind of a doctrine.

And yet, if you read them very carefully, very carefully, word by word, and see exactly what they say, you find that they actually are saying exactly the opposite. They are not saying that Israel has a glorious future as a nation, but that they will continue in their blindness, except for a remnant chosen by grace, and this blindness will continue right up until the end of time, that is, until the last Gentile has been saved. And it is in this fashion that all Israel will be saved. Now that is precisely the only thing those verses can be teaching. And yet all kinds of theologians . . . and I don't understand why they do this, I think it's just carelessness. I don't think it's done with malice aforethought. I don't think that it's done because they're trying to corrupt the scriptures. I think it's just carelessness. Someone they trust has used these two verses as a proof text for that particular doctrine, and then they have bought that without really checking it carefully. So they in turn use it as a proof text. But when you read these verses carefully, they say exactly the opposite of what they are claimed to be teaching.

And all I can say is that whoever is teaching, whether it's me or anybody else, check out the verses. Read them very carefully, and see if that is what they are saying.

CALLER: So what you're saying then is that it's okay to listen to experts that seem like they're talking from opposite sides of the fence, and then make the final judgment yourself, leaving it up to individual interpretation?

HC: Ultimately you're not leaving it up to individual interpretation. You're leaving it up to Bible interpretation, because if you listen to so called experts, those who claim to be teachers, those who claim to have a knowledge of the question, you will find that some of them are more faithful to the Bible than others. Some are simply espousing a view without really checking it out in the Bible very carefully. And you will discover this when you look up the proof texts they offer. And then you will know that they're not on very solid ground. Their interpretation is probably not very Biblical.

On the other hand, someone else might offer verses, and you check them out and find that indeed they are teaching what he is saying. And then you will begin to sense that at least on that doctrine he is more true to the Bible, and his interpretation is more Biblical than the other. And this is the way you'll learn from scripture.

CALLER: That's true. If you look up something that is obviously off the wall and has nothing to do with it, that would be an obvious error. But say, for example, there is a group that if you lead the literature on what they espouse, they are firm one-hundred percent Bible believers, even to the point where if they start hearing something that doesn't sound scriptural, they back away from it

and they always go back to the Bible. One of their beliefs is that they don't believe that Jesus was God. And they specifically put in their literature that a lot of people quote specific passages to prove that Jesus was God. And they say, "Okay, let's look at these." They put it down. One, for example, is "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God," and so on. And then later on it says, "And the Word became flesh," and it was Jesus. Well, they go back to the Greek and they say if you look at the Greek for word, it's logos and it doesn't mean a person. It means an idea. And they say that this idea was with God for all eternity. And this was the plan. And when Jesus was incarnated on earth, it was the first time He ever was incarnated, and He didn't exist all this time.

So in this particular case, for example, they actually spell it out, saying, "Here is the scripture passage."

HC: All right. Now let's take that as an example. That's a good example. You read that, and it sounds plausible. Remember, those who are writing, from whatever point of view, believe in what they are writing and they are convinced that what they are writing is true.

Now first of all, when they say that the word logos is an idea, you have to check the rest of the Bible and see if that is really so. See how the word *logos* is used. And you'll find that the word logos is not just an idea. It is the Word. It is a word. And a word, while it may express an idea, a word has substance. The Bible is the Word of God, but it has substance. It is the revelation of the will of God. And so right away you begin to sense, "Well, these people are begging the question. In their desire to prove their point, they are pushing on the use of that word far beyond where it ought to be."

Secondly, look at opposing viewpoints, where people say, "But wait a minute. Christ is God." And check their arguments, as they point to such passages as Hebrews 1, where the Bible declares, "Of the Son He said, 'Thy throne, oh God, is forever and ever.' Or where His stepfather Joseph was told by the angel, 'His name is Emmanuel, which means God With Us.' Or as you look into the nature of salvation, that it is God Himself who has to pay for our sins. Otherwise we couldn't have a sin-bearer. And begin to view it from the vantage point of everything else the Bible has to say.

Now you will find, when you read their pamphlet, now I haven't read it, but based upon the kind of doctrine they're offering, they will attack a few verses from the Bible that they feel they can refute in some way. You will find that their argumentation is weak. But they will not be ready to face everything the Bible has to offer. Nor will they get into the question, "Then how can we have a Savior if Jesus Christ is not God?" If Jesus Christ is not God, if He was simply a god, a superman, if you will, then we have no way for having remission of our sins, because who is there to become the sin-bearer of all who have ever placed their trust in Christ? If Christ is not God, then we have no Savior, we have no salvation. I feel terribly sorry for those people who believe that Christ is not God, because they are denying the fact that there is a Savior. They have no Savior for their sins.

Now it takes time. This takes a lot of homework. It takes research. One of the best books that you can buy is a concordance, a Young's Concordance. And a Christian who is serious about wanting to know more truth from the Bible ought to buy a Young's Concordance, and get his feet wet making word studies, because then you have all the verses of the Bible at your fingertips that might relate to a particular word or a particular subject.

CALLER: I believe it's true that the Bible is the Word of God and we should be able to take everything from it. It doesn't seem like it would be such a difficult task to extract this necessary information that's such a requirement to salvation.

HC: Now that's a good observation. Why does it have to be such a difficult task? Why can't it be a lot easier? Well, the reason is that God wrote the Bible so it would be a difficult task. We read in Mark 4:11, "Unto you is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven them." In other words, God wrote the Bible in such a way that truth would be hard to find. Unless you come to the Bible with a child-like trust in it that it is the Word of God and with a view to being obedient to it, you're going to end up finding all kinds of contradictions and false doctrines in the Bible.

And that's exactly what a lot of people end up finding. But if we search the scriptures, and patiently compare spiritual things with spiritual things, which is what the Bible commands us to do, and we want to be obedient to what we find there and are ready to throw out any doctrines or practices that prove to be contrary to the Bible, we will discover that the Holy Spirit will lead us into truth. And yet, again, we have to do it very patiently. It will take time.

I get on the air, and a lot of people will ask me a question about some verse in the Bible, and I will give a very quick answer, as if any dumbbell ought to know that... that's not a very nice word, I admit... but like anyone ought to know that, regardless of what their background is. But the fact is, I may have struggled with that verse for years. I may have wondered, "What can God really mean by that verse?" And finally the truth begins to dawn. And I know that I'm on truth because when I find what I believe to be truth I will find that it also is in entire agreement with all kinds of other statements that veer upon it and impinge upon it.

But to arrive at that point took a lot of work, a lot of prayer. "Oh, Lord, where is wisdom?" And that's of course why we have teachers, those who can share what they discover. And then those who listen can check them out, "Yes, that does agree with the scriptures," or "No, on that one you just don't agree with scripture. What about these verses over here that seem to be altogether contrary to what you are saying?" And then you don't have to accept that particular doctrine from that teacher.

CALLER: I see. Now you've often said that ignorance is no excuse for not knowing the Word. So if I look into the Bible and I start believing in one particular interpretation on one point, and it turns out to be wrong, it doesn't seem to me that I would be held accountable for telling other people, for passing on this wrong idea or believing this wrong idea myself.

HC: The question is, what about the matter of accountability, if I don't have a complete knowledge of the scriptures as I'm trying to share the scriptures with others?

First of all, we must not be afraid of sin if we are a child of God. We know that our sins have been covered, and we know that we never measure up. On this side of the grave we never measure up to the perfection of God's holiness. And so we don't really have to be afraid of sin. We know that if we do sin, God has covered that sin.

But because we are a child of God, we don't want to live in sin. We love God, and sin is reprehensible to us. But yet we

know that we see in a glass darkly, and sometimes we have a practice or hold a doctrine that is contrary to the Word of God. Now that's sinful. The idea of ignorance does not excuse us of that sin. If I am driving down the highway, as even our present philosophy of jurisprudence teaches, and I didn't see the sign that said "School - Drive Slowly," or "Drive 15 MPH" because there's a school, and I'm going merrily along at 35 MPH, and then a policeman apprehends me, "Sir, you were going 35 MPH in a 15 MPH Zone," and I say, "But sir, I didn't see the sign, I was ignorant of that altogether," yet I'm still going to get a ticket and I'm going to have to pay the fine. And that is correct. I have been guilty, even though I was unaware at the moment that I was guilty.

Now the same is true if I hold a doctrine that is contrary to the Word of God and I teach it to others. That is sin in my life. And the Bible warns, "Let not many of you be teachers," because teachers will be judged more severely and we want to be sure that we're not blind leaders of the blind. And therefore, before we would dare say, "Thus saith the Lord," and begin to teach, we want to really know what the Bible is saying. Many many times I will say, when someone asks me, "What does this verse mean?"... "I'm sorry, I'd rather not try to answer that because I haven't really studied that verse, and I don't want to speculate at this point." I just don't want to offer something when I haven't done my homework.

Or again, I may be teaching a verse and I realize that I'm not certain of what it teaches, and so I'll say, "I'm not really certain of what this verse teaches. It could be this, or it could be that. At least this may get your thinking started, and go on with that." But on the other hand, if I read a verse and I have studied it, and I've found other scriptures to really support it, and I find that my solution to that verse agrees with everything I know about the plan of salvation as I've studied the Bible concerning this, then I will unhesitatingly say "Thus saith the Lord. This I believe is what this verse is teaching." And I will do it without any embarrassment or without any reservations, because I believe that we can't equivocate if we know where truth is.

But let's make sure, first of all, that we know where truth is. And then let's come through with it very clearly. Now again, it's imperative that we be ready, if we're going to lay our teaching on the line and say, "Thus saith the Lord..." to be ready to defend that position from scripture. If someone would call and say, "Sir, you've been teaching this," or "You've been teaching that, and frankly, I don't know where you get that," I better be ready to say, "I taught that verse this way because the Bible says 'so and so' here, and the Bible says 'so and so' there. And as I compared that verse with these other scriptures, and as I compared it with the whole nature of what the salvation program is, I saw that this was in all likelihood what God had in view, at least as one meaning of that verse."

CALLER: I see. Well, thank you very much for being available to answer these questions, Mr. Camping.

CHAPTER 3 -- BIBLE VERSES EXPLAINED

GENESIS

The Gospel in Genesis 27 (099A)

HC: I would like to talk about something in the Old Testament. Occasionally I speak about the fact that in the Old Testament we find the Gospel. Now the Gospel, of course, is the revelation of God for man, whereby man can know his sinfulness, man can know that God

has made provision for man to be reconciled to God. And this is the thread that runs all through the Bible.

Now today many people have the idea that if we really want to learn about salvation, we've got to go to the New Testament. We've got to read the words of Jesus, and basically, the Old Testament is pretty much just a book of laws. It's a book that writes about the nation of Israel, and it was for them, it was to them. And while we can occasionally find some moral precept in the Old Testament, basically we can't get a whole lot of help from it.

But the Bible indicates that when Jesus taught, He taught in parables. And because He is Infinite God, who has given us the whole Bible, we would therefore expect that in the Old Testament, too, we would have parables, or we would have types of what salvation is.

Now let me go through one chapter in the Old Testament and illustrate this, although I could go through any number of passages in the Old Testament and find the Gospel woven through and through. I want to talk about Genesis 27.

Here we have the dismal account, the dismal account of the fact that Jacob took the blessing from Esau. Now the situation is this. When Jacob and Esau were born, they were born as twins. This, incidentally, was the year 2007 BC, although that's not important to this discussion. That's just an interesting fact that you might note.

And at the time they were born, Rebecca, the mother, was told in Genesis 25:23: "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided. One shall be stronger than the other. The elder shall serve the younger." So she knew that Jacob, who was the younger, who was the second born, would be preeminent. And the language of the elder serving the younger in the Bible is the language of the fact that the younger here, because he would be ruling, would be the one that would receive the first blessing. He would ultimately, in the biblical language, be the one who would be saved.

And so Rebecca knew this. Well, 60 years passed, and Isaac has grown to be an old man of 120. And perhaps he remembered what God had told Noah in Genesis 6, because Isaac was a God-fearing man. In Genesis 6 God had said that the days of man shall be 120 years. Isaac was old. He was 120. He was almost blind. He was not senile. He was not decrepit or crippled, or whatever, because actually he lived another 60 years. We read later on in the Bible that he died at the age of 180. But now he's 120, and perhaps he reasons that his days may be fairly short because of what we read in Genesis 6, and so he resolves to set his house in order. He's going to give the blessing to his sons.

Now for some strange reason, and the Bible doesn't tell us why, Isaac forgot that it was Jacob that was to receive the blessing. Now humanly speaking, we know why he forgot. Isaac loved Esau. Isaac loved Esau as the one who was his chosen son. Esau was a fine man who loved the great outdoors, probably basically a very honest man, a very open man. And Jacob, on the

other hand, we'll learn if we study him at all, was cunning. He was deceitful. He was of a different nature altogether. And so it was not at all surprising that Isaac would want to give the blessing to Esau, who actually was the firstborn and ordinarily should have received the blessing of the firstborn.

But in attempting to give the blessing to Esau as the firstborn, Isaac would have been going contrary to God's desires, in view of what God had told Rebecca when Jacob and Esau were still in her womb.

Well now, Rebecca hears Isaac telling Esau, "Go out and kill some game, and then make some savory food and bring it to me, and then I will give you the blessing." Now Rebecca heard Isaac discuss this with Esau. And because she knew that Jacob was the one to receive the blessing, she decided on a very deceitful plan, to try to circumvent this action of her father Isaac. And she called Jacob.

Now bear in mind that Jacob was 60 years old. He's not a youngster. He's a very mature man. He's very responsible for what he is doing. And so he is as guilty as she. And actually, as we'll see, he is a whole lot more guilty, because he is the one who begins to lie to his father.

And so then we read in verse 18 this terrible language. "Jacob went in to his father and said, 'My father.' And he said, 'Here am I. Who are you, my son?' Jacob said to his father, 'I am Esau, your firstborn.' [That's a big lie, isn't it? He was not Esau, the first born.] 'I have done as you told me.' [Lie! He's lying again.] 'Now sit up and eat of my game, that you may bless me.' But Isaac said to his son, 'How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?' And he answered, 'Because the Lord your God granted me success.'" He was indicating here that God Himself had given him this success. And so he's calling on the Name of God to witness his lie. Terrible, terrible lie.

So we begin to wonder. Why is God putting this awkward, this terrible account in the Bible? And Jacob actually is the one who received the blessing. Jacob did receive the blessing, although Isaac thought he was giving it to Esau. Isaac said, "Let people serve you and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you." That is the blessing, you see.

Now in this we see a beautiful picture of the Gospel. You know, as I'm talking about this, we begin to wonder. Why did God put this particular account in the Bible? Well, when we begin to realize who is the father of lies, then we can begin to get an inkling. Who is the father of lies? In John 7 and John 8, we find that it says there that Satan is the father of lies. And Jacob here is lying. He is lying. He is acting as someone who is unsaved. He is the kind of a person that we are before we are saved. We are slaves of Satan. We don't deserve to be saved.

And now God is using him to illustrate the nature that we have, that we are unsaved when He comes to save us. Jacob did not deserve to be saved. But Jacob had a covering. And that covering was the goatskin. That covering was the figure of Christ. The goatskins with which he was covered is a figure of the covering that we receive by the shed blood of Christ.

You'll recall that the Bible talks about the scapegoat. The sins of the people were put on the scapegoat, and it was driven off into the wilderness. That's a figure of Christ going to hell for our sins. And the other goat, the sins of the people were put upon it, and it was offered up as burnt offering. And so we see in Jacob a picture of you and me before we were saved. We were dead in our sins. We were subject to hell. We were slaves of Satan. We didn't deserve to be saved. Jacob didn't deserve the blessing. He was lying to his father.

And yet he did receive the blessing. He had been chosen by God to receive the blessing. And he did receive the blessing. So we were chosen by God. And God looked down upon us in mercy while we were yet in our sins, and He provided salvation for us.

Now you see the beautiful picture of the Gospel here in the Old Testament. It's the picture of the fact that we are saved while we're still sinners. And we don't

deserve to be saved. We're not worthy in any way.

Who are the "Sons of God" in Genesis 6:2? (232B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. The sixth chapter of Genesis talks about, "The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful, and they took them as wives for themselves." Is the Bible saying that spiritual beings took human form and actually carried on life with human beings, in terms of sexual involvement? And if the Bible isn't saying that, then how else can we interpret the verse?

HC: All right. Your question really is concerning the understanding of Genesis 6:1 & 2, where we read that "The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair, and they took to wife such of them as they chose." Who are these sons of God?

Now let me ask you a question. When God created the heavens and the earth, how did He create everything insofar as that which has life? Don't we read that He created everything "after its kind"?

All right. Now that means that a cow will always bring forth cows, won't it? And horses will always bring forth horses. And fleas will bring forth fleas. And crocodiles will bring forth crocodiles. And cats will bring forth cats.

Now isn't that a basic principle of creation, that cats never marry cows, and horses never marry dogs? Isn't that a basic fundamental of creation?

All right. Now when God created man, He created man in the image of God, and He created man with a body as well as with a soul, as a totally integrated being. Now how did He create angels, according to the Bible? Were they created of the kind as man?

CALLER: They definitely have spirits.

HC: But they do not have a body. Nowhere in the Bible do we read that they are created in the image of God. We read in Hebrews 1, the last verse, where it says, "They are ministering spirits sent forth by God on behalf of those who are to believe."

CALLER: Aren't there passages that indicate that angels have taken on human form.

HC: Indeed there are passages that show that they have taken on human form, as for example when the two angels, with God Himself, spoke to Abraham. But that doesn't mean that they took on a human nature. That doesn't mean for a moment that they became men, like you and I are. They simply took on the appearance of a man. And they were here for a moment, and they stated their message, and then they were gone, because they are angels. They did not take on a human nature.

The only time that a spirit being, a heavenly being, took on a human nature was in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. And He was born of the Virgin Mary in order to take on a human nature. But no angel ever became a man, that is, where he took on a human nature.

Now more than that, what did Jesus say about people when they get to Heaven, in connection with marriage? We will be like the angels, who neither marry nor are given in marriage. In other words, there is no sex with angels. You don't say there are women angels and men angels. They're just angels. They are an entirely different created being, entirely different from man. They neither marry nor are given in marriage.

And so the idea (and I say this kindly, but I'm absolutely flabbergasted) that this is talking about the intermarriage of men and angels is really impossible. The fact is, if we believe that, then we would have to give credence to the evolutionists who believe that everything started out from

one kind. One of the principles of the creationist, as he argues for creation, is that you don't cross kinds. You don't get men out of monkeys. Men were created men, and monkeys were created monkeys.

But if we're going to adopt the principle that men could marry angels, then we can also defend that and say, "Well then apparently there are times when God violates the rules and He crosses across kinds and possibly somehow man did come from monkeys."

CALLER: What then is the proper way of looking at this verse? Why would God say it this way?

HC: Well, you see, first of all, the principle of Bible interpretation is that the Bible is its own interpreter. Now that doesn't mean that you interpret the Old Testament by the Old Testament and the New Testament by the New Testament. The Bible is one cohesive whole. You interpret the Bible by the Bible. You interpret Revelation by Genesis, and you interpret Malachi by Matthew. You examine everything of the whole Bible in deciding what is in view.

Now in Romans 8 God of course lays it out very clearly. In verse 15 He says that those who believe in Christ are sons of God. Now once we establish this, then we immediately see what's happening here.

The sons of God are the born again believers. And we must remember that the believers in the Old Testament were saved exactly as we are. They were born again, just as we are born again. Therefore, legitimately they are sons of God. We read of Noah in the same chapter, that he found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He was saved by grace just as we.

Now do you remember what God warned about in II Corinthians 6, around verse 14? "Don't be unequally yoked with unbelievers." And God is very emphatic. Well now, here in Genesis 6, God gives us an historical outline of what happens when you violate this rule. The believers are called sons of God. The unbelievers are called daughters of men.

Now the reason they're called daughters of men is that the human race as a whole, as a human race, is enslaved to sin and to Satan and is destined for judgment and for hell. That is, most of the human race is this way. In another place in the Bible it says, "We will die like men." That is, we are under the judgment of God. That is normative for the human race because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The sons of God are an anomaly in this world. The fact that God has chosen a body for Himself, or a body for Himself, and has made us His children, His sons, is more than we could ever expect from God. But nevertheless He has done this, because the Bible says so.

And so here we have a situation where the believers, the born again believers of Noah's day looked at the unsaved, and it's very interesting how the language is put. They looked at the unsaved, and "saw that they were exceedingly fair," which is exactly the way mixed marriages are contracted today. The man looks at the young lady, or if may even be an old man looking at an old lady, and sees what a charming person she is. He sees what a good upbringing she's had, what fine family she comes from. Oh yes, she's not born again, but my, what a delightful person she is. It's so wonderful to be in her company, and so on.

And so he begins dating her. And dating is, of course, the kind of a situation where it's very easy to fall in love. And love is very blind. And so finally you fall in love. And now you begin to rationalize, "Well, I'll marry her, and then she'll get saved - Somehow God will save her - I'll really show her the way of the Gospel." or whatever the rationale may be. And so a marriage is put

together, a mixed marriage, absolutely contrary to the Word of God.

Now go back to Genesis 6, and see what's the next sad chapter in this development. Who in the Bible does God want us to put our trust in, our hope and our security? In God alone. But notice in verse 4: "The Nephalim were on the earth in those days." Now who are the Nephalim? Later on, in Numbers 13 it speaks about a race of giants who were called Nephalim. Are they related to these Nephalim of Genesis 6, would you think?

No, they're not at all. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to put you on the spot. At first blush we might think so. But we must remember that between Genesis 6 and Numbers 13 there occurred the Flood, didn't there? And the whole human race was wiped out, except the family of Noah. And so the Nephalim of Numbers 13, which are spoken of as a race of giants, simply took the name Nephalim from these men of renown of pre-Flood days. There could not be any relationship, however, between them. I only throw that in so that in case you're looking up the word Nephalim in the Bible, you won't be thrown off by what you read in Numbers 13.

"The Nephalim were in the earth in those days, and also afterward when the sons of God came into the daughters of men and they bore children to them." Now this is not saying that the Nephalim were a product of these mixed marriages. It is simply stating that the Nephalim were in the earth in those days, at the time that these mixed marriages were being contracted and children were resulting from these mixed marriages.

And then it explains who the Nephalim were. "These were the mighty men that were of old, men of renown." Now the implication is that these people who contracted these mixed marriages had taken their eyes off God and had put their trust in men of renown of that day, the Hercules, the football stars, the baseball players, and so on.

God is simply saying that if you have a mixed marriage, even though you yourself are a child of God, because you have a wife or a husband whom you have fallen in love with and whom you want to please, you're going to have a tremendously difficult time having a household, a family, that is God-directed. And the odds are that you will be drawn away. Your family will be drawn away from the worship of the true God, and you will begin to put your trust more and more in the world.

Now if you yourself are born again, you're not going to lose your salvation. But it'll be the end of the line insofar as salvation is concerned. Your family, in all likelihood, is going to end up being unsaved. Where God has promised, "I will be a God to you and to your children," and if you had married in the Lord, someone who was saved, you could expect your children and your grandchildren to a high degree to love the Lord, rather you're going to find it's the end of the line. And your family, that develops out of this, will not have a trust in Christ or in God. It will be like the world. It will be completely secular.

Now look at verse 5. This is the next step. "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." In other words, it began with the born again believer looking at the daughters of men, seeing that they were exceedingly fair. There's a marriage, there's a shift in motivation and focus of this family's life, there's a development of great wickedness. In other words, the cause of Christ has suffered very greatly. And now, finally, God says, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground."

Now amazingly, the church today is walking in these same shoes. Today,

there are a tremendous number of born again believers who are very careless as to who they are dating, as to who they are falling in love with. And if they marry someone who is unsaved, the probability is that it would be the end of the line. The probability is that the church will suffer very greatly, and the cause of Christ will erode and we'll see an increase in wickedness both outside the church and in the church.

CALLER: That's because the Flood is a type of the final judgment.

HC: Yes. This is really speaking about a situation that is very similar to what we are walking through now. You'll notice in developing this explanation the Bible itself is its own interpreter. You examine scripture against scripture, and let the Bible follow through.

"Cursed be Canaan" in Genesis 9:25 (243B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Could you tell me what happened to Canaan, the son of Ham, when Ham, the youngest son of Noah saw his father naked, and when he sobered up he said, "Cursed be Canaan." Could you tell me what happened to Canaan?

HC: In other words, how was the curse worked out in Canaan's life?

CALLER: Yes.

HC: Actually, the working out of that curse occurred hundreds of years later, actually a couple of thousand years later. The descendants of Canaan dwelt in the land of Canaan, which was later on the land of Palestine. And when God came to Abraham, in Genesis 15, He said, "Your descendants will be oppressed in the land for 400 years [speaking of the fact that Abraham's seed would spend more than 400 years in the land of Egypt]."

And then He said in verse 16 of Genesis 15, "And they shall come back here in the fourth generation. For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." Now the word Amorite is a general term that related to all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. In other words, it is actually a name assigned to the Canaanites, or the descendants of Canaan. At this point God is effectively saying, "God's curse is coming. It's going to be fulfilled, on the descendants of Canaan. But it isn't quite ready yet. The iniquity has not been completed."

But when Israel went out of Egypt, and they entered the land of Canaan, they were told to utterly destroy the inhabitants of the land. You'll recall how they dealt with Jericho, which was really a prototype of the way they were to look upon all the cities there. They destroyed the whole city; the young men, the children, the animals, everything. God's judgment had come upon the land of Canaan. And I believe that this was the final working out of the curse that had already been pronounced by Noah on Canaan.

The children of Israel were told that they were to utterly destroy the inhabitants of the land. We read in Deuteronomy 7:1: "When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you are entering, to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Gergishites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than yourselves, and when the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them. You shall not make marriages with them, giving your daughters to their sons and taking their daughters for your sons." Verse 5: "But thus shall you deal with them. You shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and hew down their ashram and burn down their graven images with fire." This was God's

statement to Israel, as they came in the land of Canaan.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

Why Was Cain's Sacrifice Not Acceptable in Genesis 4:5? (328E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question about Cain and Abel. How come Cain's sacrifice wasn't acceptable to God, and Abel's was?

HC: The question is, When Cain offered a sacrifice of vegetables, or herbs, and Abel offered a sacrifice that was a lamb, why was Abel's sacrifice more acceptable? Or why was it acceptable, whereas Cain's was not?

First of all, it was not because of the nature of the sacrifice. Later on, on Mount Sinai, God gave laws concerning sacrifices, and there were sacrifices of meal offerings, which were acceptable to God. So even though Cain offered a sacrifice of herbs, that in itself was not wrong.

But the problem was what was going on in the hearts of these two men. Cain brought his sacrifice, and you'll notice that Cain's hope was in this earth. You'll notice in Genesis 4:11, God tells Cain, after Cain killed Abel, "And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be on the earth. And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear." Now notice why he says this, in verse 14: "Behold thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth."

You see, he had placed his hope in this earth. His hope was not in God. His hope was in this earth and the things that it would produce. You'll notice later on, after he went to the land of Nod, that he built a city, and his descendants were the first forgers in iron and bronze. He found his security in the things of this earth.

When we examine Abel's life, we find that his descendants didn't build cities. They were shepherds. They were pastors, if you will, because the word shepherd means pastor. They were concerned about more important things than finding their security in this earth.

The problem was that Cain was serving the ground. He did bring a sacrifice, but it was not a sacrifice of commitment to God. It was a sacrifice of going through the motions. Abel, on the other hand, brought the very best of what he ruled over. He was a shepherd. He took the very best of the flock and offered that as a burnt offering to God. And in so doing, of course, he anticipated the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He anticipated the shedding of Christ as the one by whose blood our sins are covered.

CALLER: Okay. Cain offered the herbs and the plants. Could he have offered something better than that?

HC: If he had loved God, even though he offered the herbs and the plants, if he really loved God, God would have accepted that sacrifice. Later on in the Bible God tells the Israelites, "Your sacrifices are an abomination to Me." They went through all the ritual of offering animal sacrifices. They killed the lambs, and so on. But God said, "Your sacrifice is an abomination to Me, because your heart is far from Me."

It's like someone who is going through the motions of going to church and praying, and even teaching Sunday School, or preaching, or whatever. If in our heart we don't love God, if in our heart our will is not surrendered to Christ, then all this activity of going to church and going through the notions of being a Christian is in reality an abomination to God. We are kidding with God. We are playing with God.

If we're going to be acceptable to God, it means that we've got to come to God with a broken and a contrite heart. It means that we've got to come with a surrendered will to Him. We've got to come with the view of obedience to Him.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much for clearing up that question

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

When Jacob Wrestled with God in Genesis 32:24 (336C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. Would you comment on Genesis 32:24?

HC: The question is raised concerning Genesis 32:24. There we read, "And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him, until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh.' And he said, 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me.' And he said unto him, 'What is thy name?' He said, 'Jacob.' And he said, 'Thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Israel. For as a prince hast thou power with God and with man and hast prevailed.'"

CALLER: I'd like to make this comment. As I have been walking with the Lord I've had a lot of... He's worked through a lot of my problems and attitudes. And sometimes it seemed like wrestling to me. So I can understand Jacob's situation. But I've read commentaries, and I'm just not satisfied with what they've said. I'd like to hear your comments.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you.

We do have this account in Genesis 32. I might just briefly give a little bit of background. Jacob was the twin son of Isaac. There were two boys born as twins, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the firstborn, and Jacob immediately thereafter.

When we study the lives of Jacob and Esau, we find that fundamentally Esau was a much more honest and straightforward person than Jacob. Jacob was, to put it in common terminology, kind of a scoundrel. He was a deceiver. At the age of sixty years, he violently deceived his aged, blind father, at the time that he stole the blessing from his brother Esau. It's a sad, sad tale. As a result of this, he fled into the land of Haran, and there he engaged in all kinds of chicanery, and whatever superstitious ideas, in order to gain a better position over his uncle, Laban.

Jacob was a very sinful man. Now God declared, already before Jacob was born, and in the New Testament, in Romans 9, God gives us further insight into the life of Jacob and Esau, and here God declared that before these boys were born, "Jacob I loved and Esau I hated." In other words, God is declaring that before Jacob or Esau were born, He had made a decision which one He was going to save.

Now in studying the life of Jacob and Esau, we find that Jacob absolutely did not deserve to be saved. He was not worthy of salvation in any sense of the word. Of course this is typical of all of us. There's not one human being who is worthy of salvation. But we see this very dramatically in the life of Jacob, as we see the kind of grievous sins that he fell into.

Now he's a hundred years of age. He's not a young man anymore. Actually, when we think through the chronology very carefully, all the evidence points to the fact that he must have been a hundred years of age when he left Haran with his four wives and twelve children, including Dinah.

And he's going back to his own land. And on the way he comes to this River

Jabbok. And there a messenger of God, and from the context we learn that it is God Himself who is wrestling with Jacob, because He says in verse 30 of Genesis 32, "Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

Now this wrestling, I believe, is a real figure of the place where we must be if we're going to be saved. Up until this time Jacob knew the way of salvation. He had been taught by his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac about the covenant God Jehovah. And Abraham and Isaac had very deep insight into the nature of salvation. Jacob had been in the presence of God before. You'll recall that when he fled from Esau, he had this beautiful vision in Bethel, when he saw the messengers, the angels of God, ascending and descending on the ladder.

And so he definitely knew about God and had lots of insight as to the nature of God, and the nature of salvation. But Jacob had never, never thrown himself on the mercies of God, as near as we can tell. Jacob had never really desired to be right with God.

Now when we are on the threshold of becoming saved, one of the factors, or one of the needs that we sense in our life is a desperate need to be right with God. This is developed, of course, because we have come to a fuller knowledge than ever before of the ugly truth that we're sinners, that we're under the wrath of God, and we're heading for hell. Our situation is very desperate.

If you think you can be saved without facing hell, then you really don't know what salvation is. I've talked with people who would love to be identified with the Christian Gospel, would love to know that they are saved. And yet they just don't want to talk about hell. That's too ugly. That is too difficult a thing to think about. But actually, unless we face hell exactly as it is, and look it squarely in the eye, that we're sinners and we're headed for hell, we're not going to really have a sense of urgency, a sense of deep need, to go to Christ as a Savior.

Jacob, in his timetable, had finally come to that point where he realized he needed God. And so God is wrestling with him, and Jacob will not let go. Jacob holds on to God, "You've got to bless me." The only way we can be blessed of God is to have the curse removed - the curse that comes against us because of our sins, the curse that declares that we are subject to hell because of our sins. And the only way we can be blessed of God is to know that Jesus Christ is our Savior. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness."

And so there finally comes that time in our life when we've had it. "I can't sin any longer. I can't face life knowing that I'm destined for hell. I don't want to live this way any longer. Oh Lord, have mercy on me. Oh Lord, save me. Oh Lord, my need is very great." And we come to that point where we continue to agonize before God. We continue to plead with God. We continue to search the scriptures. We continue to pray, until we have that peace come over us, that we know that our sins have been forgiven.

This wrestling with God in the life of an individual might go on over a period of weeks, or months, as that person is struggling with the question, "Am I really saved?" struggling with the question, "Can I know that my sins have been forgiven?" struggling with the question, "Supposing I die tonight. Will I end up in hell for eternity?"

If we really wrestle with God, if we really come to Him sincerely, if we really keep knocking, if we keep asking, if we keep praying, if we keep beseeching God, really meaning business with Him, you can depend upon it that God will answer, and we will receive the blessing. We will be called Israel, because you see, when we are saved we become one of Israel. The true Israel of God are those who

have become born again, who have become a child of God, because we become a prince with God, and we have prevailed because in Christ we have become more than conquerors.

This wrestling of Jacob with God at the River Jabbok is a beautiful picture of the transition from death into life, a beautiful picture of someone becoming saved, as we sense our desperate need to hold onto God, to be right with Him. And I trust that this is the way each of us who are listening to this program can answer to God, that we can know that we are at peace with God.

Purgatory and Locating the Garden of Eden (338B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Mr. Camping, I've got a couple questions I'd like to ask you. Do you know whether or not the Bible says anything about a place like Purgatory?

HC: The question is raised concerning a place like Purgatory. If you mean a place where there is a second chance, where a person goes and his eternal destiny has not yet been resolved, and there is the possibility that he can come out of that and still go to Heaven, absolutely not. There's nothing like that in the Bible.

If you mean by Purgatory a place where unsaved man goes to await the judgment of the last day, yes, the Bible does speak of Hades. It's called a place of silence. And all of the unsaved, whose sins have not been covered by the blood of Christ, go there. There's no way of getting out. There's no possibility of saving a person who is in Hades. He will be resurrected on the last day to stand for judgment, and then will be cast into hell.

CALLER: I see, okay. The other question I wanted to ask you was, do you know whereabouts the Garden of Eden was here on earth? And I'd also like to ask you a question which relates to another caller. You said that at the end of time there would be no children, and there would be no males and females. I don't understand that statement.

HC: All right. Let me answer your second question first. The question is, in Heaven there will not be males or females, nor will there be children. I answered this, first of all, because of what Jesus said. Remember the Jews tried to snare Him, and they said there was this man who was married, and his wife died, or, no. There was this woman who had a husband, and the husband died. And then, according to Jewish law her brother had to marry her, to raise up seed for her, and so he married her, and he in turn died. And then this went on until seven brothers had all taken their turn in marrying her. And so then they asked Jesus the question. Now in eternity whose wife will she be, having had seven husbands? And then Jesus answered. He said you don't understand the resurrection. In the resurrection there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

The fact is, the Bible speaks of us as being sons of God when we are saved. The sexual relationship, male and female, the bearing of children, is in the context of time, when God is bringing into existence a great host of people, during a period of 13,000 years, so that all that He planned to save could be saved. This is all in the framework of time.

But once we leave this earth, we're outside of time, and we're in eternity. There is no procreation, there is no multiplication of the human race. We are sons of God, and we remain His sons eternally. Our focal point is not on a wife or a husband, or children. Our focal point is on the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and whom we serve totally, because we have been made perfect.

I find very frequently in our lives that we are so conditioned by this world that we always think in relationship to this

world. We always try to bring our thoughts of this world to bear into eternity. We try to think of eternity in the sense of buildings and cities. We try to think of eternity in terms of marriage, husbands and wives and mothers and fathers, and all of this. But eternity is a new world. It's a brand new existence. We have spiritual bodies. I don't know what spiritual bodies are, but they're like Christ's spiritual body, not like His resurrected body. That wasn't His glorified body. But we will be Like His spiritual body. Remember on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared with bodies that glistened. And certainly the disciples didn't see them in their full glory any more than they saw Christ in His full glory at that time. Had they seen Christ in His full glory, they would have perished.

We will have glorious bodies. I don't know what it is, what they're like, only God knows. But it's something that we need not speculate about. It's too wonderful for any words of this world to describe.

Well, the other question is concerning the location of the Garden of Eden. Now the Bible uses some very interesting language that makes us think that we might know where the Garden of Eden was. We read in Genesis 2 that there were four rivers around the Garden of Eden. It says in verse 14, "The name of the third river is Hiddekel; that is, which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates." And then in verse 13 it says, "The name of the second river is Gihon; the same as that that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia."

Now these are names that are common in the world: Ethiopia, Assyria, Euphrates. They're all common names. And so immediately we think that the Garden of Eden must have been somewhere in the location of these countries.

We must, however, keep our bearings. We must keep our perspective. The Garden of Eden existed 13,000 years ago. It existed at a time when there was one continent. Later on, 6000 years later, in the Flood of Noah's day, the whole world was utterly destroyed by a flood that changed the appearance of the world to a very high degree, inasmuch as there was a great amount of mountain building, and so on.

A couple of thousand years later the earth was divided. We read about this in Genesis 10. In the days of Peleg the earth was divided. At that time the continent was split up into the continents that we have today. So there were vast changes in the continents since the days of the Garden of Eden.

The fact that we see these names—Euphrates, Ethiopia, Assyria—does not mean that it relates to present day Ethiopia, Euphrates River, or Assyria. But it simply means that these names were selected by the descendants of Noah when they gave names to a river or to a land, or to a people. These were names that were carried down from father to son through the generations as being identified with the Garden of Eden, and then would have been given to a river, which now is called the Euphrates River, or given to a land, which is now called Ethiopia, or given to a land which is now called Assyria, or as was called Assyria in the days of the Bible.

The river Euphrates that now exists, the land of Assyria, or the land of Ethiopia, does not relate to the Garden of Eden, not in any way, except that these names were chosen that originally related to the Garden of Eden. There's too much change in the continents that has occurred to permit this possibility.

The Descendancy of Black People in Gen 10:6 (418A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I would like to know if black people are descended from Ham, one of the sons of Noah.

HC: Yes, that is correct. The residents of Africa, of North Africa, of Babylon, of the land of Canaan, are the descendants of Ham.

CALLER: Okay. In my Bible, the Living Bible illustrated, there is a footnote that Ham was not the ancestor of the Negro as once erroneously supposed. Now from the information that you have just supplied me, I would like to get this out of the Bible.

HC: Well, the book that you're referring to is not the Bible. You can depend upon that.

CALLER: The book, "The Way," is not considered the Bible?

HC: That is not the Bible. That is a paraphrase of some kind, and it is not the Bible. Now we read in Genesis 10, in verse 6, "The sons of Ham, Cush and Mizraim and Phut and Canaan, the sons of Cush; Seba and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtecha, and the sons of Raamah; Sheba and Dedan." Then it goes on and talks about Cush, that he begat Nimrod, and so on.

Now Cush is related to Ethiopia, which of course is in Africa. As near as we can tell, the inhabitants of Africa and North Africa, which would be Egypt and right up into the fertile crescent, Mesopotamia, where Babel and Erech were, and the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, which later on became the land of Israel, were all the descendants of Ham. Now that doesn't mean that the sons of Japheth or the sons of Shem did not also come into these lands. Nor does it mean anything bad that certain peoples are the descendants of Ham. There is nothing negative in the Bible concerning this particularly. It simply means that Ham was one of the three sons of Noah, and certain nations came from Ham and certain nations came from Shem. I'm not even certain how all this devised.

CALLER: Okay. Then I am to assume that "The Way" is not the Bible.

HC: Anything that calls itself a paraphrase of the Bible is not the Bible at all. It is simply the work of men who are trying to develop some kind of a commentary on the Bible, but it must never be considered to be the Bible.

CALLER: Fantastic. Thank you very much. Good night.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

EXODUS

Why Did God Harden Pharaoh's Heart? (113B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I've been working in Exodus on God's dealing with the Egyptians and the children of God being moved out of Egypt. And I'm having an awful time dealing with God's hardening the heart of Pharaoh, and the suffering that all of the Egyptians went through as a result. I've studied this, and I've asked the Lord to show me, and He has. Yet it's still difficult for me to understand. He keeps saying that He can show His glory, and He can manifest Himself. In the Word He says that. And yet it seems that so many people suffered as a result of that. Is that basically the reason that He hardened Pharaoh's heart?

HC: Well, let's look at the real picture, because we have more information about the nature of unsaved man. We discover that an unsaved man is the slave of Satan, he is under the dominion of Satan. And Satan is the father of lies. He is a murderer from the beginning. He is desperately wicked. In fact, God tells us in Jeremiah that man's heart is desperately wicked.

In Matthew's Gospel He says, "Out of the heart of man comes murder and adultery and all manner of terrible sins." So the normal situation, posture, status of man, is that he is a desperately wicked person. Now because of God's love for His creation, because God makes sure that this creation will go along to its predetermined end, God restrains sin in the life of the unbeliever. And so we look at Pharaoh, or we look at the Egyptians, and while deep in their heart they're in writhing rebellion against God, there is still what appears to be some goodness. There appears to be the milk of human kindness, there appears to be some pity, and so on. We see this among all unsaved of the world. We know there's love for the child, we see the citizen's respect for authority, and so on. This is because God is restraining sin.

But the natural habitat of man, because he is unsaved, because he is a slave of Satan, because he is in rebellion against God, is to want to sin and sin and sin. And so we could think of God's hardening the heart of Pharaoh very readily by simply thinking of Him removing these restraints just a little, because the moment God does, Pharaoh will do what comes naturally. He will become a great sinner.

God does this at the end of time. We read in II Thessalonians 2:8-9 where it says: "for the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only He who now restrains it will do so until He is out of the way." Restrains what? Restrains sinfulness in the world. He who restrains sin is God. And when God is taken out of the way, that is, when God lifts His hand of restraint, then lawlessness, then rebellion, grows. And so II Thessalonians 2 is telling us that at the end of time there will be massive rebellion against God. Why? Because God has taken His restraint away.

Now why is He doing this? Well, He's doing it at the end of time in order to bring warning judgments upon the world. He's doing it as a curse upon the church, because the church is increasingly going apostate. And so by this means the church is decimated and receives tremendous affliction from God. In the days of Pharaoh He did it against Pharaoh because Pharaoh was grievously sinful in bringing the nation of Israel into bondage and in dealing with them. But ultimately He is doing it in order to glorify Himself, because as Pharaoh becomes more and more what He really is, desperately sinful, which is what happens as his heart is hardened, then God is going to be able to do more and more wonders. He's going to be able to show His power more and more, so that it will be the big story all over the known world of that day.

CALLER: Thank you very very much. Good night.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Zipporah Circumcises Moses' Son in Exo 4:24-26 (380A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have four questions concerning a scripture passage, and I'd like to have my answer on the air. It's Exodus 4:24-26. And my questions are: The wording in verse 24, that the Lord "seeks" to kill him. And yet if the Lord wanted to kill him, He could. Why this language?

The second question is: Moses had two sons. Why did Zipporah only circumcise one?

The third question is: Could these verses be transposed from an earlier part? Were these really newborn sons? If it is after Moses saw the burning bush, surely these boys would be men. I'm all confused about it. And what's the application for today? What significance does it have for us today?

HC: All right. I'll speak to these

questions.

The question is raised concerning this provocative passage of Exodus 4:24-26. Moses has been 40 years in the wilderness of Midian. There he had met a wife by the name of Zipporah, and God had given them two sons. Now he has been called of God to return to Egypt, where he had grown up as an Egyptian prince. He was to return to Egypt to be God's man, to lead the nation of Israel out of Egyptian bondage into the promised land.

And while he is going, it says here, "And it came to pass, by the way, in the inn, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at his feet and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. So He let him go. Then she said, A bloody husband thou art because of the circumcision."

What is happening here? Well, you see, 600 years earlier God had given the sign of the covenant to father Abraham, the first of the great patriarchs of the nation of Israel. The sign of the covenant was that each son was to be circumcised at eight days. And the circumcision was a figure to indicate that in Christ, or in the coming Messiah, by trusting in the promises of God, their sins could be cut away from them.

The New Testament sign of the covenant really is baptism, that in Christ our sins are washed away. But in the Old Testament it was circumcision. Moses was thoroughly aware of this command. Later on we discover that it was Moses who wrote the first five books of the Bible, according to all that we can read in the Bible. He was a student of all that God had declared earlier. So Moses, as a true Israelite, even though he had been brought up as an Egyptian in the household of Pharaoh, in the palace, nevertheless he should have been aware of this.

Now imagine. Here he is, to be the leader of the nation of Israel, and he is going to begin this leadership with sin in his life. He had not circumcised his son. Now perhaps he had circumcised his other son, but that's beside the point. This son had not been circumcised. And so God sought to kill him. The Bible doesn't say how God did this. Perhaps He brought a great fever upon Moses. It seems that he was too weak to do this act of circumcision himself.

What happens in your life when adversity strikes, when difficulties arise? What is the first thing that you begin to do? You begin to check out your life, don't you? Is God saying something to me? Is God trying to get my attention? Is God chastising me? I think Moses was following true to form the life of any believer. He immediately realized that his son had not been circumcised.

So Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son. Now there's a deeper spiritual truth in this. Really there must be. Moses, in a real sense, I believe, is a figure of Christ. He is portrayed in the Bible as a figure of Christ. Even as he led the children of Israel out of Egypt, so Christ leads us out of bondage to sin.

And he is a bloody husband, he is called here. Now actually, Christ is a bloody husband, is He not? We are the bride. As the church, we are the bride. Christ is the groom. And Christ shed His blood for our sins. It is true, of course, that Moses didn't actually have his foreskin cut off here. Apparently he had been circumcised earlier. But nevertheless, in the language here that God has given to us, he is the one who is called a bloody husband. It says here, "She cast it at his feet," so that he became identified with this circumcision.

And so Christ became identified with the fact that our sins have been cut off. The fact is that Christ became sin for us, and He endured hell for us, which was symbolized by circumcision. To be cut off means to undergo the judgment of

God. So in a real sense, and I haven't explicated this well, but at least it's along this direction, we see here that there's a deeper spiritual lesson. Not only is it giving us a reminder of the fact that we must be obedient to the commands of God, but also it is showing us again the nature of Christ's salvation.

Even as Moses was a bloody husband, so Christ is a bloody husband, in order that we might be saved of our sins.

LEVITICUS

Some Questions About Leviticus 10 (029A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I was studying the Book of Leviticus, and there are a couple of problems I ran into.

First of all, we're told in Leviticus 10:16 that Moses was very angry with the two sons of Aaron, because if I understand it right, they had eaten the sacrifice. And it says in verse 17 that they were to eat it to make atonement for the people before the Lord. And I'm wondering if that's the reason why Aaron and his sons were supposed to eat it. For instance, we're told, I think somewhere in Exodus, when the breastplate was being made, that they were supposed to bear these stones upon their shoulders.

HC: The Urim and the Thummin . . .

CALLER: To bear the sins of the people. I'm wondering if this is the same type of thing.

HC: Actually, first of all, the altar was a figure of Christ. And in order for us to be holy, we eat of Christ. He is the Bread of Life. And when the priests ate of the altar, now they were commanded in verse 12, where Moses said to them, "Take the cereal offering that remains of the offerings by the fire to the Lord and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy. You shall eat it in the holy place because it is your due and your sons' due from the offerings by fire unto the Lord, for so I am commanded."

And so, actually, by their eating this, this was a figure of the fact that they became holy by eating of this. To partake of the altar would make one holy. Now Eleazar and Ithamar apparently refused to do this. In other words, they were disobedient to God's command. Therefore, this would disqualify them, first of all, to be the priesthood that would offer the sacrifices, because they themselves had not become holy, without even counting the fact that they were in open disobedience against God.

And so Moses said, "Why have you not eaten the sin offering in the place of the sanctuary since it is a thing most holy and has been given to you that you may bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord?" In other words, that you might become holy so that you in turn could offer the blood sacrifices, so that atonement might be available to the congregation. These blood sacrifices, of course, were anticipating the sacrifice of Christ.

CALLER: I sometimes forget the fact that everything has to be looked upon in the Christo-centric principle.

HC: Yes. Everything has got to be looked upon in the light of everything else in the Bible. And then you're going to have to include Christ. And so much of the Bible focuses on the coming of Christ. Just a tremendous percentage of the Old Testament passages focus on the first coming of Christ, although there are a number of them that focus upon Judgment Day also.

CALLER: Now we're told in Leviticus 6 that the sin offering is to be eaten, but they were not to drink the blood.

HC: Well, they were not to partake of the blood. The blood was to be poured into

the ground or, of course, in the sacrifices it was sprinkled on the mercy seat, sprinkled on the altar, because it represented the blood of Christ. It was not to be eaten in any way, because the life was in the blood. The blood was to be put into the ground. This was simply God's command.

CALLER: But the way it's mentioned in verse 30 of Chapter 6, it seems that the blood has already been removed from the offering, because it says that "No sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting. It shall be burned with fire."

HC: Yes. Let's see. In verse 24 we read: "Say to Aaron and his sons, 'This is the law of the sin offering. In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed. Before the Lord it is most holy. The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tent of meeting.'"

Okay. So he eats the burnt offering that is killed for the sin offering. And the priest that offers it eats it. Now that all ties together with partaking of the body of Christ. "Whatever touches its flesh shall be holy, and when any of its blood is sprinkled on the garment, you shall wash that on which it was sprinkled in a holy place."

Just touching the altar would make one holy. It's picked up, for example, in Isaiah 6, where coals are taken from the altar and touched on Isaiah's lips, so that he becomes holy. He says, "I am a man of unclean lips." And then the angel took a coal from the altar and touched his lips, so that he might be qualified to be a witness.

Well then it goes on. "And the earthen vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken, but if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed in water. Every male among the priests may eat of it. It is most holy. But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting, to make atonement in the holy place. It shall be burned with fire." Now this is not saying that the blood has simply been removed from the sin offering. The blood was always poured into the ground or used for sprinkling on the altar, but where the blood is brought into the tent of meeting for that particular purpose of making atonement in the holy place, "It shall be burned with fire." Now I don't know the implication of that right offhand.

CALLER: Well, does the same thing go for the cereal offering, where we're told in Chapter 6 that "they shall eat the remaining part?" In other words, they should not eat it all, but they should eat only the remaining part.

HC: Yes, I think so.

CALLER: What about the unholy fire that we're told about in Chapter 10, where the sons of Aaron are both killed? Did they sin in that they arbitrarily offered a sacrifice that the Lord had not instructed them to offer?

HC: Yes. Again, it was an act of rebellion. They were not following the prescribed rules. They were saying, "Well, we can do it our way." This was unholy fire.

CALLER: Why did Aaron answer Moses in such a way in verse 19 of Chapter 10? Could you interpret that for me?

HC: No. I'm not really sure why he did, either. Aaron said to Moses, "Behold, today they have offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the Lord, and yet such things as these have befallen me. If I had eaten sin offering today, would it have been acceptable in the sight of the Lord? And when Moses heard that, he was content."

I don't know what the context is here. I think the one truth we can get from this, however, is that God is very patient with us in our sin, and Moses frequently is a

type of Christ. And God just doesn't strike us down. Actually, because of the rebellion of these sons, God's judgment should have come upon them. But God is very patient with us in our sin.

Now there must be more meaning to it than this, but that's all that I can offer right at the moment.

The Cleansing of Lepers in Leviticus 8:23-24 (142A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: It's good to talk to you again. I'm curious about a passage that I read in Leviticus. It's in Leviticus 8, and it's also recorded in Chapter 14, about the cleansing and restoring of the lepers. And it says that Moses was to put the blood of the lamb of ordination on the tip of Aaron's right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot. And I thought that there might be a deeper spiritual meaning. And the only thing I could think of is, Could it be that he was to glorify God as a priest in what he touched, heard, and where or how he walked in the faith?

HC: What verse is that, incidentally?

CALLER: That's Leviticus 8:23 and 24.

HC: Your question is: What does this mean that they were to take the blood and touch it on the tip of the right ear, the thumb of his right hand and on the great toe of his right foot? I think that your answer is correct. I think that the ear represents that which is heard. Jesus said again and again, you know, in the New Testament, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Those whose ears have been opened, you see.

Remember when we talked about Israel, we learned that their ears have been closed. But those who are going to be born again, the remnant chosen by grace out of any nation, they have been given ears to hear.

Now the thumb of his right hand would have to do with his will, or the fact that his will has been surrendered to God.

And the great toe, remember what we do with the Gospel. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel." The toe would be related to the foot, of course, and would tie in with the idea of going, as well as walking. I like what you said about walking, walking in the will of God.

CALLER: You were the one that sort of inspired this, because I heard you and someone else talk about leprosy a few months ago. And you were saying how leprosy is a figure of sin. And in Leviticus he's talking about the restoring of lepers. And he also gives these same verses, about the ear, etc. And I wondered if that could be saying, Yes, this is a figure of sin. You were cut off from your people. You're being restored now, but this is how you are to live.

HC: Yes, that's in Leviticus 14:14. It's the same kind of an idea, that once they have been restored, they are to listen to the Word of God carefully. They are to have their will surrendered to God. They are to walk in His way and go to do His bidding.

JUDGES

The Spiritual Significance of Judges 19 (216A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I believe you told a caller that you'd attempt to speak on the spiritual significance of Judges 19. And I've been anxiously waiting to hear that. And I also have another one that I'd like to hear your comment on, and it's Judges 11:30-40, about Jephthah's daughter.

HC: Well, tonight let's just talk about Judges 19, and then another day we'll talk about Jephthah, because you really

don't realize what a big order this Judges 19 is.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much
HC: Thank you. Good night.

The question is raised concerning this interesting passage in Judges 19. And I'd like to spend the next little while on this because I did study this since last week, and I had studied it previously, and I've tried to bring some ideas together, to see if we couldn't be blessed by what the Bible declares.

Now we read in Mark 4 that whenever Christ brought the Gospel, He spoke in parables, and "without a parable He did not speak." And since Christ is Eternal God, and God is the author of the Bible, therefore we can expect that while God gives us much historical information that is record of events that actually did occur, we can expect that there must be deeper spiritual significance that must be found from these historical events, even as when Christ, for example, did a miracle. That miracle actually happened, but there was deep and rich spiritual significance connected with that miracle. In other words, through that miracle He is teaching us something about the nature or the very essence of what salvation is.

Well, let's look at Judges 19 for a bit, and see if we can discover some spiritual truth connected with it. Now again let me just very quickly outline the story. In the days when there was no king in Israel, there was a certain Levite. And he took to himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah.

Now a concubine was the equivalent of a wife. A concubine, in certain instances, did not have quite the rights of a wife. She was even called a half wife. She was on a lower status than an ordinary wife. But in other places in the Bible a concubine is looked upon as really the equivalent of a wife. We think, for example, of the two concubines that Jacob married. He married Leah and Rachel, but he also took on two concubines. And their sons had equal inheritance with the sons of Rachel and Leah. So a concubine effectively is a wife.

Now his concubine played the harlot, and she went back to her father's house in Bethlehem in Judah, and was there for four whole months. And then, after four whole months, her husband went to Bethlehem and spoke kindly to her, and was reconciled to her, and spent 5 days in the house of her father, in Bethlehem. He tried to leave on the third day, but his father-in-law constrained him to stay a fourth day. And on the fourth day he wanted to leave, but his father-in-law constrained him. But finally on the fifth day late in the afternoon, he left Bethlehem.

Now Bethlehem is located about seven or eight miles south of Jerusalem. And he is leaving Bethlehem close to evening time. And he's heading back up toward Ephraim, the land of Ephraim, which was his homeland. And then we see the interesting information that when they arrived opposite Jerusalem he would not go there, because that was occupied by strangers, "Let us not spend the night in Jerusalem." Now this is strange because in Judges 1 we read that, in verse 21, "The people of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who dwell in Jerusalem. So the Jebusites have dwelt with the people of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day." And so there were people of Israel dwelling in Jerusalem.

But here we find the strange language that they would not lodge in Jerusalem, even though that was a logical city to lodge in. But the reason is that it's a city of strangers, of foreigners. And we don't want to lodge there. And so they went up north a little bit farther, to Gibeah. And when they came to Gibeah, it's nighttime now. And they sat down in the square of the city, and no one gave them any lodging.

Now the interesting thing that's emphasized here is that they're going with a couple of saddled asses, in verse 10, and the concubine, and a servant. In other words, we have this little company that leaves Bethlehem. The Levite from Ephraim, with his concubine, with his servant, and two saddled asses. That's the entourage that leaves Bethlehem and now comes into Gibeah.

And then in verse 16 it speaks about an old man, who came from his work in the field. It was evening. He also was a sojourner from the land of Ephraim. He was sojourning in Gibeah. And he talked to this Levite and invited him into his home. Now the emphasis in verse 16 is that this was the land of the Benjaminites. The people of the city of Gibeah were of the tribe of Benjamin.

Then we also have the interesting statement that the Levite says in verse 19, to the old man, who is inviting them into his home, "We have straw and provender for our asses, with bread and wine for me and your maidservant, and the young man with your servants. There is no lack of anything." Interesting statement. They have everything that they need as they go into this old man's house.

Well, then, in the old man's house they were fed, and they ate and drank, and they washed their feet. Okay. Then the tragedy occurs. As they are spending their night together, the wicked people of the city, of the tribe of Benjamin, surround the house. And they say:

"Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him. And the master of the house said, 'No, my brethren. Do not act so wickedly. Seeing that this man has come into my house do not do this vile thing. Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine [that is, the concubine of my visitor]. Let me bring them out now. Ravish them, and do with them what seems good to you. But against this man do not do so vile a thing.' But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine [now as near as we can tell it's the man of the house that seized the concubine and put her out to them] and they knew her, and abused her all night until the morning.

"As the dawn began to break, they let her go. And as morning appeared, the woman came and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was until it was light. And her master rose up in the morning. And when he opened the doors of the house and went out to go out on his way, behold, there was his concubine lying at the door of the house, with her hands on the threshold. He said to her, 'Get up. Let us be going.' But there was no answer. [She had been killed. She had died because of the ill treatment by the wicked men of the city.] And so he put her on his ass and took her home. And then he cut her up into twelve pieces and sent one piece into each of the tribes of Israel, to indicate the dreadful thing that had been done."

Now there's the story, the tragedy. It's a terrible thing. It's a blot on the nation of Israel that God has recorded for us. Why did God put this in the Bible? Well now, the first thing in studying this, we notice a stark similarity to the events that occurred at the time that Lot was ready to leave Sodom and Gomorrah.

Let's go back there for just a moment, to Genesis 1-9. The two angels have come into the house of Lot in Sodom, and we notice here that they are going to spend the night. And notice the reference to washing your feet, in verse 2. "My lords, turn aside, I pray you, to your servant's house, and spend the night. And wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go your way." And so in verse 3 of Genesis 19, "They entered his house, and he made them a feast, and he baked unleavened bread, and they ate."

But then we have the same tragedy developing. "Before they lay down, the

men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people, to the last man, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot: 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them.'" The same kind of language, you see. They wanted to know this Levite in Judges 19. That is, they wanted to have despicable sexual relationships with this man, and eventually to kill him.

"Bring them out to us that we may know them." Lot went out to the men and shut the door after him and said, "I beg you, my brothers. Do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do to them as you please." The same strange offer. The man of the house in Judges 19 said, "Look, I have my virgin daughter, and here's this concubine of our visitor. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do with them as you please." The same strange offer.

Now in Genesis 19 it didn't develop quite the same way, because the two men in the house were angels, and they brought Lot back in the house, and then they struck the wicked people outside with blindness, so that they actually were not able to ravish either of Lot's daughters.

Now we know, of course, that the event in Lot's case was a figure of the situation that prevailed on earth at the time that Christ returns, because the rescue of Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah is a type of the coming of Christ. We read about this in Luke 17. In Luke 17 it says, "Remember Lot's wife. Then there will be two men in the field. One will be taken, and the other will be left." And so on. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was a figure of Judgment Day. And the rescue of Lot was a figure of the rapture, really. And the conduct of the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah was indicative of the condition, the spiritual condition of the world, just prior to Christ's coming, that the world that surrounds the church, which in Sodom and Gomorrah was composed only of the family of Lot, wants to destroy it. It wants to play the harlot with it, and it wants to destroy it in so doing. This is the picture that we get from Genesis 19.

Therefore we suspect that Judges 19 is also giving us a picture condition in the world at the time that Christ returns, because of this similarity in the two events, of Genesis 19 and Judges 19.

Let's see if we can develop this just a little bit. Now first of all, it begins with this Levite and his concubine. And of course we immediately think of the intimate relationship between God and the believers. Now the concubine plays the harlot. And Israel in the Old Testament, of course, did play the harlot with God. God came to Israel and did everything for Israel. He looked upon Israel as His wife. And yet Israel played the harlot. And so there was a period when there was an estrangement between God and Israel, a long period of time, when there was no vision, when Israel had gone into subjugation by the Babylonians and by the Assyrians.

But then God came to Israel to renew the relationship. And that of course was in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And where was this contact made? It was in the city of Bethlehem, wasn't it? Christ became flesh in Bethlehem. This is where He was born. And it is from Bethlehem that we have the beginning of the new covenant, when Christ really has become identified with His church. He's always been identified with His body of course, in the Old Testament, too. But Christ has become identified with His church in a far more glorious way than ever before.

Now here it says that after four months . . . now four months is 120 days, and actually, in the Hebrew, the term four whole months is actually day-month. It

has the word "day" right in the phrase, to indicate four whole months. So 120 days is in the fullness of time. The number 12 is the fullness of something. In the fullness of time Christ came, and He provided reconciliation between Himself and those who would believe on Him, those who are the true Israel.

And so we see, therefore, the picture here of five days of glorious rejoicing in the father's house, here in Bethlehem. They're eating and drinking and rejoicing. And there is total happiness here. What does the five represent? Well, the five represents God's grace. Again and again in the Bible the number five represents God's grace. We could try to speculate a little bit more here. And in a sense, whenever we are trying to understand the spiritual significance of a passage, we must recognize that we are speculating just a little bit. But we're doing it based upon figures that the Bible itself uses. And as we go along, we can see whether it will indeed hold water.

Well, he remained three days, and then wanted to leave. The number three signifies that God has spoken. Three times Jesus said, "Father, remove this cup." And that was the answer. Well, God has spoken. But there's more.

The fourth day. The number four signifies the universality of the Gospel, or the mercy of God, that God has spoken but it is to be a universal Gospel, and it is to be a merciful Gospel. The fifth day is God's grace. God has provided redemption.

But now it says, "The day has waned toward evening" (verse 9). It has come for the night to fall. Now remember what Jesus said in John 9? "Work while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work." And so the events that are going to follow are the events that are typifying the sad period just before Christ returns. The day has been spent. The day of salvation has been accomplished, and now it is night-time.

And so we see this little band leaving Bethlehem, the house of bread (that's the meaning of the word Bethlehem), the place where they have had the Bread of Life. And now they are going to exist in the world, typified here by their travel back to the land of Ephraim. And we're going to see what events befall them.

Now notice, first of all, who is leaving. There is the Levite. There is his concubine. And this is a figure of the intimate relationship of Christ with His church. There is the servant. The servant also emphasizes the condition of the born again believer. We have become servants of God, in Christ. And there are the two saddled asses. Now at another time we looked at this matter of asses, or donkeys, and we found that they are a figure of born again believers. And I won't try to develop this now. At another time, if you're interested, we can look at that again. But they, too, are a figure of born again believers.

And so in this little company here we have a figure of the body of Christ, the true body of Christ, that exists at the time when the night has come upon the earth. It's just before Judgment Day, and the Gospel has been silenced, as we shall see.

Now first of all, they come opposite Jerusalem. Now Jerusalem in the Bible is the figure of Mt. Zion. It's the figure of the body of Christ in all of its strength, in all of its ruling power. But they don't go into Jerusalem, because there aren't any believers there. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 24:15? He said, "When you see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place."

Now the holy place is the body of believers. It was typified in the Old Testament by Jerusalem. It says, "those in Judea, flee to the mountains." In other words, the constituted, organized body of believers is no longer trustworthy. Place your trust in Christ. "To the hills I lift my eyes." The mountains are actually being

a type of God Himself. He is the one that we can trust, and we cannot trust in the organized body any longer. It has become so apostate. It has become so watered down, it has begun to run after other gospels to such a degree that we cannot trust in it any longer.

Already today, incidentally, there are those who are finding that they have to seek other congregations because the congregation they belong to no longer is bringing the true Gospel. And this sad condition will intensify as we go along, until the tribulation period, when it will be fairly universally evident everywhere somehow.

So they can't go into Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the organized, the recognized, the official body of Christ as it's found in the world, is no longer trustworthy in any sense. And so they go on to the land of Benjamin. Now I have to say a word about Benjamin. Benjamin in the Bible is a figure of the New Testament church, of the New Testament body of Christ. And let me quickly cite a couple of references to prove this, although there are many in the Old Testament.

In Deuteronomy 33:12 we read, where Moses is pronouncing a blessing upon the twelve tribes, "Of Benjamin, the beloved of the Lord. He dwells in safety by Him. He encompasses him all the day long and makes his dwelling between His shoulders." What a beautiful statement of what the New Testament church is. We are the beloved of the Lord. We dwell in safety, by Christ. He encompasses us. That is, He cares for us, and surrounds us with His love all the day long. He makes His dwelling with us, between His shoulders. You can see that Deuteronomy 33:12 is talking directly about the body of Christ that exists. And so Benjamin is a figure of the body of Christ.

Benjamin, incidentally, was the only one of the sons of Jacob that was born in the land of Canaan. That is, it's a figure of the fact that we in the New Testament are born in the presence of the Gospel. We're born again because Christ has offered the Gospel to us. And I can go on with other figures to show that Benjamin is a figure of the New Testament church.

And so, going back to Judges now, we see this group of believers. And they're in the land of Benjamin. They're in the land of the church. Now let me underscore this. They're in the land of the church. They're not in the land of the Babylonians. They're not in the land of some wicked enemy of Communism. They're in the land of the church. And here is where this dreadful event is going to take place.

So they come into this home. And you'll notice that in this old man's home, and this old man, incidentally, again is a figure of those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. He has finished his work. It's the end of the day. And so it is with the born again believer. We have work to do. And that work will only be finished when God takes us at death, or if that final day of darkness comes, when there is no Gospel, which is also called the time of great tribulation. That is the time when our work is finished. "Work while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work."

And so we see him coming in, in verse 16, coming from his work in the field at evening. And he also is a sojourner. He was sojourning in Gibeah. Lot was sojourning in Sodom and Gomorrah, we would discover, if we went there. We are sojourners in this world. We're strangers and pilgrims here. This is not our eternal resting place. We are just passing through.

And you'll notice that when they came into this old man's house, they said, "We have straw and provender for our asses." In other words, the asses were a figure of born again believers, and there is sufficient food for them. The born again believers in the day of tribulation will

still be able to feed on the Word of God. We are never going to be left by God at all.

"There is bread and wine for me and your maidservant, and the young man with your servants." What does bread and wine signify? The bread is the broken body of Christ. The wine is His shed blood. There is sufficient spiritual food. Even though there is going to be a great tragedy, even though it has been nighttime, amongst those who are born again believers, they are sustained by the Word of God. What a precious promise we're beginning to see shining through here. There is no lack of anything. That's the language of someone who is born again. Our salvation is sufficient for every situation. We don't have to fear, even when the time has come when it is the period of great tribulation, when the church, as typified by Benjamin, has become desperately wicked, because you see, these people outside the house of this old man are Benjaminites. And they have become desperately wicked. They want to have an immoral relationship with those in the house. They want to kill those in the house. And that is the situation that I'm afraid is going to prevail in the final tribulation, that the church will be the chief instigator in seeking to make sure that the Gospel will be silenced.

This is not surprising. You know, it was the church of Jesus' day that were most dynamic and dominant in calling for the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was Annas and Caiaphas, the high priest, who pronounced the death sentence upon Christ.

Samson Loses His Strength in Judges 16 (274E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Back in the Book of Judges, we have the story of Samson, and everyone thought his strength came from his hair. Now did he believe that his strength came from his hair? Was this his own deception?

HC: The question is raised, Did Samson know that his strength came from God rather than from his hair, from the length of his hair?

I don't really know. There may be information that would indicate this. The fact that he let his hair grow was a figure that he was in complete submission to the will of God. This was really the characteristic of a Nazarite vow, complete submission to the will of God. And when he allowed his hair to be cut, it was indicative of the fact that he was rebelling against the will of God. And then of course his strength departed from him.

CALLER: Okay. Well, did he allow his hair to get cut?

HC: Yes. He was troubled by his wife again and again and again and again. And first he kidded with her, and said, "You've got to bind me with a certain amount of this or that." And then the Philistines would come, and then he would knock these things off of his body and he would destroy them. But she kept at him and kept at him, and wearied him and wearied him.

And finally he gave in. Finally he took his eyes off God and succumbed to her wiles and gave her the truth, that if she would cut his hair, then his strength would leave him. And so she knew at that point that he had spoken all of his heart. And at this point was the moment when Samson was disobeying God. He was being enticed by Satan, if you will, and succumbing to the wiles of Satan.

You can read about this in Judges 16.

CALLER: In so much of the Old Testament there are things that seem so insignificant. But I tell myself, "This has got to have some kind of meaning, but I just don't see it."

HC: Yes. Samson, in the Bible, is really in a real sense a figure of the church. And notice. He judged for twenty years. And somehow I sense that that might be related in some way to the fact that the New Testament church continues approximately 2000 years. But that may be guessing a little bit, or it may be speculative.

But at any rate, the Holy Spirit would come upon Samson and he would do marvelous exploits on behalf of God. And then again he would be very carnal. And this is the way the church has been throughout the New Testament period. There are times when the Spirit of God burned very brightly, as, for example, in the days of the Reformation, or the days of the early church of Acts.

And then again there were periods, like the Dark Ages, when the wick was burning very low. Then we finally see that Samson's strength has departed altogether. His eyes are put out and he's thrown into jail, because he has rebelled against God altogether. And this I believe prefigures what is going to happen to the church, which we are really on the threshold of. The church, the body of Christ, becomes more and more snared by other gospels. It rebels more and more against God. And so finally the Gospel is silenced. Samson's eyes have been put out, and the Philistines rejoice because their enemy has been silenced.

And then, when it looks like all is lost, even as in Samson's case God gives him strength so that in his end on this earth he kills more than in all the twenty years of his life, so the church is given tremendous strength at the end, as it judges the unsaved upon Christ's return, and gets the complete victory over the unsaved by removing them into hell. I see a very distinct relationship in the life of Samson to the life of the New Testament church.

Thank you for calling.

RUTH

The Gospel in the Book of Ruth (241A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Recently, Mr. Camping, you said that you would give the verses in the Book of Ruth that show us where the Gospel is. When are you going to do it?

HC: All right. Supposing we talk about that a little while tonight. Should we?

CALLER: Yes, that would be very fine, if you would.

HC: All right. If you'd like to hang up, I'll speak to that question. Thank you. Good night.

Let's look just a little bit at the Book of Ruth, and see if we can find the Gospel in it. Now in this study that we're going to look at, we're not going to begin to exhaust the whole book. I'll speak to this question for just a little bit, and then at another time we'll continue in it.

The Book of Ruth is a little book found in the Old Testament. It's right after Joshua and Judges. It's kind of hard to find, as a matter of fact, if you're not at all acquainted with the Old Testament it only has 85 verses. And it is a love story of the courtship of Boaz for a Moabitish woman by the name of Ruth.

And the upshot of this courtship is that Boaz marries Ruth, and from their marriage eventually David is born, who in turn is in the genealogical line of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Now the fascinating part of this love story is that Ruth is a Moabitess. Ruth is a girl who is under the curse of God.

In the Bible we read that a Moabite cannot come into the temple for ten generations. In Deuteronomy 23:3 we read, "No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord even to the tenth generation. None belonging to

them shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever, because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you came forth out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam, the son of Beor, from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you."

So here we find a girl who is a Moabitess, who is resoundingly under the curse of God. And yet she marries Boaz, who lives in Bethlehem. And eventually they give birth to a son who in turn becomes the progenitor of David, who in turn is in the genealogical line of Jesus.

Now that in a nutshell is the story. Now it begins with the fact that there's a famine in the land of Bethlehem. And there's a man there by the name of Elimelech, who lives in Bethlehem, with his wife Naomi. And I'm sure that somewhere along the line, as you have heard Bible stories, you've heard about Naomi.

Now Naomi and Elimelech have given birth to two sons, whose names are Malon and Chilian. Now because of the famine in the land, they leave Bethlehem and go into the land of Moab. Now that in itself is a very sinful action. They are not trusting in the Lord the way they ought to. But that is not really the point of the story. It's simply a fact of history that they left Bethlehem and they went into the land of Moab.

And there their sin is multiplied, because eventually Malon and Chilian take Moabite girls as their wives. And that's a second dreadful sin on the part of this family of Elimelech and Naomi, and their two sons, Malon and Chilian, because these two Moabitish girls would have been classed amongst those who were the unsaved. They were not to take wives from the Moabites.

We read in the Book of Nehemiah, in Chapter 13, in verse 2: "On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people, and in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God. And when the people heard the Law, they separated from Israel, all those of foreign descent," indicating that the Israelites perfectly understood that there was to be no marriage at all with a Moabite.

And yet Malon and Chilian, totally contrary to the will of God, married Ruth, on the one hand, and another girl by the name of Orpah. Now in the course of events, after they had lived there for a number of years, Malon and Chilian died, and so did Elimelech. This is just part of the historical development of the story. Naomi and Elimelech had sinned against God in leaving Bethlehem, their two sons had grievously sinned against God in marrying Orpah and Ruth, who are Moabitish girls, and now they experience total bereavement. Naomi loses her husband Elimelech, who is the father of the clan, and Ruth and Orpah in turn also lose their husbands, Malon and Chilian.

And so now we have these three widows: Naomi the mother-in-law, and Ruth and Orpah the two daughters-in-law, who are Moabitish girls. This really now is where we want to begin our search here.

Now in verse 6 we read that, "Then Naomi started with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited His people and had given them food. So she set out from the place where she was, with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go. Return, each of you, to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find a rest, each of you, in the house of her husband.'" "

Now here we find a tremendous statement of the Gospel, in this verse 9. She is telling her two daughters-in-law,

"Go back to your own people. You're Moabitish girls." Naomi was perfectly aware that for ten generations they could not come into Israel, into the temple, into the house of the Lord, that they were under the curse of God. It was the heaviest curse pronounced against anyone in the Bible. And logically, she is telling them, "Your husbands, my sons, have died, and now you remain here in Moab while I return to Bethlehem, to the city where I have come from."

And then she uses this very strange language, in verse 9: "The Lord grant that you may find a rest, each of you, in the house of her husband." Now that's very strange language. We would expect her to say, "The Lord grant that you may find happiness in the house of your husband," or "The Lord grant that you may find security in the house of your husband." In other words, that you find a Moabitish person that you can marry, and you find your future, you find a home with him.

But no, she said, "The Lord grant that you may find a rest in the house of your husband." Now why did she use that word "rest"? Well you see, in the Bible God never uses words accidentally. Naomi may not have realized why she used the word rest in this discussion with her two daughters-in-law. But nevertheless she did.

And the word "rest" is pointing to the rest that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we are saved, we come to be at rest. This is particularly illustrated in Hebrews 3 and Hebrews 4. Before we are saved, we are desperately working to get right with God. Whatever our plan of action may be, this is the ultimate goal of our life. We've got to somehow get right with God, and we are trying to work this out one way or another.

But when we truly become born from above, when we become a child of God, we rest in the fact that Christ has paid for our sins. There is no more work that we must do. There is nothing at all that we can contribute to our salvation. We rest in Him.

And where do we find our rest? We find it in the house of our husband, do we not? Who is our husband, when we become born again? Our husband is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We are the bride. What is the house of our husband? Well, remember in Romans 8:1 it says that "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Or in the Psalms we read that God Himself is our "eternal habitation." God is the house that we enter when we are saved, when we have found rest.

And so Naomi is uttering a truism, a basic principle, a basic desire of every believer who wants to see salvation for an unsaved friend. "The Lord grant that you may find rest." That is, "The Lord grant that you may find salvation, in the house of your husband," that is, by dwelling in the Lord Jesus Christ, by entering into Him, by having the salvation that is provided in Him.

And so while she may not have recognized what she was saying, nevertheless this is the language of a plea, of a desire that Ruth and Orpah might become saved: "The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you, in the house of your husband." Any one of us who has become born from above, born again, have found rest in the house of our husband.

Now let's look at Ruth for just a moment, and Orpah. Could they find this kind of rest? Could they, as being under the curse of God, could Naomi really desire salvation for them? Oh, she wasn't thinking all the way to salvation. She was only thinking in very superficial terms, about a happy home. But the underlying truth that is being presented is that there is this offer of salvation to them. And could this offer of salvation be legitimate, when Ruth and Orpah

were Moabitish girls, who were under the curse of God to the tenth generation? It doesn't seem right, does it?

Well, the fact is, Ruth and Orpah represent the human race. Before we are saved, we are under the curse of God. We're destined for hell. Hell is guaranteed for us. There's no way that we can become right with God. It's just absolutely certain that we're going to hell, because the Bible teaches, "the wages of sin is death." And we are all sinners. There's not one of us that has escaped the curse of sin.

And so, even as Ruth and Orpah were Moabitish girls, and under the curse of God, so you and I, as part of the human race, in ourselves are likewise under the curse of God. There's no way that we could become right with God, except by God's grace. And that's what we're going to see in the life of Ruth, as we go along.

Now notice the next verse, verse 10: "They said to her, 'No. We will return with you to your people.'" Now that's an odd thing for them to say. Think about this. "No. We will return with you to your people." Now that doesn't make any sense at all. That implies that Ruth and Orpah had already been in Bethlehem. How can they return somewhere that they have never been? They were Moabitish girls. They were not former residents of Bethlehem. They were born and grew up in the land of Moab. Why would they say, "We will return with you"?

Here again we have an example of a statement that in itself makes no sense whatsoever. It would be far more logical if they had said, "No. We will go with you when you return, Naomi, our mother-in-law, to Bethlehem. We will go with you." But certainly, for them to say, "We will return with you," implying that they had already been there, makes no sense. And this odd language guarantees for us that this was written under the inspiration of God. No human author, writing a love story, would ever have written with this kind of language. It doesn't make logical sense, that Ruth and Orpah would return with Naomi. But they did say it, nevertheless, under the inspiration of God. And this is recorded for us.

Now why did they say this? You see, they again are uttering a very beautiful truth. If we look at the underlying spiritual meaning of this statement, we are looking at mankind. Now what is the situation of mankind when God first created the heavens and the earth? Mankind was completely in fellowship with God. Mankind was not estranged from God in any way. Mankind was created in the image of God, to live with Him eternally.

But because man has sinned, man has become an outcast. Man has come under the curse of sin. He has become a Moabite, if you will. Now when we become saved, when we become a child of God, we are returning to God. We are returning to God, who originally had created mankind perfectly, without sin. This in capsule form is the whole story of the Prodigal Son, all over again. Jesus embellished this very same truth in the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

The Prodigal Son was in the house of his father, and he left his father's house. And he went out to waste his living. And finally, when he was eating the husks of the swine, then his spiritual eyes were opened, and he said, "I will go back to my father. I will be a servant there." That is the story of anyone at all who is exercised by the Gospel, "I will return to my father's house. I will return to Bethlehem."

You see, the meaning of the word Bethlehem is "the house of bread." Not only was Jesus born at Bethlehem, this is the point on the surface of the earth where God became incarnate, it is the first point where we can literally meet the Lord Jesus, as He becomes flesh, in

order to become sin for us, but it is also the "house of bread," and Christ is the Bread of which we must partake in order to live eternally.

And so when Ruth and Orpah are saying, "No. We will return with you," while they didn't know the implication of all that they said, nevertheless they were uttering a wonderful spiritual truth. They were saying, "The only way for us to enjoy life and to find rest in the house of our husband is to return with you, to go back to Bethlehem, the house of bread, to go where we can meet the Lord Jesus Christ," if you will, to look at it from a spiritual standpoint, "to go where we can again be reconciled to God, to go where we can feed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be nourished by Him."

Well now, let's go on. So far we find two sentences already that are just loaded with spiritual truth relating to what salvation really is. We come to verse 11. And here we find again some very strange language, in a sense. Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters. Why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters. Go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters. For it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me."

Now in the context of this love story this is a very logical statement. It is a very logical statement. She is reasoning with them, "Go back to your own people. Don't go with me. You're under the curse of God. You're apt not to get a good welcome in Bethlehem at all. And I have no more sons in my womb, so that you can find a husband from me. Go back."

But when we are looking for spiritual truth here, then this sounds very strange. We would say, "Well, here Naomi in verse 9 is earnestly desiring that they find rest, each of them in the house of their husbands." And we saw that that was really wishing, spiritually speaking, that they might have salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, so they would become the bride of Christ.

And we saw in verse 10 that they indeed desired to return with her, and using language that would be the language of someone who is coming back to God as his Creator and as his Redeemer, someone who wants to be reconciled to God. And here Naomi is saying, "Look. Don't come now. It doesn't make any sense for you to come." It seems like she's almost saying, "Look. I really don't want you to be saved." How can we fit that into the puzzle?

Well you see, there are those who feel that we've got to be salesmen for Christ, we've got to win souls for Christ is the phrase that is frequently used. And every tactic is employed that can be found, to make the Gospel as attractive as possible. We don't really dare talk too much about hell, we don't really dare to talk too much about what it means to be surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ. We like to make it as palatable, as delightful as possible, so that if at all possible we can get their name on the dotted line. It's kind of like the vacuum cleaner salesman, you know, who comes to the door, and he says everything positive, and he says everything in a delightful way, in order to woo the person he is selling, so that she might be inclined to sign on the dotted line.

But you see, that isn't the way we're to present the Gospel. We are to be witnesses of the Gospel. And we are to present the whole counsel of God. We're not to kid anybody that everything is really quite well with this person, and we just want to make it a little better for him, "God loves you, and now there's

something even more wonderful for you, that we want to tell you about." You know, we get on the good side of this person, and finally get them to see that yes, there's even more blessing that can come if they would only accept Jesus.

That isn't the way we're to present the Gospel. We're to present the whole counsel of God. We're to come with the ugly truth that man is a sinner, that man is under the wrath of God, and that in order to be saved it is necessary for man to see that there's nothing in himself that is worthy, there is nothing that is desirable, that he is to strip himself of his ego. There's nothing he can do to make himself worthy for this salvation. It's ugly. My self-respect is worth nothing. My works are worth nothing. If you want to be saved, you've got to come to the Lord with a broken and a contrite heart. You've got to surrender your will to Christ. You've got to forsake your sins. And it may mean that you've got to leave your old friends that are enticing you to sin. It may mean that you have to even leave your family, and in certain conditions this has been the case. It's a very very difficult piece of information we have to offer.

We've got to present the Gospel asking those who hear the Gospel to count the cost. It means you've got to give up everything, and cast yourself as worthless, empty-handed sinners, on the mercies of God. And only as you come with a broken and a contrite heart can salvation be yours. And you've got to turn away from these things that you cherish so much. This is the language that Naomi is using: "It's not an easy thing for you to go with me, Ruth and Orpah. It would be far better if you stay here. If you go to Bethlehem with me," I can see her arguing, "you're going to leave all that has been dear to you, your family, and who knows what you're going to come into?" This again is the language of the way we present the Gospel. We witness carefully of what is true and trustworthy.

Well then we see the reaction of Ruth and Orpah. Now in Ruth and Orpah we see the reaction of the human race to the Gospel. Orpah represents those who hear the Gospel, and when they've counted the cost, when they've really seen what's involved in becoming saved, that they've got to strip themselves of their own pride, of their own ego, they have to admit the ugly truth that they're rotten, no good sinners, they've got to leave their friends, probably, and they certainly have to turn away from their sins, that they so dearly cherish, they decide, "I can't do it. I can't do it." That's Orpah.

Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, and she left Naomi and Ruth. She couldn't sacrifice all of this to go with Naomi. She represents those who hear the Gospel but are not willing to surrender to the claims of the Gospel. She is like the thief on the cross. Remember, there were two thieves on the cross, and both of them reviled Jesus, when they were first hanging there. One of these thieves went to his death continuing to revile Jesus. He was in the presence of the Gospel, with Christ Himself being next to him. And yet he went to his death continuing to revile Jesus.

But Ruth, on the other hand, is a figure of those who are exercised by the Gospel and become saved. Ruth counted the cost. She saw what was involved in leaving her family and her present environment, and going to a strange land, going to a place where she had never been before, just stepping out in faith. And what did she say? She said, in verse 16, "Entreat me not, Naomi, to leave you or to turn from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also, if even death parts me from you." This is the confession of someone

who has cast his lot with Christ. "I want this God of the Bible to be my God. I surrender my will to whatever comes. I don't know what path I must walk as a born again believer, but that path is good enough for me. I entrust my life altogether with God's people. I entrust my life with the Lord Jesus Christ. I surrender everything, and give it all to Him."

Ruth represents all who have become saved. She, like the thief on the cross, who said to Jesus, "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom," is a representative of those who are under the curse of sin and rightly ought to go to hell for their sins, but have placed their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so have become born again.

1 SAMUEL

The Evil Spirit in 1 Samuel 16:14 (211C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I have a question about 1 Samuel 16:14, where it speaks about an evil spirit from the Lord coming to torment Saul. It's hard for us to understand that, because it sounds like there's evil coming from the Lord. Is an evil spirit the same thing as a demon?

HC: The question is, How are we to understand 1 Samuel 16:14, where we read, "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him. And Saul's servant said to him, 'Behold, now an evil spirit from God is tormenting you.'"

Now the question is, How is it possible that an evil spirit would come from God? Isn't an evil spirit a demon? Yes indeed, an evil spirit is a demon. An evil spirit is a fallen angel. But you see, God is in control. God controls everything.

Now normally, unsaved men are under the power of the evil spirits. They are enslaved to Satan, and he does with them what he wills, insofar as God allows them to do what they will with mankind. God chose Saul to be king, and therefore qualified him to be king by sending the Holy Spirit upon him, not in the sense that he was born again, but in the sense that he would have the wisdom and the qualification to be a king.

But then Saul turned against God, rebelled against God. And so God allows the evil spirits to again gain more control over his life. And to show that God is in control of this, the language is actually used that an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.

Now we have other illustrations of this in the Bible. In other words, this is not isolated, as if it's an anomaly that you just can't understand at all. In II Samuel 24:1 we read this: "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And He incited David against them, saying, Go number Israel and Judah." Now God is taking full responsibility here.

Now the same event is recorded also in I Chronicles 21:1: "Satan stood up against Israel, and incited David to number Israel. So David said to Joab and the commanders of the army," and so on. In other words, Satan is actually the instigator, but because God allows it to happen, God takes the ultimate responsibility that it has occurred.

CALLER: With this evil spirit tormenting him, it causes Saul to sin. I was under the impression that because the Lord is without sin, He cannot tempt anyone.

HC: Now the question is, Since God is a holy God, how can He allow anyone to be tempted into sin? This is beginning to look like it is God who is making Saul sin. Now we must remember that God isn't doing the sinning. Saul is doing the sinning. Saul is the one who was created in the image of God, and who, all the

way from the depths of his heart, is in rebellion against God.

Now God can restrain sin in Saul's life, as He has done to some degree in order that Saul might be a good king over Israel. But when God removes His hand of restraint, then this allows Saul to become more firmly in the grasp of Satan, in whose dominion he is normally, anyway. And Saul simply does what comes more naturally to him now, and that is to sin. That is the normal posture of Saul, to sin. That's the normal situation of mankind. Mankind's heart is desperately wicked.

In other words, any time God takes His hand of restraint off of any unsaved man's life, that man is going to start sinning more desperately.

CALLER: Is that what it means in Romans 1, when it speaks of the lifting of God's hand from someone?

HC: In Romans 1 we read that God gave them up to all kinds of immorality, and so on, and so on. Three times in Romans 1 we have the terrible words, "God gave them up." Now that is emphasizing, amongst other things, that if man persists in rebellion against God, then eventually God allows wickedness to multiply in their lives and gives them up to that which is natural within their lives, so that they become increasingly sinful.

Now this non-neutrality of God is also emphasized in II Thessalonians 2. It's very surprising how God becomes involved in the sins of mankind, never making Him the author of sin, never making any sin to be charged at God's door. But because the basic nature of man is so fantastically sinful, the heart of man is desperately wicked, the moment that God removes any restraint from man, any insights from man as to what really goodness is, man will automatically become exactly what he is.

Now we read in II Thessalonians 2, where it's talking about, in verse 10, those who are to perish "because they refused to love the truth, and so be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Now how does God do this? All He does is remove His hand of restraint, and He lets them be as blind as they are by nature.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Was King Saul Saved? (233B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: Hello. I have a question regarding whether or not Saul was saved. In I Samuel 28:19, where Saul is talking with the medium, and he calls up Samuel, and then Samuel says in verse 19, when he's telling Saul that he will be killed, he says, "Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me." And then the next reference is in II Samuel 1:23, where David is talking about Saul and Jonathan, and then he says, "In death they were not parted." I would like for you to speak to that.

HC: The question is raised concerning the salvation of Saul. And this is speaking not of Saul of Tarsus in the New Testament, although he also was a Benjamite and was a very important man in God's program. But this is King Saul in the Old Testament, the first king over the tribes of Israel. Was he saved or not?

And the language of the Bible is somewhat difficult to follow. We read, to complicate the question further than what has been raised in the question, when we go to I Samuel 10, in verse 6, "Then the Spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon you [this is Samuel talking to Saul, when he's just anointed him to be king], and you shall prophesy

with them and be turned into another man." And we read in verse 9, "When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him [that is, Saul] another heart. And all these signs came to pass that day." So that sounds like he was saved.

Again, as has been pointed out, in I Samuel 28 the witch of Endor declared, through this apparition which appeared to be Samuel but who was not Samuel, "Tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me." Now this whole business of I Samuel 28 is another question altogether. This actually is not Samuel speaking. This was an apparition conjured up by Satan himself, because this medium was an ambassador of Satan. But Saul was convinced that it was Samuel. Actually, this statement, "Tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me," had some truth in it, in that death did come to Saul and his sons the next day. But as to whether Saul and his sons all went to be with the Lord, as Samuel had, that's another question altogether.

Now this statement in II Samuel 1, where David indicates in verse 23, "Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely, in life and in death they were not divided. They were swifter than eagles. They were stronger than lions," suggests, too, that maybe Saul was saved, because Jonathan was a very personal friend of David. We don't read anything negative about Jonathan. And we could conclude that Jonathan probably was saved. And if in death they were not divided, the suggestion might be that Saul also was saved. However, this verse is not conclusive at all, because it is true that in the grave they were not divided. And in that sense death claimed them. This is not a discourse on everything that happened after death.

If Jonathan was saved he went to be with Christ in his soul, and if Saul was unsaved, his soul went into another place, called Hades. But the very fact that it says, "In death they were not divided" could refer to their bodies, that they were both buried in the same grave, in the same tomb.

But there's other language in the Bible that suggests very strongly that Saul was not saved. It's very very strong language. We read in Psalm 18, I believe it is, where David is indicating these words, and the heading of this psalm, which is part of the Holy Canon also "A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who addressed the words of this psalm to the Lord on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul."

And then he goes on to speak as if he were the Messiah. This is a Messianic psalm. It says in verse 4, "The cords of death encompassed me. The torrents of perdition assailed me. The cords of Sheol entangled me. The snares of death confronted me." This is the language of Christ going to the cross. And of course Christ went to the cross to pay for our sins, but also there He was delivered from all of the hands of His enemies, because He rose from the grave. He was saved from this once He had paid for our sins. And it was His enemies who had brought Him to the cross.

And so Psalm 18 is putting Saul in the same class with Satan, with those who are totally antagonistic toward God. And we see this also in Saul's life. For the last ten or fifteen years of his life he sought constantly to kill David. And a murderer is not one that has eternal life.

Now this language of I Samuel 10 probably refers to the fact that Saul was qualified by the Holy Spirit to be a king. You must bear in mind that before Saul became king, Israel had no king, it had no court, it had no palace, it had no protocol, it had no army. It had nothing at all of this nature. It was led by God, and the servant of God was a man like Samuel, who was a prophet, who just kind of went in and out amongst the people. But there was no regal ruling of

any kind.

And so here Saul is a farm boy. He really was a farm boy. And God now is going to make him king. And so this was a very very large change, where there was no preparation of any kind. And God qualified Saul to be king by giving him another heart, not in the sense of being born again, but in the sense of giving him the ability to rule wisely.

Now Saul actually was a pretty good king. He did rule quite wisely. The only trouble is, he rebelled against God very quickly, and therefore God took the throne away from him and eventually gave it to King David. And when we look at the rulers over Israel, they really begin with David. David is the line that began the real rule over Israel, even though Saul had reigned forty years before David.

I really believe that Saul was not saved. I really believe that the burden of the evidence is that he was not saved. And when the witch of Endor was prophesying through an evil spirit that tomorrow you and your sons would supposedly be with Samuel, this was true in the sense that they would be dead tomorrow, but not true in the sense that they would all be in Heaven with Christ. And I think that the passage in II Samuel, where David says, "Saul and Jonathan, in life and in death they were not divided," can easily be explained if we think of death in terms of the grave rather than in terms of the place where their souls went.

The "Cave" as a Figure of Hell in I Samuel 22:1 (257A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Several weeks ago I asked you something about a passage in I Samuel 22. And there we read, "David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him, and he became captain over them."

And then we agreed that this is a marvelous figure of mankind's sin situation. And David is a figure of Christ, who is the captain of salvation. But you also mentioned something interesting, if I'm quoting you correctly, that the word cave is often a figure of judgment, or a figure of hell.

And I saw something in Psalm 142 that I wanted to share with you today, to see if it applies. The heading is, "A maschal of David, when he was in the cave." It's a prayer. And in verses 3 and 4 we read, "In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. I look to the right watch, but there is none who takes notice of me. No refuge remains to me. No man cares for me. I cry to Thee, oh Lord. I say, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low."

And this seems to suggest the same type of condition. And I wondered if you could reply.

HC: Yes. Your question really is, Is there a relationship between Psalm 142, that talks about a song that David wrote when he was in the cave, and I Samuel 22, which gives us a description of him in the cave? And can we tie these two passages together and see in both of these Christ as Messiah?

Now in Psalm 142, this definitely is a Messianic psalm. It is the language of Christ, who is about to go to the cross. And the terribleness of the wrath of God is such, because of the sin of mankind, that He is crying to God, "Oh God, make sure that I will come out after I have paid for the sins of mankind." This is a Messianic psalm that finds similar language in other psalms.

We read, for example, in Psalm 18:4: "The cords of death encompassed me, the torrents of perdition assailed me, the cords of Sheol entangled me, the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord. To my God I cried for help."

This is already seen when Christ is in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Father, is it possible that this cup might pass from Me?" The terror of facing the wrath of God is so great. This is the language of Psalm 142. And so he says, "Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low. Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me. Bring me out of prison." Hell is prison, where he is going to spend the equivalent of an eternity on our behalf. But Christ is effectively saying, "I don't want to be consumed there. Once I have adequately paid for the sins of those who have died, be sure that I will be raised, that I will come into the land of the living."

And notice it continues: "The righteous will surround me, for thou wilt deal bountifully with me." And the righteous are the kingdom that Christ came to establish. They will surround Him. They will be His people eternally.

Now this ties right back, and very correctly, to I Samuel 22, where David went into this cave, the cave of Adullam. That cave is a figure of hell, as Psalm 142 very clearly proves. And those of us who believe on Him meet Him at the cross. That is, we meet Christ where we are, requiring salvation. We are subject to hell. We're under the wrath of God. It is here that He became sin for us. And therefore we can be free from hell.

And I don't know if I talked about this before with you. But that next phrase, "And there were with Him about 400 men". The number four in the Bible is very frequently a figure of universality. And it suggest in I Samuel 20, at any rate, that those who would meet Jesus in hell, that is, those who would become saved, because of Christ going to hell on our behalf, would come from every part of the world. It would be a universal salvation in that sense.

CALLER: Do you think you can put your finger on something else that talks about 400?

HC: What else relating to 400 speaks of universality? Well, we know, for example, that the number four is used in the sense of the four winds of the earth, the four corners of the earth. "Men will come from the north, the south, the east and the west, and sit down at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." These are a couple of illustrations. There may be more, that just don't come to mind right now.

CALLER: In Chapter 24 of I Samuel, this is when David spares Saul. And he's in a cave again. He's in a cave, and this is where Saul is trying to kill him, in this cave. Could that have the same implication?

HC: Does I Samuel 24, where David again is in a cave, and Saul is still trying to kill him, at which time David could have killed Saul, because he cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, have the same idea? I really think it does. You see, Saul is a figure of Satan. And Christ actually did destroy Satan by going to the cross, by enduring hell for our sins. Now he didn't destroy Saul at this point, because there was also the historical development that had to be carried out. But he had the capacity to destroy Saul. And only because Saul was the anointed king, he did not. But figuratively speaking, he did destroy Saul, because was in his power at that point. And Christ went to the cross to destroy Satan, as we read in Hebrews 2:14.

Incidentally, if I may add just one more quick thought, the interesting thing in I Samuel 24:2 is that Saul took 3000 chosen men and went to seek David. Now that's kind of interesting, that Saul took 3000 men, because the number

three in the Bible is frequently related to God Himself.

You see, it was God's program that Christ should go to hell. It was God's program that Christ would do battle with Satan. It was God's program that it would be the hour of the power of darkness, and Satan himself would enter into Judas and betray Christ, and so on. And I think this is perhaps, perhaps, signified by the fact that Saul comes with 3000 men. In the spiritual sense here, he is coming in order to accomplish God's program in precise detail. Satan accomplished God's program in precise detail by bringing Christ to the cross. But in doing this Satan himself was destroyed, even as Saul was brought into the power of David, so that he could have destroyed Saul.

CALLER: Is it also significant in verse 3 that it says, "David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave," because Christ went down into the innermost parts of the earth?

HC: The Bible teaches, in Matthew 12:40, that Jesus was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. And the heart of the earth is very definitely a similar statement to that which we find in I Samuel 24:3, where it says that David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave.

In other words, Christ endured the awfulness of the totality of hell on our behalf. It was not just a skirmish with hell. It was not just a superficial contact with hell. But He had to enter into the bowels of hell, in a sense, in order to save us, because that's how deep our sins are. That is where we are under the wrath of God. We are subject to the depths of hell for our sins.

CALLER: That makes wonderful sense. Thank you.

HC: Thank you. Good night.

The Gospel in David and Goliath in I Samuel 17 (274C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have one question. In I Samuel 17:38-40, I'd like to know, in these verses is there a message for the Christians today?

HC: The question is raised concerning I Samuel 17:38-40, whether there is a message in this concerning the Christians today. Well, I haven't really looked at these very carefully, but let's look at them a moment and see if we can quickly discover anything.

It's at a time that Israel is being assaulted by the Philistines. Saul is king, and the Israelites are really in terror before the Philistines. And now there is this Goliath, who is threatening to destroy Israel, and no one dares go out and fight Goliath.

We read in verse 16 of I Samuel 17: "For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening." In other words, this forty is referring to the question of Israel being tested. Are they going to trust in God, or are they going to stand in fear because they don't have trust in God?

And now David comes forth, and he is just a youth. He has no armor, and he's brought before Saul, and he's ready to fight this Philistine. And then we read there that David said to Saul, in verse 34: "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father, and when there came a lion or a bear and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and smote him and killed him. Your servant has killed both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.

"And David said, The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion, from the paw of the bear, will deliver me

from the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Go. And the Lord be with you. Then Saul clothed David with his armor [this is verse 38]. He put on a helmet of bronze on his head, and clothed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword over his armor, and he tried in vain to go, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, I cannot go with these, for I am not used to them. And David put them off. Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in his shepherd's bag [or wallet]. His sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine."

I believe there is a beautiful lesson here for us. You see, David is assaulting the kingdom of Satan, and he is doing it in the power of the Lord. The number five in the Bible really is the number of grace. It is the number of redemption. I don't have time now to give illustrations of where this number is used in this way, but it is the number of redemption. And here David of course is a figure of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He takes his staff in his hand. Now his staff, of course, is reminiscent of "The Lord is my Shepherd." He cares for us with His rod and His staff. It is a staff that is a figure of the rod of God's wrath, as He pours out His wrath on the unsaved. He will break the enemies as a potter would break the vessels.

And the armor that is spoken of here would be a figure of anything that would be of earthly might. This is Saul's way of doing it. "You've got to be clothed with my armor and with my sword." And that is not the way we go out to fight the battles of the Lord. This isn't the way Christ took on Satan and endured the wrath of God for our sins. It was not in the power of this creation. It was not in the power of men, or what men could provide. It was in the power of God.

And so David went forth without any armor, just armed with his sling and his five smooth stones, and his staff. And of course he accomplished fantastic victory.

The Deceitfulness of Mediums in I Samuel 28 (278B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I would like to talk about the Witch of Endor. Was that really Samuel that was brought up, or was it something else?

HC: The question that is raised is concerning the Witch of Endor, that we read about in I Samuel 28. This is a passage that, if we read it just fairly superficially, we can come to the very distinct conclusion that Satan has some power over the dead, that he was about to raise up Samuel.

But when we read it more carefully, we find that it's not so at all, if we read it really in the light of everything that the Bible offers. Now you see, Saul, who is king of Israel, has reigned for forty years. And he has rebelled against God, and God's wrath is against Saul. And the prophet Samuel, who is the spokesman for God in that day, had died several years previously. And more than that, Saul would not even go to Saul in the closing days of Samuel's life. And after Samuel died, Saul more directly than ever would try to get information from any other source than from God Himself.

And so the Philistines are at war with Israel, over whom Saul reigned. And things are looking very bad for Israel. And so Saul goes to a medium, or to a witch, in order to ascertain what the future is going to bring, whether he is going to be successful in this endeavor, in this war with the Philistines.

It reminds us of some of our leaders in our land today, whom we hear about now and then, who go to mediums, in order to find out the future. Now this was really an abomination altogether. The fact is, God had commanded Saul earlier to kill

all the mediums and the witches and the wizards from the land. And God had warned, in Deuteronomy, that the Israelites were not to have anything at all to do with those who were diviners or mediums or enchanters, or whatever.

But Saul is in rebellion against God. Saul is anti-God. And so in his desperation he goes to this witch, this medium of Endor. And he asks that Samuel be brought up, because he wants to talk to Samuel. And lo and behold, we read in verse 11, that Saul says, "Bring up Samuel for me." When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul." The king said to her, "Have no fear. What do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a god coming up out of the earth." He said to her, "What is his appearance?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel. And he bowed with his face to the ground and did obeisance. Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" And Samuel goes on to tell him, in verse 19, "The Lord will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines. And tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. The Lord will give the army of Israel also into the hands of the Philistines."

Now when we read this casually, or superficially, it certainly looks like this medium was able to bring up Samuel, and that Samuel talked to Saul, and Samuel told him exactly what was going to happen on the morrow, that Saul and his sons would be killed, and the Lord would give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.

And when we go into the next couple of chapters, we'll find that this is exactly the thing that happened. Saul and his sons were killed, and Israel was defeated by the Philistines. And so it would certainly seem that the witch had been able to bring up Samuel.

But when we read it more carefully, we find that this is not really the case at all. First of all, how do we know this is Samuel? Well, what does the medium know about him? It just says, "When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice." Now Saul says to her, in verse 14, "What is his appearance?" In other words, "How do you know that this is Samuel?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe."

Now do you see how if we want to see something we're going to see it? She wanted to see Samuel, because she was genuine in her ability to foretell the future. And as a slave of Satan, as an emissary of Satan, she had been able to do other things of this nature previously. And so she's convinced that this apparition that she is looking at, which looks like an old man, wrapped in a robe, that this is Samuel.

Now notice what Saul said. It says, "And Saul knew that it was Samuel." But what did Saul see? Well, we read here that Saul didn't see anything. The woman saw Samuel, which was really this apparition of an old man wrapped in a robe. And the woman said to Saul, "I see a god coming up out of the earth," and he said to her, "What is his appearance?" In other words, he didn't see anything. And yet because he was convinced, and completely deceived that she could bring up Samuel, therefore, when they saw this apparition that appeared to look like an old man, they were both convinced they were looking at Samuel. And Saul begins to worship and address him as Samuel. And God carries out this deception by simply going on and speaking, "And Samuel said to Saul," and so on.

Now how do we know it wasn't Samuel? Well, first of all, nowhere in the Bible does God indicate that Satan (and remember, this witch of Endor was under

the power of Satan) has the power over those who are born again believers, to bring them up from the dead. Only God can resurrect a person. Satan can never do this.

Secondly, where did Samuel go when he died? The Bible says that "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." Samuel was a priest of God, and he was in Heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ, along with Moses and Elijah, and all the other believers that were there. And so he would not have come up. True, his body may have come out of the grave, if indeed there had been a bringing up here. But Samuel, in order to speak, would have had to come down from Heaven.

And so this whole thing was a hoax. This whole thing was a deception, worked out by Satan himself. This is exactly the way mediums operate today. They are convinced they are speaking with the dead, because Satan mimics the voice of the dead. Evil spirits mimic their voices. Evil spirits make tables move, and create certain other phenomena in haunted houses, and so on, because Satan breaks the barrier between the supernatural and the natural.

Now what about the fact that the evil spirit speaking through this apparition is able to foretell what's going to happen tomorrow? That, of course, is because Satan is part of the spirit world. Mediums today are frequently able to foretell the future with a reasonable degree of accuracy far beyond that which they could guess at. Somehow Satan has some knowledge of the future. We know this, of course, that whatever Satan's knowledge of the future is, it is going to be frustrated by God. Whatever events will be frustrated by God, in those events he will be incorrect.

It certainly was Satan's desire that the Philistines would destroy Israel, and destroy their king. And God allowed this to happen. And so Satan certainly was accurate in his prognostication, in his forecast of what tomorrow would bring. But this does not mean for a moment that this was Samuel speaking to Saul. It was Satan himself, or an evil spirit, speaking to Saul through this apparition of Samuel.

We must not have anything at all to do with the occult world, no matter how good or how holy it may be. Saul was convinced that this was Samuel. And since it was Samuel, he perhaps reasoned in his heart, "I did something terribly sinful in going to this medium, this witch of Endor. But here is Samuel, and that certainly underscores that maybe it wasn't as bad as it might have been." Saul may have reasoned this in his heart.

But God does not want us to have anything to do with the occult. If we want to find anything at all about God, we must go to the Bible. The Bible reveals to us the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Prophet to whom we are to listen. And Christ calls Himself the Word. And the Word of God is what we read in order that we might know truth.

Well, thank you for those questions.

2 SAMUEL

Was David Moved by the Lord or Satan? (346B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I have one question involving two separate parts of the Bible. In II Samuel 24 and I Chronicles 21 there are great similarities. And my main question then is, in reading the opening verses of both chapters, in II Samuel 24 it says the Lord moved David against Israel to count them, but in I Chronicles 21 it says Satan moved David against Israel to count them. And that puzzles me a bit.

HC: All right. Now the question is raised concerning II Samuel 24 as it relates to I Chronicles 21. In II Samuel 24:1 we read, "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, Go number Israel and Judah. For the king said to Joab, the captain of the host which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people that I may know the number of the people."

Then in I Chronicles 21:1 we read, "And Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel. And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go number Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan. And bring the number of them to me that I may know it."

And then if we go on in the context we'll discover that this was sin on David's part. Actually, God here is letting Satan have his way. You see, God restrains sin in the lives of unbelievers. He restrains sin in the lives of believers. Even believers like David still have an old nature that lusts after sin. Praise God that once we're saved we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, and God strengthens us, so that we are able to not fall so easily under the temptations of Satan. But here God allows Satan to have his way with David, and removes His hand of restraint on David in order that David might commit this sin. Satan can do nothing except under the permissive will of God. We see this very clearly, of course, in Job 1 and 2.

Now this sinful act on David's part was really a repudiation of God being his strength. He was numbering the people of Israel from the same vantage point that the Eastern kings did, to indicate his strength, his power, his might. His glory was not in God at that point. His glory was in his own strength. And so this became a real sin in David's life, and it brought great judgment against the nation of Israel.

CALLER: Yes, I see. Apparently Joab, in both chapters, was reluctant to number. He must have had some knowledge.

HC: Joab, in both of these passages, is really speaking out for the right. In other words, David is doing this in the face of good, sound advice from his general. But you see, when we become perverse, when we take our eyes off God and try to satisfy our own ego or our own pride, sometimes we are very very insistent on having our own way, are we not? And that's where we really get into sin.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

1 KINGS

Solomon's Besetting Sin in 1 Kings 11 (448A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I'm in I Kings 11, concerning the end of Solomon's life. And I was wondering if you could shed any light on why he let his wives turn his heart away from the Lord.

HC: All right. The question that's raised is concerning the end of King Solomon's life. King Solomon reigned for forty years, and was a marvelous king, the wisest of all kings who ever reigned on the face of the earth, and who had so many endowments and wonderful privileges. How is it possible that in his old age he allowed his wives to turn his heart from God, so that he actually, in a sense, began to worship other gods, and brought the wrath of God upon him? How is this possible?

Well, I think Solomon's life is a classic illustration of what happens if we do not take care of the besetting sin. You know, God lets us go along. There may be something in our life. We're a child of

God; we've actually become born again. And yet there is an area of our life that we never quite straightened out. Oh, it didn't seem to be really troublesome, but yet it was contrary to the will of God. And God lets us go on and on and on.

Now there's a natural development of sin. Sin develops additional sin. Sin goes in the direction of destruction. Now if we're truly a child of God, this sin will not make us lose our salvation. But my, oh my, that sin ultimately can really get us into serious trouble. And it can bring us very low, and can be a real terrible thing in our life before it's all done with, because there is this natural outworking of sin.

Now this was the case with Solomon. He was a wonderful king, a marvelous child of God. But there was one little problem that he hadn't resolved. He loved women. And his father David had a harem of several wives, and this got David into trouble. But this wasn't enough of a lesson for King Solomon. He multiplied the harem. And this was contrary to the Word of God. God had declared, way back before Israel ever came into the land of Canaan. When you have a king they should not multiply wives.

But God didn't trouble Solomon about this. God allowed it to happen. God allowed it to go. Solomon was not reminded of his sin, and because it was in vogue in those days for kings to have harems, and because father David had had a number of wives, he continued to let them multiply.

But Solomon wasn't getting away with it. Eventually his wives began to turn him away from God. He wanted to please his wives as well as please God, and so he raised up high places, and so on. And this was such a terrible abomination that God took the kingdom away from Solomon. Except for the promise He had made to his father David, that the lamp would never go out, God would have taken all twelve tribes away from Israel, or from Solomon's son Rehoboam. As it was, He took ten tribes away.

Solomon did not get away with his sin. Now that sin was covered by the blood of Christ. In the life of the believer all of our sins are covered. But if we have a besetting sin that we do not get victory over, and in Solomon's case, of course, it was a very incidental sin, in view of everything God had said heretofore, and in view of the customs of that day, it was a relatively incidental sin, and we have these in our lives, too. Of course, had Solomon been serving other gods all his life, had he been going after other gods as a youth, and continuing this way, it would have indicated he was never saved, because we could never live that way for a lifetime.

Thank you so much for calling and sharing. Good night.

2 CHRONICLES

Healing the Land in 2 Chr 7:14 (356D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Good evening. Could you please relate II Chronicles 7:14 to the matter of the aging of the earth?

HC: Yes. All right. II Chronicles 7:14: "If my people which are called by My name shall humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from Heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Yes, now how does that relate to the fact that this world is wearing out and that it's doomed to be destroyed by fire? Actually, you must remember that this world has continued for about 13,000 years. During this 13,000 years many nations have arisen. Many tribes have existed, and so on. And it's only at the end of time that we see the earth finally

wear out. It's only at the end of time that it's going to be destroyed by fire. In the meanwhile this earth goes on. Therefore, at any time in history, except at the end of time, it is a truism that if a people will turn from their sins and cry out to God for mercy, He will bring His blessings upon them, not only spiritual blessings, but the land will also react in a very close relationship to these blessings.

But when we come to the end of time (where we are now, I believe with all my heart), then we get to the point where two things are happening. First of all, there is no more healing of the land possible, because it is at the end of time, and secondly, there is no repentance that will come. There is no repentance.

Now the Bible teaches, on the one hand, that this earth is going to wear out. But it also teaches that wickedness will multiply, in Matthew 24, "Wickedness will multiply and most men's love will grow cold. II Thessalonians 2 indicates that the rebellion will come, and the man of sin will take his seat in the temple. That is, Satan will begin to rule in the congregations. The whole world becomes increasingly rebellious. And at the same time the evidence of the final demise of the earth becomes apparent also.

It's very interesting when you read the Bible that there's a very close parallel between creation and its fortunes and the spiritual conduct of mankind. We see this very interestingly in the almost destroyed Nineveh, in the Book of Jonah. If you read the last verse of the Book of Jonah, it says there that Jonah is unhappy because God did not destroy Nineveh, which was the enemy of Israel, and then God says to him, "Don't you realize that there were 120,000 in this city who did not know their right hand from the left, and much cattle?" Now why did He talk about the cattle? The cattle were representative of the creation. And if the 120,000 were destroyed because of their wickedness, then the cattle would have been destroyed, even as happened in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah or in the destruction of the world by the flood. Everything with the breath of life was destroyed. Or in the destruction of the firstborn of the cattle when the firstborn of Egypt was killed. Or in the destruction of all of the animals in Jericho when they were destroyed. There is a parallel development of God's plan that comes upon creation as it comes upon man.

Now by the same token, God uses language to indicate that even as there is redemption for man, there is a redemption for this earth. Mankind is redeemed by experiencing the resurrection, and this earth will be redeemed in that it will be burned by fire and be recreated New Heavens and a New Earth.

But when we read II Chronicles 7:14, while this holds throughout time, and Nineveh is a good example of this; they repented of their sins, and God did not destroy them nor the cattle nor the city. You see, God healed their land. Had they continued in their rebellion against God, had they not repented when Jonah preached to them, they would have been destroyed, but so would have the cattle been destroyed. The whole city would have been destroyed, as Jericho was destroyed, and Sodom and Gomorrah.

CALLER: We as a nation have experienced so much moral decay, and in the last fifteen years or so we have experienced such great pollution. I too believe that we're close to the end of time, but I was just wondering how this passage in II Chronicles fit in.

HC: It still stands as a warning. But I'm afraid that it is too late. I'm afraid that we're right near the end of time. You made an interesting observation. Our nation (and not only our nation but every nation in the world in these last ten or fifteen years) has experienced great moral decay. Therefore, because there is

this parallel condition that prevails, that as nations become more wicked, then also the earth begins to suffer, there is that parallel relationship that continues, therefore we can expect more and more natural calamities, more and more droughts and famines and earthquakes and pestilence's of various kinds. I really believe that, although it will be very difficult to measure. I think time is moving along so very swiftly, the time is approaching so very quickly that it will be difficult to really have a good barometer, a good standard with which to measure the increase in these various natural catastrophes.

But I think we will sense, more and more, that these things are happening. We'll become more sensitive than ever that things aren't quite as normal as we can remember them from way back.

NEHEMIAH

Rebuilding the Wall in Nehemiah 4 (339D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. In Nehemiah 4, does the rebuilding of the walls of the city of Jerusalem by the remnant of Israel somehow symbolically mean it is the believer's duty today to build and renew the church by making disciples, first at home and then expanding to encompass the whole world? Is there some symbolical meaning in that chapter for me?

HC: The question is raised concerning the building of the walls of Jerusalem as we see it related to us in Nehemiah 4. Nehemiah came with a remnant out of Babylon, and in a space of fifty-two days he built the walls of Jerusalem. And we see a rather detailed account of this building.

Now the question is raised, does this symbolize in any sense the task that the believer has today, to build the walls of the temple, or the walls of Jerusalem? And by all mean, yes, that is so. We are temple builders. When we bring the Gospel as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are building the temple of God. Each believer becomes a living stone in the house of God, we read in I Peter 2:4 or 5. Or in Ephesians 2 it speaks about us being built into a most holy temple. Or in Acts 15, as the Gentiles are coming into the body of Christ, the Old Testament reference is to the rebuilding of the ruins of the dwelling of David.

When we are bringing the Gospel, we are building the walls of Jerusalem, of the holy city, or the walls of the temple, the body of Christ. And certainly it is typified by Nehemiah 4.

CALLER: Thank you so much, Mr. Camping.

JOB

What Type of Animal Was Leviathan in Job 41? (093B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I want to thank you for this program. It's the first time I've ever called, but I appreciate listening to it.

We have a neighbor that's very concerned because the Bible never speaks anything about prehistoric animals. And I mentioned this to a fellow I work with, and he said he was listening one time when you gave a scripture describing the skin, etc., of dinosaurs. And I was just wondering if you would mind taking a few minutes to give me some of those verses.

HC: Yes. There is a passage in the Bible that describes a very fearsome beast which cannot be a beast that lives on the earth today. And that is described in Job

41, the whole chapter of Job 41. As it's described, it reminds you of the dragons that you read about in mythology. Now those myths, of course, are myths, but they still have their roots in some kind of truth way back when. And we find, of course, the fossilized bones of very huge animals that once roamed the earth.

Now when the Flood came, 7000 years ago, the world was destroyed, and all of these prehistoric (the word prehistoric really means those that lived before the invention of writing, before any written history could be recorded) animals, that lived before the Flood, would have been destroyed, although Noah was commanded to put 2 of every kind into the ark. So you can be sure that there were a couple of baby dinosaurs and a couple of baby this and baby that on the ark.

But the weather conditions were much colder after the Flood. The fact that the ice covered a large part of some of the continents was because of the Flood. And so the worldwide temperature was much lower. And so the environment was not conducive to large scale development of these large animals again.

But it seems that as long as 3000 years after the Flood, when Job was written, because the Book of Job was written around 1800 BC, whereas the Flood occurred in 4990 BC, there could have still been living some of these large animals, that had survived the Flood by coming into the Ark, and who again multiplied to some degree.

And so you have this vivid description of an animal in Job 41. It says, for example, in verse 7: "Can you fill a skin with harpoons, or his head with fishing spears? Lay hands on him. Think of the battle. You will not do it again."

Or in verse 10: "No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up. Who then is he that can stand before Me?" And then verse 12: "I will not keep silence concerning his limbs or his mighty strength or his goody frame. Who can strip off his outer garments? Who can penetrate his double coat of mail? Who can open the doors of his face, round about his teeth, his terror? His back is made of rows of shield shut up closely, as with a seal. One is so near to another that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another. They clasp each other and cannot be separated. His sneezings flash forth light, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn."

And then it goes on in verse 23: "The folds of his flesh cleave together, firmly cast upon him, and immovable, as hard as the stone, hard as the nether millstone. When he raises himself up, the mighty are afraid at the crashing. They are beside themselves. Though the sword reaches him, it does not avail, nor the spear, the dart or the javelin. He counts iron as straw and bronze as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee. For him sling stones are turned to stubble. Clubs are counted as stubble. He laughs at the rattle of javelins. His underparts are like sharp potsherds. He spreads himself like a threshing sledge on mire. He makes the deep boil like a pot. He makes the sea like a pot of ointment. Behind him he leaves a shining wake. One would think the deep to be hoary. Upon earth there is not his like, a creature without fear. He beholds everything that is high. He is king over all the sons of pride."

Now this is actually a figure of Satan himself. From the context we would gather that. But nevertheless it is a literal animal that seems to have been living in that day.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

PSALMS

Psalm 23 Explained (110A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Some time ago you did an explanation of Psalm 23, and I wondered if you would do that again tonight.

HC: Psalm 23. I'll try to do that.

The question that's raised is: What does God teach in the 23rd Psalm? We are all quite familiar with this, of course. I think most of us are. But it is a psalm that is loaded with deep spiritual meaning.

Now the first verse goes: "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want." It's interesting how God presents Himself to us as a Shepherd. In Ezekiel 34 we find such a beautiful statement about the kind of a shepherd that God is. He says in verse 11 of Ezekiel 34:

For thus says the Lord God. Behold, I, I Myself will search for My sheep and will seek them out, as a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad. So will I seek out My sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered, on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land.

And I will feed them in the mountains of Israel, by the fountains, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and upon the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, on fat pasture. They shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I Myself will be the Shepherd of My sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over. I will feed them in justice.

Now you see how God repeatedly uses this figure that He is a Shepherd. And you will recall in John 10 that Christ says, "I am the Good Shepherd. I lay down My life for My sheep." And so when it says here, "Jehovah, the Lord, is my Shepherd," it is really speaking of those who have been sought out by God and who have been found. It is talking about those who are born again believers, those who have become children of God.

No wonder it goes on to say, "I shall not want," because when we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ we have everything on our side. We are of royal blood. We are heirs of all the promises that we find in the Bible. Jesus promises, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And He of course is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the Almighty Ruler of the universe. So we have everything going for us.

Now: "He makes me lie down in green pastures." And the word green here is a word that really means the tender grass. He leads me where the grass is the most tasty. In a pasture the older grass is not nearly as quickly eaten as the young tender grass, because the older grass is more difficult to digest. And it does not have the taste, apparently. And so sheep will always eat the new grass first. God, of course, when He provides for us, provides that which is the very best.

"He makes me lie down." We are safe and secure when we are in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have no fear. A lamb, a sheep, that is frightened is not going to lie down. It will be running hither and thither. But when a lamb is safe and secure, and there is abundant food, then he can lie down in the pasture land.

Now of course when He provides this pasture, it means that there is abundant food. And we feed on the Lord Jesus

Christ. He is the Bread of Life. He is of course identified totally with the Word of God. And as we read the Word of God, we are feeding on Him.

Then it says, "He leads me beside still waters." The word still here really means waters of rest. Again you get that picture of having arrived, of having finally found total safety and security. The land of Canaan is called the Land of Rest in Hebrews 3 and Hebrews 4. And it's a figure of salvation. We rest in Christ.

Now you see, the fact is, before we are saved we are struggling. We are desperately trying to find a way back to God. And of course we're doing this by thinking we can do good things, by thinking that somehow by our good works, by our worthiness we can come to the Lord Jesus Christ. But the fact is that when we realize that Christ has paid it all, and that we only have to rest in Him, then we have found the true rest.

Now waters bespeak of the Word of God. You'll recall that in John 7 it says that when we belong to Christ, out of our belly will flow rivers of living water. The Word of God will flow from us. And we are led by Christ into this land of rest, which is described here in the Word of God. All of this is totally interrelated with each other.

"He restores my soul." Now before we are saved, in body and soul we are unsaved. Before we are saved, body and soul we are antagonistic toward God. But the first grand and wonderful thing that happens when we are saved is that we experience the resurrection of our souls. We are restored to Christ. We are no longer an alien. We are no longer against God. We read in Psalm 19:7: "The Law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul." It is the Word of God in which we can discover about this salvation. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit that leads us to a repentant attitude so that we experience salvation.

It goes on: "He leads me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake." Remember, Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." This is the path, this is the way that we walk when we become born again, when we are a sheep, when we are under the care of the Shepherd, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been led in the way of Christ. And it's the way of righteousness. We read in II Corinthians 5:21: "For our sake He made Him to be [that is, Christ] sin, who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." And so God imputes His righteousness to us, and He leads us on the way to God, which is a righteous way. And it's for His Name's sake. Not because it's going to be for our glory, but it's totally for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our salvation is to bring Him glory.

Then it goes on: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil." No matter how death might threaten, you'll remember what Jesus said, "Don't fear him who can kill the body, but fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell." Even though we are threatened by physical harm, by persecution, we fear no evil because God is always in charge of us. Even at the moment that we would die, because of illness or whatever, we know that we are never abandoned by God, that we are only one breath away from being in His glorious presence.

And so we have the promise, "Thou art with me," Jesus said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." He sends the Holy Spirit, God Himself, the Holy Spirit, to indwell us, from the moment that we are saved.

"Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." The shepherd's rod was the symbol of his leadership. It was the rod that was able to keep the wild animals away. It was symbolical of his care over his flock.

"Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of my enemies." Now the table that is prepared for us is really Christ

Himself. He is the Bread of Life. We eat that Bread in the presence of our enemies. We are in an alien world. Actually, all of the unsaved of the world are enemies of Christ and His followers, enemies of the citizens of God's Kingdom, which we enter into when we are saved. And yet we can very safely and securely feed on the Word of God, because we are protected by God. Even in an alien country like Russia, they don't have the Bible in their home. And yet they can feed on the Word of God, as they recall this verse or that verse from the Word of God.

"Thou anointest my head with oil. My cup overflows" — "Thou anointest my head with oil" refers to the fact that we have been ordained by God, from the moment that we have been saved, to be a king, a prophet, and a priest. A king was made king by having his head anointed, and we read in Ephesians 2:6 that we have been "raised with Christ and are seated with Him." We read in Revelation 5 where it speaks of the fact that we reign with Him on earth. We also have been anointed with oil in the sense that we are priests. We are a royal priesthood, as we read in I Peter 2:9. This is all because of fact that Christ has become our Shepherd.

"My cup overflows." This reminds me of Luke 6. Remember in Luke 6 where it speaks about giving in verse 38? Notice what God will do: "And it will be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back." When we have surrendered our lives to Christ, when we have laid our lives down on the altar of service, as we read in Romans 12:1, then we can expect that God's blessings will flow, and our cup will overflow. He will give us more than we deserve, more than we could ever contemplate. In fact, our whole salvation is just a cup that overflows.

And then the psalm closes with this beautiful promise: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." This is a faithful statement of God that once we are saved, we will always be saved. "All the days of my life." Now how long is my life when I have been saved? Well, the Bible teaches that I have been given eternal life. And so the days of my life continue, on this side of the grave, until I die. And then they continue forever and ever and ever, in the presence of the Lord.

The fact is, the next phrase emphasizes this eternity: "And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Do I dwell in the house of the Lord now? Yes, I do, if I'm born again. This does not mean that I live in a church building. This does not mean that my home is in some kind of a physical temple. The house of God, the house of the Lord, is God Himself, as we read in Psalm 90:1: "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." When we are saved, we are brought into Christ, as we read in Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." When we are in Him, we are dwelling in Him, and we dwell in Him forever. We dwell in Him now that we are saved. We dwell in Him eternally. We read in Revelation 21 or 22 where it says that there is no temple in the New Heaven and the New Earth. The Lord Jesus Christ is our temple. And this is to be forever.

So in Psalm 23 we have a tremendous statement of the security, of the eternal character, of the rest that is found in the born again believer who has been encompassed within the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Shepherd.

On Our Being "Sons of God" in Psalms 82:6 (113A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question about Psalm 82:6. Quite frequently people say that we're all children of God, and that we're all saved as a result. And Psalm 82:6 kind of verifies that. But I can't find in the New Testament where it says that we're given the right to be called children of God, and that's often applied to when you are saved.

HC: When we read Psalm 82, where it says in verse 6, "I say you are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you," we cannot isolate that from the rest of the Bible. This is a statement that is true in a sense. Now let's examine the rest of the Bible and see why it's true.

We go back to Genesis 1, and we discover there that we are created in the image of God. We discover that we are a son of God in that sense. When you look at Luke 3, and you see the genealogy of Jesus, it goes right back to Adam, who was called a son of God. And so because we are created by God, in the image of God, we are called gods, or sons of the Most High.

But the Psalm goes on in the next verse, "Nevertheless you shall die like men and fall as one man, oh princes." That fact, that we have been created sons of God, has been severely strained. We actually have rebelled against God and have been estranged from Him, so that Jesus declared of the Pharisees, "Ye are of your father, the devil." You are sons of Satan, in other words. This is the condition that we finally come to, because we are unsaved.

Now when we are born again, we are reintegrated into the family of God. The curse of sin is taken out of our life, and we again are as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. We have become sons of God. We read in Romans 8:14: "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."

So you see, while man, by virtue of the fact that he is created as part of the human race, in the original sense he was a son of God, he was created in the image of God, his relationship to God has been severely changed, so that effectively he has become a son of Satan. And he can only become a son of God in the true sense of the word by becoming born again, by being saved.

The "Cave" as a Figure of Hell in Psalms 142:1 (257A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Several weeks ago I asked you something about a passage in I Samuel 22. And there we read, "David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him, and he became captain over them."

And then we agreed that this is a marvelous figure of mankind's sin situation. And David is a figure of Christ, who is the captain of salvation. But you also mentioned something interesting, if I'm quoting you correctly, that the word cave is often a figure of judgment, or a figure of hell.

And I saw something in Psalm 142 that I wanted to share with you today, to see if it applies. The heading is, "A maschal of David, when he was in the cave." It's a prayer. And in verses 3 and 4 we read, "In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. I look to the right watch, but there is none who takes notice of me. No refuge remains to me. No man cares for me. I cry to Thee, oh Lord. I say, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low."

And this seems to suggest the same type of condition. And I wondered if you could reply.

HC: Yes. Your question really is, Is there a relationship between Psalm 142, that talks about a song that David wrote when he was in the cave, and I Samuel 22, which gives us a description of him in the cave? And can we tie these two passages together and see in both of these Christ as Messiah?

Now in Psalm 142, this definitely is a Messianic psalm. It is the language of Christ, who is about to go to the cross. And the terrible wrath of God is such, because of the sin of mankind, that He is crying to God, "Oh God, make sure that I will come out after I have paid for the sins of mankind." This is a Messianic psalm that finds similar language in other psalms.

We read, for example, in Psalm 18:4: "The cords of death encompassed me, the torrents of perdition assailed me, the cords of Sheol entangled me, the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord. To my God I cried for help."

This is already seen when Christ is in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Father, is it possible that this cup might pass from Me?" The terror of facing the wrath of God is so great. This is the language of Psalm 142. And so he says, "Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low. Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me. Bring me out of prison." Hell is prison, where he is going to spend the equivalent of an eternity on our behalf. But Christ is effectively saying, "I don't want to be consumed there. Once I have adequately paid for the sins of those who have died, be sure that I will be raised, that I will come into the land of the living."

And notice it continues: "The righteous will surround me, for thou wilt deal bountifully with me." And the righteous are the kingdom that Christ came to establish. They will surround Him. They will be His people eternally.

Now this ties right back, and very correctly, to I Samuel 22, where David went into this cave, the cave of Adullam. That cave is a figure of hell, as Psalm 142 very clearly proves. And those of us who believe on Him meet Him at the cross. That is, we meet Christ where we are, requiring salvation. We are subject to hell. We're under the wrath of God. It is here that He became sin for us. And therefore we can be free from hell.

And I don't know if I talked about this before with you. But that next phrase, "And there were with Him about 400 men". The number four in the Bible is very frequently a figure of universality. And it suggest in I Samuel 20, at any rate, that those who would meet Jesus in hell, that is, those who would become saved, because of Christ going to hell on our behalf, would come from every part of the world. It would be a universal salvation in that sense.

CALLER: Do you think you can put your finger on something else that talks about 400?

HC: What else relating to 400 speaks of universality? Well, we know, for example, that the number four is used in the sense of the four winds of the earth, the four corners of the earth. "Men will come from the north, the south, the east and the west, and sit down at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." These are a couple of illustrations. There may be more, that just don't come to mind right now.

CALLER: In Chapter 24 of I Samuel, this is when David spares Saul. And he's in a cave again. He's in a cave, and this is where Saul is trying to kill him, in this cave. Could that have the same implication?

HC: Does I Samuel 24, where David again is in a cave, and Saul is still trying to kill him, at which time David could have killed Saul, because he cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, have the same idea? I really think it does. You see, Saul is a

figure of Satan. And Christ actually did destroy Satan by going to the cross, by enduring hell for our sins. Now he didn't destroy Saul at this point, because there was also the historical development that had to be carried out. But he had the capacity to destroy Saul. And only because Saul was the anointed king, he did not. But figuratively speaking, he did destroy Saul, because was in his power at that point. And Christ went to the cross to destroy Satan, as we read in Hebrews 2:14.

Incidentally, if I may add just one more quick thought, the interesting thing in I Samuel 24:2 is that Saul took 3000 chosen men and went to seek David. Now that's kind of interesting, that Saul took 3000 men, because the number three in the Bible is frequently related to God Himself.

You see, it was God's program that Christ should go to hell. It was God's program that Christ would do battle with Satan. It was God's program that it would be the hour of the power of darkness, and Satan himself would enter into Judas and betray Christ, and so on. And I think this is perhaps, perhaps, signified by the fact that Saul comes with 3000 men. In the spiritual sense here, he is coming in order to accomplish God's program in precise detail. Satan accomplished God's program in precise detail by bringing Christ to the cross. But in doing this Satan himself was destroyed, even as Saul was brought into the power of David, so that he could have destroyed Saul.

CALLER: Is it also significant in verse 3 that it says, "David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave," because Christ went down into the innermost parts of the earth?

HC: The Bible teaches, in Matthew 12:40, that Jesus was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. And the heart of the earth is very definitely a similar statement to that which we find in I Samuel 24:3, where it says that David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave.

In other words, Christ endured the awfulness of the totality of hell on our behalf. It was not just a skirmish with hell. It was not just a superficial contact with hell. But He had to enter into the bowels of hell, in a sense, in order to save us, because that's how deep our sins are. That is where we are under the wrath of God. We are subject to the depths of hell for our sins.

CALLER: That makes wonderful sense. Thank you.

HC: Thank you. Good night.

"Ye are gods" in Ps 82:6 & Jn 10:34 (394D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. I'd like to ask you about two pieces of scripture. Psalm 82:6, and also, I think Jesus is referring to this Psalm in John 10:34. Would you give me an interpretation of what you feel those verses mean?

HC: Yes. Jesus in John 10:34 is talking to the Pharisees, and they are very incensed against Christ.

CALLER: They're ready to stone Him.

HC: They're ready to stone Him because He is indicating that He is God. And therefore in verse 33 the Jews answered Him, "For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy, because that Thou being a man maketh Thyself God." Then Jesus answered from the scriptures. And He's really putting them down. He's really indicating that they are hypocritical, that they are not reading their scriptures, that they're saying far more than what the Bible says. He's not defending in this context the fact that He is God. He is simply saying that in a real sense every human being is God, in a

certain sense. And we know what that sense is. The sense is that we are created in the image of God. We are created like God. We have eternity within our souls. We can think God's thoughts after Him. We worship God. We are related to God in a very intimate fashion, through creation.

And so He's reminding them of this, "Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If He called them gods [that is, if God Himself calls human beings gods] unto whom the Word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken, say ye of Him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest because I said I am the Son of God?"

In other words, He's putting them down on their own level. He's not at this point emphasizing that He is Eternal God. He is simply indicating that to call Himself a Son of God is not contrary to the scriptures. Now Psalm 82 is the verse that He referred to, where it says, "I have said, ye are gods. Then all of you are children of the Most High."

Now you see, when we become saved, what are we called in Romans 8? We're called sons of God, aren't we?

CALLER: Right. So then in Psalm 82 the Psalmist is, or God is speaking through the Psalmist, actually, in that verse. Is that correct?

HC: Yes. God is speaking through the Psalmist, and is speaking to mankind: "Ye are gods and all of you are children of the Most High. But ye shall die like men and fall like one of the princes." The reason you shall die like men is that you're under the judgment of God, and you're going to hell. But by creation, by virtue of creation, you are created in the image of God and you are in that sense related to God and are like God.

CALLER: Okay.

HC: And we want to really understand that God is not saying that we stand like God stands. We are not God, singular. God is God. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He is infinite in all of his attributes, and marvelous, and holy and all of this. And we never can hold a candle to that.

But nevertheless, in a real sense the Bible speaks of us as being gods. And that is particularly dramatized after we're saved, when the Bible says that we are sons of God.

CALLER: I see. Now somewhere else (I don't remember where) Paul says that one day we will be rulers with God. Do you think this has any connection in that area?

HC: I think it really does. In I Corinthians 6 it says that we will judge men. In Revelation 2 it says that those who conquer will rule the nations with a rod of iron; very similar language to that which is spoken of by Christ. And in Ephesians 2:6 it is stated that we've been raised with Christ, and we are seated with Him in heavenly places. The Bible really becomes almost impossible to believe, as we see the intimate relationship God allows to be spoken of in the relationship that exists between mankind who are saved and God Himself.

CALLER: Okay. That answers a lot for me. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

ISAIAH

The Gospel in Isaiah 6 (1143C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I'd like to ask you a question about Isaiah 61. I get kind of mixed up around verse 6 and verse 7, who all this is referring to. I get lost. So maybe you could clear that up.

HC: First of all, we know from Isaiah 61:1 that it is talking about the coming of the Messiah. "The Spirit of the Lord

God is upon Me because the Lord has anointed Me to bring good tidings to the afflicted. He has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound."

Now this is quoted in Luke's Gospel, when Jesus read from Isaiah. He said, "This day has this prophecy been fulfilled." You can read this in Luke 4. And so Christ came to do these things, to free the captives, those who are in spiritual bondage to Satan, to bind up the broken-hearted, "Blessed are those who mourn," "Blessed are the meek," and so on. "A broken and a contrite heart I will not despise." We come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and because He went to the cross, we can have joy and salvation.

Now in verse 4 it goes on: "They shall build up the ancient ruins. They shall raise up the former devastations. They will repair the ruined cities." Now this is a statement that is pointing to the offering of the Gospel to the world, in order that God's temple and God's city might be built. The city of God in the New Testament is made up of all the born again believers. You'll recall that in Ephesians 2 it says that we are building blocks in this temple. Or in 1 Peter 2:4 it says that we are lively stones in the house of God. We are the Holy City, if you will, in Revelation 21.

And that city, that temple, will be built when the Messiah would come. He came to build the temple of God, to build the city of God, which is really another name for the body of Christ.

Then it goes on in verse 5, and it indicates to us that those who will be exercised and blessed by the coming of the Messiah are more than just the Jews, more than just the blood descendants of Abraham. "Aliens shall stand and feed your flocks. Foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers." There will be others that will come into the body of Christ than just Jews.

"You shall be called the priest, of the Lord. Men shall speak to you as the ministers of our God. You shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory." Now this is talking about the body of Christ, that we are priests of God. Remember what 1 Peter 2:9 says: "Ye are a holy priesthood."

CALLER: Here he seems to be speaking about two Israels here, and that eventually the Gentiles would come into the sphere of Israel, and that the Gentiles also would become the people of God.

HC: Yes.

CALLER: But he says "Ye", which seems to be referring to the Israelites, or a certain group of the Israelites, when he says, "Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord." Have I got that wrong?

HC: Verse 5 is really an insertion, indicating that at this point in time God is speaking to Israel, during the days of Isaiah, that is. And He is prophesying what the future is going to be. And we read in Isaiah 6 that Israel as a nation was cursed, that Israel as a nation would never come to Christ as Messiah, never, until Judgment Day itself.

Nevertheless there is going to be blessing flowing out of Israel, and that blessing is focused, or the head of that blessing is the Lord Jesus Christ who comes out of Israel. But that blessing is going to incorporate more than just believers from Israel. It will include the Gentile world. That's verse 5.

But now He's going on, speaking to Israel about the fact that there is blessing that is going to come out of them. That is, there will be Jewish people that are included in this wonderful blessing that's going to come. Yes, there are aliens, too. There are foreigners. There are Gentiles. But specifically, He is indicating to national Israel that there is still to be blessing that's going to flow out of them, for their own people.

And we know from other Scriptures that it will be a remnant chosen by grace. They themselves, personally, can be priests of God. And they themselves, personally, will be ministers of God and will eat the wealth of the nations. I think eating the wealth of the nations has to do with the fact that the born again believers are the inheritors of the New Heaven and the New Earth. All that the nations own eventually will be owned by the born again believers, in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

CALLER: How about verse 7?

HC: Now we come to verse 7: "Instead of your shame you shall have a double portion." Now Israel is under the curse of God. God has nothing good to say about them, hardly anything good to say about them as a nation. They have repeatedly sinned against God. They're under the curse of God.

But out of Israel there is going to come blessing. Now they are ashamed. Now they are under this terrible curse of God. But through the Lord Jesus Christ the blessing will begin to flow. And anyone out of Israel who joins with the Lord Jesus Christ will no longer be ashamed. He shall have a double portion.

Now the double portion was the portion of the firstborn. He is the one who would receive the inheritance. And we become sons of God, co-heirs of Christ. Christ is the heir because He is the only-begotten Son of God, but we stand in the Kingdom of God as firstborn.

CALLER: I was thinking that it was saying, for your shame you shall have double shame, which destroys the whole meaning.

HC: Yes, "instead of" is, I think, a better way of looking at that. Instead of dishonor you shall rejoice in your lot. And therefore, in your land, or in their land, you shall possess a double portion. Which land is that? It's the land that we enter when we come to Christ. It's Heaven. That's the land that we become citizens of when we become saved. And that eventually will be the New Heaven and the New Earth.

The Gospel in Isaiah 54 (370B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question on Isaiah 54:9. Is this a figure of eternal salvation?

HC: Isaiah 54:9. Let's back up a little bit and pick up the context. In verse 7: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee." Obviously God is talking about Israel. "But with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment. But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, sayeth the Lord, thy Redeemer." He's speaking here of course, about the fact that salvation will come to Israel through the Lord Jesus Christ. "For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me. For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee. Neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, sayeth the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

You see, God is indicating that in spite of the fact that His wrath is on Israel because of their repeated rejection of God, so that God places a curse upon them, that as a nation they will never respond to the Gospel, yet there is a covenant promise. And notice that He talks about the covenant here in verse 10, "this covenant of My peace." There is a covenant promise that He has made with Israel through Abraham, that in Abraham's seed all the nations would be blessed, that the seed of Abraham would be as the stars of the heaven in number, that they would be a multitude of nations, and that they would be given the land as an everlasting heritage.

Now these blessings had not come. But God is absolutely faithful to these blessings. These covenant promises had to do with salvation, had to do with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the seed of Abraham would be expanded to include all believers in Him, whereby the believers would inherit the New Heaven and the New Earth, the final product of their salvation, and thereby receiving the fulfillment of the promise that the seed would inherit the land as an everlasting possession.

This promise is inviolate. It will not be set aside regardless of how wicked national Israel became, or would remain. And so therefore, even though national Israel, right up to the very present day, continues to reject Christ as Messiah, nevertheless Christ did come. He did provide salvation to a remnant chosen by grace; not only in Jesus' day but throughout the New Testament history there has been a trickle of believers from every nation coming into the body of Christ.

Now He relates this to the promise that He gave to Noah, because that also was an inviolate promise. God destroyed the earth with the flood, and after the flood God made a promise. He made a commitment to Noah that never again would He destroy this earth with a flood. He never would bring a flood against this earth that would utterly destroy everything. And even as He had kept that promise to that day, so it was His intention that He would keep the promise made to Abraham concerning salvation, that it would be accomplished.

CALLER: What does Genesis 8:21 mean, when He says, "I will not again curse the ground for man's sake"? We know that the earth is cursed, according to the Bible.

HC: The earth is cursed, but God gave a result of that curse against the earth when He destroyed it with the flood. You notice, in Chapter 9, verse 13, He says, "I do set My bow in the cloud. And it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

Now in II Peter 3 we read that when God destroys this earth again it will be by fire, will it not? He will destroy this earth by fire. But He will not bring His curse upon the earth in the sense that He will ever destroy it again by the flood. This was a tremendous curse upon the earth, when He utterly devastated this earth by the flood of Noah's day, so that the whole surface of the earth was changed.

CALLER: Thank you. Good night.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Understanding Isaiah 30:15

(411B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I have a few questions. One of them is, how rich does the Bible consider rich?

HC: How rich does the Bible consider rich? First of all, the Bible does not consider physical riches as being rich, necessarily. A man can be physically rich, and if he has not salvation, he is of all men most miserable. He is doomed to hell, and is to be pitied.

To be really rich is to be born again, to be a child of God, because then we are heirs of all the promises that are given in the Bible. We are heirs of the New Heaven and the New Earth. We become sons of God. We will reign in this

New Heaven and New Earth eternally as kings. There is no one richer than a born again believer.

Now we can't see these riches with our naked eye today. Now we live on this earth in sackcloth, as it were, to use the figure shown in Revelation 11. We live humbly. We live patiently, bringing the Gospel. We are the physically poor of the world to a very high degree, frequently. But we are the heirs. We are the sons of the King. And once we've spent a few years here on this earth, we go home to our homeland which is Heaven. And from then on everything gets better and better. We are the rich of the world, really.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you. And I have another question. In Isaiah 30:15 it says, "For thus sayeth the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel. In returning and rest shall ye be saved. In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. And ye will not." Does that mean you won't be able to be in quietness and confidence, or what?

HC: The question is raised concerning Isaiah 30:15, where God is using this language. First of all, let's get the context. The context of Isaiah 30 is that God is warning Israel that they are subject to judgment and hell, that God is going to destroy them because of their wickedness, their apostasy. And in verse 14 He uses the language of Judgment Day of the last day: "He shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces. He shall not spare, so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a shard to take fire from the hearth or to take water withal out of the pit." God is speaking here of final judgment.

Now in verse 15 He is saying that it doesn't have to be this way. He says, "For thus sayeth the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel. In returning and rest shall ye be saved." You could be saved if you would rest in the Lord, if you would rest in Christ as your Messiah, if you would quit trying to get into Heaven on your strength, on your good works, on your deeds that you think ought to be looked upon as worthy by God, if you would quit trying to satisfy your own personal pride and take credit for what you are doing, if you would only recognize the dismal truth about yourself, that you're sinners and you're under the wrath of God. And the answer to it is to admit this and rest in the salvation that God is going to provide. Rest quietly, and confidently in this.

"But ye would not. But ye said, No. For we will flee upon horses. Therefore shall ye flee. And we will ride upon the swift. Therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one. At the rebuke of five shall ye flee." In other words, they're saying, "We will put our confidence in the things that we own, in our horses, in our physical strength, in Egypt," in whatever they could find their strength in. And God says, "You're going to be destroyed. You're going to be so weak that one could destroy a thousand of you."

And this of course is speaking very pertinently to us today. There are all kinds of people who are placing their confidence in their good works, in their worthy lives, in their righteous deeds, in their desires to please God along this line. They really believe that God will look with favor upon them because look how hard they're trying to please God. And God will say, "No. No."

Or they've placed their trust in their money, or in the lands they own, or in their physical strength, or the guns they have in the house, or whatever else it may be, or in their nation, whatever it may be. And God says, "No. None of those things have any strength whatsoever, because you're still under the wrath of God. You're still subject to Judgment Day and hell unless you have placed your confidence only in the Lord

Jesus Christ. You realize that you're a sinner and that you're spiritually bankrupt, and you're in deep and terrible trouble with God. And therefore you cry out to God for mercy. You rest in Christ. You trust only in His Word as being sufficient to save you.

CALLER: Okay. I've heard you talk a few times about healers, you know, those who heal people. And a friend of mine was listening to one of these preachers. And he said that people there actually went in wheel chairs and walked out, and things like that. And I was wondering why you say that there's no healing going on today.

HC: The question is raised, in view of the fact that you can go to healing meetings today, and see people who come in wheel chairs walk out as if they are healed, doesn't this make a lie of the idea that God is not miraculously healing today?

Well, we first of all cannot trust an experience that we see. We do not build doctrine or truth by experience. That's a pragmatic way of doing it, and this is the way, for example, the scientific community does it. They run experiments, and based on the experiments they form a postulate or an axiom. They arrive at some kind of a law. When you drop an apple and it falls, and then you drop a silver dollar and it falls, and then you drop a feather and it falls, pretty soon you begin to sense that there's a law. And finally they call it the law of gravity. It's based on experiment, that there is a law of gravity, and so on.

But when we get to spiritual truth, we do not find out what the rules are by experience, because experience can be very deceiving. We have to find out what the rules are by the Bible. The Bible is the only trustworthy guide.

One of the laws, for example, that is being promulgated today by those who believe in miraculous healing is that Christ went to the cross to give us whole bodies, to heal our physical diseases. And they can quote a couple of passages in the Bible, a couple verses of the Bible, that appear to indicate this. But when we read the whole Bible, and compare all the scriptures, we find that that absolutely is not so. The Bible indicates that even though we're saved, even though in our spirit we go to be with Christ at death, our bodies will go into the grave. Our bodies will waste away. This is God's program, for saved people as well as unsaved people.

So therefore under no circumstance is Christ indicating, or the Bible indicating that Christ went to the cross to give us physical healing. Secondly, the Bible indicates that we're to walk by faith, not by sight. The Bible indicates that an evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a miracle, or seeketh for a sign and so on and so on.

Well then, once we understand the Biblical statement, then we wonder, "Well then, what's happening out there?" Well, if I go to see a magician, for example, I don't know how he pulled a rabbit out of a hat. I don't know how he did all the things that he did. I saw it with my eyes, certainly. I saw lots of things. But I know they were impossible things. I know that somehow he didn't really do that.

But my mind is very easily deceived, My mind is very tricky. I went to see this magician knowing that he would deceive me this way, and knowing that my own mind would deceive me. This is the basis of many of the circus side shows, ant so on. Our mind is very tricky. We see what we want to see very frequently.

And so if people go to a place where there is reputed to be miraculous healing, then they're going to see miraculous healing. Their minds are conditioned to see this. Now true, there is some healing that is taking place. A tremendous amount of illness, and it's real illness, is psychosomatic in nature. Ulcers,

hardening of the arteries, arthritis, migraine headaches, skin disorders, paralysis, are just a few of the diseases that frequently owe their basis to body tension, to anxiety that's within a person. And if that person will put his trust in anything at all, then the tension is removed, whether that trust is in the evangelist, in the healer, or in the Bible, or in whatever it is. If there is a real positive trust there, then the symptoms will also go away. There will apparently be healing. And it will be real healing. But it's not the miraculous healing that we read about in the Bible at all. It's simply that the tension has been removed.

Secondly, there is a certain amount of chicanery. I don't know how much, and I wouldn't even care to know how much or how little. But I know there is some, where there is just outright deception, in an effort to convince people that there is this kind of healing.

The important thing, however, is that if you go to a healing service, and you look at those on hospital beds, who are very obviously in need of a healing, or could stand a healing very nicely, as you look at their twisted limbs or their emaciated bodies, ridden by disease, whatever it may be, these kind always go out the way they came in, where there is very obvious disease. And these are the kind that Jesus healed, and the apostles healed. When James and John stood outside the temple gate, and the man was there with the withered limbs, who had never walked in his whole life, you can imagine what pencil thin legs, twisted little bone structure he had from his waist down. And yet instantaneously he stood up and jumped and ran, and so on. Now that kind of healing is not going on today.

CALLER: Okay. I heard about this girl in Oakland who bleeds every Easter, from her hands and her feet, where Jesus was nailed to the cross. And the doctors haven't found any explanation for it. I was wondering, is this another sign that Jesus is coming soon?

HC: It's not a sign from God, if indeed this is happening, and I don't believe everything I read, or that people tell me, because there's tremendous exaggeration today. I just don't believe everything that I read about. But assuming that it were true, it certainly is not a miracle done by God. God does not come with those kinds of signs and wonders today. God comes with the Word of God. It is the place where we're going to find divine truth. If you want some kind of an indication that we're near the end of time, read the Bible. It is the trustworthy account.

CALLER: Okay. And I've just got one more quick question. Who wrote the Book of John?

HC: The Gospel of John was written by the apostle John.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you.

HC: Thank you so much for calling. Good night.

Does God Create Evil as in Isaiah 45:7? (420B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: The question I would like to ask you is in Isaiah 45. It says, "I form light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil." And I've had a problem understanding this. I know God is in control of everything. But I think that all good things come from God. It's hard to understand that He creates evil. Can you explain this to me.

HC: Yes. The question is raised concerning Isaiah 45:7, where we read, "I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things." What does it mean here that God creates evil? Isn't God a good and holy God? How could He create

evil?

The problem is that in the Bible the word evil is used in two ways. Sometimes the word is used in connection with that which is sinful. Evil men are wicked men. And God of course did not create men wicked. God does not create sin in any sense.

But evil is also used in the sense of God's judgment. For example, when Israel sinned God brought evil men against Israel as a judgment. God brought terrible things against Israel as a judgment. These were evil things for Israel. This is the kind of evil that God is speaking of.

When Babylon, which was a sinful nation, came against Judah to destroy it, this was a great evil for Judah. But it was a judgment of God against Israel. Now God was not guilty of creating sin in the lives of the Babylonians, but He was using these sinful men to achieve His purposes. And so it became an evil against Judah.

CALLER: Oh, I see.

Isaiah 1:10-17 Explained (426C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: Good evening. Would you speak on Isaiah 1:10-17, please. And I'll listen on the air.

HC: Yes. Isaiah 1:10-17. All right. Let's take a look at that and see what that says. Here we have a statement where God is faulting Israel because they are not being obedient to God. Oh yes, they are obedient in their outward actions, but their heart is far from God. They are actually going through the motions, but in their hearts they are not surrendered to God at all. The fact is, they have become so adulterous that God calls them Sodom. Now Sodom of course was a very wicked city that was destroyed by God because of its extreme wickedness. But this is the way He puts it. Now bear in mind that He's addressing Israel, the apple of God's eye, God's own chosen people. And He's saying to them in verse 10, "Hear the Word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom. Give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats."

Now the sacrifice of these animals was called for by God. But they were only paying lip service to God. They were going through the action, but their heart was far from God.

So He goes on in verse 13, "Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto Me. The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with. It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth. They are a trouble unto Me. I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you. Yea, when you make many prayers I will not hear you. Your hands are full of blood."

And now the next two verses tells us what the problem is: "Wash you, make you clean. Put away the evil of your doing from before Mine eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Seek judgment. Relieve the oppressed. Judge the fatherless. Plead for the widow. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Now God is indicating here that the only way they can come into His presence and have their offerings accepted is if they are coming as born again individuals, if it is true that they have been washed of their sins. And they can only be washed of their sins in the coming Messiah.

These Jews were coming to God in their good works. They were coming believing that in what they were offering that action was making them worthy before God.

Now this is very pertinent for today. We have all kinds of people in the church, and don't you point the finger at anyone else, just look into your own heart, and make sure that in your own heart this will not be true. And if it is true, then do something about it. But there are all kinds of people today who believe that because they are good Christians, because they faithfully go twice to church, and even teach Sunday School, because they pray, because they're nice to their friends, and so on, that therefore they are living worthy lives, and therefore God ought to save them. They surely must be saved.

Now that is the path toward hell, that is the path toward hell. Under no circumstance are we saved because we are living good lives. Under no circumstance are we saved because we are worthy before God. The path to salvation is to look at ourselves honestly as God looks upon us, that we're sinners, that we're under the wrath of God, that we're destined for hell because of our sins. And we come to God with nothing in our hands. Like the publican of old, we cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me. I'm a Sinner. I'm a sinner. There's nothing good in me, when I get really honest with myself, when I look upon myself as Thou dost look upon me through my Word." Then we discover that we're not worthy of salvation in any way. And it's only by God's grace that we're saved, only because of the love that if we will abandon ourselves to Him and throw ourselves on His mercy that we can know that we are saved.

This is what God asks of us, and this is what is so lacking in many of our lives. In many of our lives we have never known what it means to really repent and really admit our sinfulness. We have never humbled ourselves to the point where we admit that in God's sight we're a hopelessly lost sinner, that there is nothing good within us. Our self-respect, our pride, will not permit this. But unless this happens in our life, unless we see the sad fact in our life that we are sinners, then there is no salvation.

The church today in many ways is very much like Israel of Isaiah 1. The church today, the congregations and denominations... I belong to a congregation and I belong to a denomination, and therefore I'm not speaking against the church *per se*. I'm only saying what the Bible says, that the organized view of the body of Christ, the organized fashion of the body of Christ, as we see it in the congregation, to a very high degree today is paying lip service to the Gospel. We're proud. We think that while we talk about the grace of God and the infallibility of the Word of God, the fact is, where the rubber meets the road, that is where it comes to a specific verse or a specific doctrine or a specific practice, very frequently it's our own idea rather than the Bible's ideas. We're not actually living with the Bible as our final authority. And that is very very serious business. The Bible and *it* alone must be the authority. It must come out in our lives, it must come out in our congregational practices and doctrines. And if this is not so, then we are walking in the shoes of ancient Israel that came under the curse of God.

Well, thank you for that question.

JOEL

Dreams and Visions – Joel 2:28 Explained (114D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello What I'd like for you to do is explain Joel 2:28 for me, where it

says, "Your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions." The way I feel right now, I've only been a Christian for a few short months. But before I gave my heart to God, I would have these dreams. And I would look them up in the dream book. And they would seem so encouraging. The explanations would be something like, "Great financial success," or "Good things will happen," or things like this. And I've found that my life has been restored. God has restored my life from what I was supposed to be, and from what I did on my own, and where I am right now.

But I feel that the more that we can attune our mental faculties to God, the more He can reveal Himself through our mental faculties. Am I on the right track?

HC: I don't think so. You see, in Joel 2, when God said in verse 28, "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions," we have to look at that in the context of the whole Bible.

Now in the Old Testament, before the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, God saved people just like He saves people today. But He did not mandate them, nor qualify them ordinarily to be a witness. It was only occasionally that a prophet would arise. And that prophet would declare the Word of God. Now that prophet would receive his information from two sources. One was from the Bible that he had complete to that point in time, which of course was an incomplete Bible. And occasionally God would also bring additional information which was the Word of God in the form of a dream, or a personal visitation, or a vision, or whatever. And in this way God added to His Word.

Now it was God's program that when the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, right after Christ went to the cross, that every born again believer would be a prophet, would be a witness, would be qualified to declare God's Word by being filled with the Holy Spirit.

And so to emphasize this, God uses the language of this more glamorous way that the Old Testament prophets received truth. He speaks about the fact that "your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions." In other words, they will be bona fide prophets. Everyone who is a born again believer will be a prophet. Now that was fine for that day, in the Book of Acts, because the Bible was not yet complete. It was still possible in that day for someone who was a born again believer to receive a dream or a vision. The fact is, we know that Peter received a vision. We know that the apostle John received a series of visions on the Isle of Patmos. All of this was possible because the Bible was not yet complete.

But then God finished His Word. And He declared in Revelation 22:18: "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein." In other words while up until this time you have the written Word, but you also have the possibility of hearing from Me from other sources, that possibility no longer exists. From now on the only way I am speaking is through the Word of God. And if you think that you have something else from Me, which would be equivalent to adding to the Bible, it simply indicates that you are still under damnation. You are still subject to hell. You don't understand that the Bible alone is the divine Word of God.

And so ever since the Bible was completed, there have been those who have had dreams, who have had visions, who have seen apparitions of one kind or another. And many of them seem to be so very holy. But you can depend upon it, none of this activity was from God.

And so today, if someone says, "I've had a dream that came true," that dream was

not from God. It may have been out of their own mind. It could have been coincidental that it came true. Or it could be that they're being preyed on by Satan.

And you can see why this is. If I received a dream that I was convinced was from God, and suppose that dream appeared to relate quite strongly to the Bible, and yet it might deviate very slightly but in an area which I could hardly detect. Perhaps in this dream I dreamed that there was going to be a great famine next year, or that there was going to be a war, or whatever. Now you can depend upon it, that every time I read the Bible, if I accepted that dream as being the voice of God to me, every time I read anything in the Bible concerning the future of this world, I'm going to read it in the light of my dream. I'm going to use that dream as the telescope through which I have to look at the information in the Bible. In other words, that information from that dream will cause me to modify what the Bible actually teaches. Because when I read the Bible and try to understand it, I am to look only at the Scripture. It alone is the interpreter, not something out here that I thought was the Word of God.

And so by accepting that dream as the Word of God, it is going to close the Bible to me. The Bible no longer will be a book that I can understand. And the more I listen to this other information which I believe was divine, the farther away I'll get from finding the true understanding of the Bible.

And I think this is the reason that many folks could never come to agreement with me about certain passages in the Bible, because I choose to understand the Bible by letting the Bible alone be the interpreter. But if someone else is going to understand those same verses, and they are looking upon the Bible as the Word of God, and they're also looking upon certain visions or dreams or revelations they've received as the divine Word of God, and they are going to interpret the Bible with that information additionally, they can't possibly come to the same conclusion I would come to.

Thank you so much for calling. Good night.

The Pouring Out of the Holy Spirit in Joel 2:28-31 Explained (259C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question for you. I would like to have you explain Joel 2:28 through 31. I would like to know what period in time he is speaking of. It sounds to me as though he was talking to men of that day, but then I read down in Joel 2, and it sounds as if all of this is to be followed by Judgment Day. So I'm just a little bit confused about whether the time is yet to come for all of these things he's talking about, or whether they have already come.

HC: All right. I'll be happy to speak on that. We have before us a question concerning the meaning and understanding of Joel 2:28-32. Now this is an excellent passage to give us a lesson in how to understand the Old Testament Scriptures. We have here a passage in which God declares, through the prophet Joel:

And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and the maidservants in those days, I will pour out My Spirit. And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the Name of the Lord shall be delivered, for in Mount

Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said. And among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

Now in trying to understand a passage, one of the principles that we must follow is to search the Bible to see if there is anything else that relates to it. Now in this particular instance, we have very excellent information at our fingertips, because we find this very same passage is quoted, not absolutely precisely, but very close to precisely, in Acts 2, where at the time that the Holy Spirit was poured out, on that Pentecost Day back in AD 33, the apostles are beginning to speak in foreign languages, and there are these other signs the tongues of fire on their heads, and the sound of the rushing wind. And now Peter stands up and says that "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel."

And then, beginning in verse 17 of Acts 2, down through verse 21, he quotes these very same verses, not completely exactly, but very close to exactly. For example, in the first phrase, in Joel 2:28 it says, "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh." Well, when Peter quotes it, he, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, adds a little bit more truth. And he says, "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." And then he goes on and continues the quotation.

And so we know immediately that Joel 2, beginning with verse 28 to verse 32, is that which was prophesied concerning the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, or the beginning of God's program to evangelize the world. Now as one of the aspects of evangelizing the world, it was God's purpose that every believer would become a prophet, that is, would be qualified by God to become a witness.

Before Pentecost in AD 33, only occasionally a believer was so qualified. Only occasionally was there a prophet raised up who was under the activity of the Holy Spirit and would be qualified to be a spokesman for God. But it was God's intention that, beginning with Pentecost, immediately after Christ ascended to Heaven, after paying for our sins at the cross, God would begin to evangelize the world, and He would do this by putting His Spirit on all believers, qualifying them to be a witness.

Now the difficult language is verse 30 of Joel 2: "And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke." And then the next verse: "The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." And that is also quoted in Acts 2, because in verse 19 of Acts 2 we read, "And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day."

Now is this talking about something different, or is this also to be understood as part of the event that is being described here in Acts 2, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit? Now it's certainly part of the same quotation. And God has declared: "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel." And he's referring to it in the present tense, that this is what has occurred.

Moreover, in verse 21 of Acts 2, it says, "And it shall be that whoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved," which is taken over from Joel 2:32: "And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the Name of the Lord shall be delivered. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said. And among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls." Now from Acts 2:21 we know that this is talking about the fact that the Gospel would go into all the world. And anyone

from any nation, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, would be saved. And this is the second part of God's program to evangelize the world. The first part was that every believer would be qualified to be a witness. That's spoken of in Acts 2:17.

The second part is that God the Holy Spirit would bring believers forth from every nation. And that is Acts 2:21. And since Acts 2:21 is covering most of the information of Joel 2:32, and since Joel 2:30 and 31 is all part of the same context that is being quoted in Acts 2, as being fulfilled at the day of Pentecost back in AD 33, we know that we must read verses 30 and 31 and 32 of Joel 2 as being related to that which happened in AD 33.

Now let's see if we can do a little bit better work with this. First of all, let's look at verse 31. That's the easiest one to look at. "The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." Now there are two days spoken of in the Bible that relate to the sun being turned into darkness. One of these days is the Judgment Day of the last day, at the very end of time. We find, for example, in Revelation 6, where God declares in verse 12: "When he opened the sixth seal, I looked and behold, there was a great earthquake. And the sun became black as sackcloth."

And we read in Matthew 24:29, in speaking about the end of time, when Christ would return in judgment: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened." And so we know that this is one possibility. But Judgment Day is at the end of time. So that does not relate directly to the prophecy of Joel 2, because Acts 2 indicates that it was fulfilled back in AD 33.

Well, we also discover that when Christ hung on the cross, the sun did not give its light. Remember? Over the whole world the sun's light was hid for three hours. And so the sun was turned to darkness at that time.

Now at the same time, if the sun is turned to darkness, the moon would not give its light, or it would be turned to blood. That has really a double meaning, the moon being turned to blood, because the moon, well, let me give the physical meaning first. And then we'll look at the spiritual meaning perhaps as an afterthought.

But if the sun does not shine, then the moon does not shine, because the moon gets its light as reflected light from the sun. And so we see the same thing in Revelation 6:12, where it says, "The full moon became like blood," at the time that the sun became black as sackcloth. That's at the end of time.

But when Jesus hung on the cross, the sun did not shine. And therefore the moon would not have given its light. Now was the cross a "great and terrible day"? Well, yes. It was Judgment Day, wasn't it? What kind of Judgment day? Well, you see, those who are not saved, who do not have Christ as their Savior, must answer to God on the last day for all of their sins. And they will be condemned by God, and they will be cast into hell, to begin to suffer the penalty of God for their sins. That's Judgment Day, at which time the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood.

But there is also Judgment Day at the cross, because Jesus had become sin for us. He was standing before God as a guilty sinner on our behalf, and He was condemned, exactly as the unsaved will be condemned on the last day. He was condemned for our sins, and God began to pour out His wrath on Him, and Christ did endure the equivalent of an eternity in hell for our sins. This all took place when Christ hung on the cross. That was Judgment Day. That was the "great and terrible day of the Lord" just as much as

the last day is a great and terrible day of the Lord.

And so verse 31 fits into the context. You see, it's speaking here about an event that would occur when Christ would go to the cross, and the Holy Spirit would be poured out. And here it says that in connection with this, "the sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes," that is, at the time that Christ went to the cross to endure the wrath of God for our sins. This was the great and terrible day of the Lord spoken of in Joel 2:31.

Now let's go back to verse 30 and see if we can figure that one out. "And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke." Now this is language that is actually taken from the Old Testament. Back in II Samuel we find a song of praise penned by David, who is a great type of Christ, incidentally, in II Samuel 22. And he wrote this psalm or this song of praise, which is also found in Psalm 18, incidentally, at the time that he was delivered from the hand of all of his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

Now David is a great Messianic type. He is a type of Christ Himself. And even as David was literally delivered from the hand of his literal enemies, so Christ went to the cross, and there He obtained victory over all of the enemies that sought to destroy Him, namely, Satan and all of his hosts.

And so we read this song of praise, and we find that it is the language of Christ hanging on the cross, enduring hell. II Samuel 22:5: "For the waves of death encompassed me. The torrents of perdition assailed me. The cords of Sheol entangled me. The snares of death confronted me." That is the language of Christ enduring hell for our sins.

Then notice this song going on. Notice verse 8 of II Samuel 22: "Then the earth reeled and rocked. The foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked, because He was angry. Smoke went up from His nostrils and devouring fire from His mouth. Glowing coals flamed forth from Him. He bowed the heavens and came down. Thick darkness was under His feet." And so on and so on.

Now this is poetic language describing the majestic nature of God, as He poured out His wrath on Christ on the one hand, and on the other hand as He brought victory over Satan and all the enemies of God. And notice how similar this language is to Joel 2:30 or Acts 2:19, "And I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth, blood and fire and vapor of smoke." Now to some degree this was literal. The sun was darkened, the moon did not give its light. There was a great earthquake. These literal signs were there. But it is actually going beyond this, and giving us a psalm of praise, a song of praise, illustrating the majesty of God, as God's wrath is poured out, and as victory is obtained over the wicked.

And so verse 19 of Acts 2 and Joel 2:30 are also speaking of Christ on the cross, as He gets victory over sin, which is a prelude to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, or a prelude to God's program to evangelize the world.

Now this brings us to verse 32 of Joel 2: "And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the Name of the Lord shall be delivered." And we know from Acts 2:20 that this is referring to Christ's promise that whoever turns to the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved.

Now this gives us a little bit of insight as to who these are who will bring the Gospel. "For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said. And among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls." Now that again is somewhat ambiguous language. It's not quoted in Acts 2, but it is totally a part of the context of what is quoted in Acts 2:32. It

is directly related. It is in the same context. It says, "All who call upon the Name of the Lord shall be delivered, for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be those who escape." And so it's got to be talking about the events that began with the cross, and were coming into full fruition when the Holy Spirit was poured out in AD 33, immediately after the cross.

Now you see, what God is saying here is that Mount Zion and Jerusalem effectively are figures of the body of believers that is sent forth into the world to bring the Gospel. Mount Zion is a synonym, in this instance, of the body of believers. Now true, the first believers came from Jerusalem. But it actually is a figure that goes on throughout the New Testament period, because the phrase before is covering the whole New Testament period, "It shall come to pass that all who call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved (or shall be delivered)." And that's a promise that continues throughout the New Testament period.

And so Mount Zion and Jerusalem, therefore, while literally began as the believers who were Jews, living in Jerusalem, is actually expanded to include all who are born again believers, and who are those who are being saved. Now it says they "shall be those who escape." Escape what? Well, what does the New Testament say? "How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?" Escape what? The wrath of God for our sins. And so anyone who is a born again believer is included amongst those who escape. They are the survivors, they are those who are not subject to judgment – "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" – they are the ones whom God has called and predestined to be His own.

Now I could go on in Joel 3, which is part of the same context. We see that verses 1 and 2 are also talking about the cross. But that's another subject altogether.

JONAH

"Should I not spare Nineveh?" in Jonah 4:11 (354C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I have one question. It concerns the Book of Jonah. The last two verses in Chapter 4 sort of leave me hanging. I don't know what happened with Jonah. What does verse 11 mean?

HC: In Jonah we find that very provocative statement, where God has just spared Nineveh, because Jonah faithfully, finally, he wasn't a very happy prophet, but nevertheless he obeyed God finally, and he preached to Nineveh and told them that if they did not repent in forty days God would destroy them. And finally they did repent, from the king all the way down. It was a tremendous repentance, so that God did spare them.

And then Jonah showed his displeasure at this, because after all, the city of Nineveh was an enemy of Israel. And it was very difficult for Jonah to contemplate the idea that this city would continue to exist. But then God said, "Should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than 120,000 persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?"

Now that's a very interesting statement. Why the "much cattle"? The 120,000 is really a statement concerning all the little ones, I would think, in the city, who do not know their right hand from their left. It was a great city, and it may have had a population of a couple of million people, or thereabouts. Maybe not quite that great, but anyway, it was a very great city. And there were many, many little

ones in that city.

But also there were cattle. Now the interesting thing in the Bible is that whenever God brings judgment upon the earth, the cattle suffer right along with mankind. When God brought judgment on the world in Noah's day, the animals were destroyed, were they not, right along with mankind? When God killed the firstborn of Egypt, the firstborn of the cattle were killed. Have you ever thought about that? When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, fire and brimstone rained down on the cities, and the cattle would have been killed right along with the people.

The same is true when God destroyed Jericho, or when the Israelites destroyed Jericho. They were to kill the sheep and the oxen and the cattle, right along with all the people. God's judgment had come upon Jericho. And so will it be in the judgment of the last day. When fire comes down to destroy this old earth, in preparation for God recreating it New Heavens and a New Earth, all of the cattle, all of the animals, will be killed, also.

You see, man was created to rule over this world. He is responsible for this world. Man of course rebelled against God, and dominion was given to Satan. But nevertheless man continues to rule over the cattle. Now it was not the cattle that sinned in the Garden of Eden. It was not the trees, it was not the rocks that sinned. It was man that sinned. But the whole creation, the cattle, the trees, the rocks, the whole creation was subjected to the curse of God, because of man's sin. That is because the cattle and the animal world and the vegetation of the world, and so on, are intimately associated with man. Man had been created to rule over them.

And so when man was cursed, the cattle were cursed. When God's judgment comes upon man, God's judgment comes upon the animals. Now there's another side to this picture. God redeemed mankind. That is, He made provision for the salvation of the believers. And He also has made provision for the redemption of this creation, "For God so loved the world [the *cosmos* – in that context the word *cosmos* includes the whole creation – "God so loved the whole creation," really, is what John 3:16 is saying], "that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." He particularizes on mankind, but it is God's intention to save this creation, that is, to recreate this present earth and heavens, New Heavens and a New Earth, where righteousness dwells.

Now of course right now same of you are saying, "Well, then are there going to be cattle in Heaven?" No, that's not the right question to ask. You see, the Bible says that flesh and blood does not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. We will have spiritual bodies in the New Heaven and the New Earth. Animals have physical bodies. They're flesh and blood. We will not expect to see animals in Heaven, unless they're an altogether different design than what we see here.

But that isn't the point. The point is that the cattle are part of creation, and the creation was cursed because of man, and creation is redeemed because of Christ's work on the cross. The details of that redemption are not really what God deals with. He only deals with the fact that creation as a whole is redeemed.

Now in the destruction of Nineveh, or the possible destruction of Nineveh, when God referred to the 120,000, really that's a figure of what a believer is. Remember Jesus said in Matthew 18, I think, that unless we become as a little child, unless we become as a little child, we shall not see the Kingdom of Heaven, or "Suffer these little ones to come to Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

When you find a reference to a child in the Bible, very frequently it symbolizes what a born again believer is. We become as children before God. That is, we have that naive faith of children. The 120,000, that's that number twelve again, which really signifies the fullness of believers. We see it repeatedly in the Book of Revelation: the 144,000 (twelve times twelve), the twenty-four elders (twelve plus twelve), and so on.

120,000 signifies the fullness of believers. The salvation of Nineveh was a figure, really, of the salvation God is providing to all the nations of the world, to all the heathen, all the Gentiles of the world, and the fact that He is going to redeem this creation. That's why I think God introduces this statement here, that there are 120,000 who do not know their left hand from their right hand, also much cattle.

The creation, represented by the cattle, the 120,000 children who do not know their right hand from their left, representing the born again believers. This salvation of Nineveh, the fact that they repented, is pointing to the salvation that God would provide through Christ for all who would believe on Him. Now actually, while this is typology, Nineveh was saved. These people of Nineveh, we read in the New Testament, that they will stand in judgment, and judge Capernaum, and so on, because of their sin. And only those who are saved will have that relationship. There was a marvelous salvation that did take place at Nineveh.

Well, this got kind of complicated, but I hope this will set you thinking, at any rate.

Jonah and the Gourd in Jonah 4 (512A)

HC: Good evening Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Mr. Camping. Would you please turn to the Book of Jonah, Chapter 4, the first verse?

HC: Jonah 4:1. Yes.

CALLER: The question that I have for you is why was Jonah displeased because God saved the people of Nineveh after they turned from their evil works and did good in God's eyes? And I would also like to know what a gourd is, because I've been reading this book for quite some time and I can't seem to get any understanding out of this particular chapter. Would you explain that to me, please?

HC: Let me answer the second question first. What is the gourd in the Book of Jonah? We read in verse 4 of Jonah 4: "So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow till he might see what would become of the city. And the Lord God prepared a gourd [which was a very fast-growing plant of some kind] and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd." The gourd is a very fast-growing plant. I don't know if there's a significance in the word gourd itself, but it certainly is a plant of some kind.

"For God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass when the sun did arise, God prepared a vehement east wind, and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And then God said to Jonah, Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd? He said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot

discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?"

Now the question is, what is God teaching through this? This of course is a bit of history. This is an account of an historical event that did occur. And what is represented by this gourd and by the reaction of Jonah?

Well, we'll get to Jonah in just a minute. But the gourd really represents this world, the things of this world that bring comfort to man, and which God brings to man without any preparation on man's part. We receive comfort from the things of this earth. We receive comfort from the trees, from the shade, from the warm sunshine, and so on. All of these things we derive comfort from. But man by nature is not at all interested in saving his fellow man from hell. Man by nature is more concerned about this earth than he is about his fellow man. In other words, we see this today as man gets very up-tight when animals, for example, might become extinct. This is a tremendous concern to many people. Or when the trees are being cut down in certain areas many people are up in arms, because this creation is what is important to them. And this is what pains them.

But the fact that all of their fellow men are going to hell, that doesn't disturb mankind in the slightest. Does it? And here is Jonah. He is more concerned about this plant that dies in the night than he is about Nineveh, that was on the threshold of being destroyed. And Nineveh is really a picture of the world that is consigned to hell because of its sin. You see how unbalanced, how out of proportion, the attitude of man is toward this world. He is far more concerned about those things which benefit him directly, the things that this world produces, than he is about his fellow mankind that are going to hell. That I think is the picture of the end of the chapter.

Now the question is raised, "What really is the Book of Jonah?" And I think we could summarize this in a couple of sentences. The Book of Jonah, I believe, is a picture of Israel, of national Israel. Now Jonah of course was a Jew. He was of national Israel. And God uses the Jews to bring the Gospel to the world. Remember, "salvation is of the Jews." Jesus was a Jew. The Bible came from the Jews. The whole program of God is that God worked through the Jewish nation in order to accomplish the salvation program that He has decided for the world.

Now she as a nation does not really want to be active in this program of sending the Gospel to the world. For example, when the Messiah came on the scene, remember now, Jesus was a Jew, you would think that if they were really spiritual and close to God, when Jesus came they would welcome Him with open arms. The Messiah is here. And now they would be ready to be obedient to whatever the Messiah would desire.

But instead they crucified Him. They do not want him as their Messiah, even though it is the nation of Israel that produced the Messiah. The Messiah came from the Jews. And of course this is pictured by Jonah in the belly of the fish. He did not want to go there, and he effectively became a figure of the Messiah. Remember, Jesus said in Matthew 12, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Jonah is a picture of Christ.

But he develops himself as a picture of the Christ because of His refusal to be instrumental of God in saving Nineveh. He doesn't want to see Nineveh saved; he is reluctant to go there. And of course the nation of Israel produced the Messiah. That is, she crucified Him, which was necessary for God's plan in making Christ a Messiah, because of national

Israel's reluctance to accept Him as a Messiah.

Now in this brief time I can't go into all the background of all this, but this I think is the larger picture here. Now eventually the world is saved. In other words, the Gospel does go out, whether national Israel likes it or not. The Gospel does go out, and it goes out by the preaching of the Jews. Jesus was a Jew, and the first disciples were Jews. The apostle Paul was a Jew. The first missionaries were Jews.

But national Israel is unhappy about it. Right to the very present day they want nothing at all to do with the salvation of the world from eternal damnation through anyone like the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They want nothing at all to do with this, that is, except for the remnant chosen by grace.

And so that's the picture of Jonah, seeing that Nineveh has been saved, but not at all happy about it, much more concerned about this world as it stands than he is about the fact that the nations of the world are going to hell. We have really here in the Book of Jonah a picture of God's dealing through national Israel to accomplish the Messiah, to accomplish the salvation that was brought to the world.

ZECHARIAH

Is Zechariah 14:16-21 Referring to the Millennium? (034C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Brother Camping. I have a question about Zechariah 14:16-21 particularly, but also the whole latter part of the chapter. It seems to me it's talking about the thousand year reign. Yet I know that you say that there's not going to be any such thing. But it speaks previously about the great plague that will come upon the people, and the fighting around Jerusalem. And then it says of those that are left, if they don't go up to Jerusalem to worship the kings, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them. I wonder if you'd just explain this.

HC: We have two clues in Zechariah 14 that indicate that this cannot be read quite as simply as we might think. First of all, we have the major clue in the beginning of the chapter, where it says, for example, in verse 6: "On that day there shall be neither cold nor frost, and there shall be continuous day. It is known to the Lord not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light. On that day living water shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter."

Now these three verses are the language of Revelation 22. Christ becomes the sun, and there is no day nor night. And so we know from this that God is talking about the New Heaven and the New Earth. Now there are other clues that speak to this. We have the earthquake in verse 5, and we know that Judgment Day comes upon the earth in the context of a huge earthquake.

We have the fact that "the valley of My mountain shall be stopped up. For the valley of the mountains shall touch the side of it." In other words, there will be a movement of the earth itself. And that matches the language of Revelation 6, where it speaks about the cataclysmic events that are occurring upon the earth.

And so there are a number of these kinds of clues that point to the fact that this is talking about the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Secondly, speaking specifically about verses 10-21, we read here, threaded through this, we find this matter of

keeping the Feast of the Booths, in verse 19. And we read about the pots in Jerusalem being sacred to the Lord, in verse 21. Now we know that the ceremonial law has been completely done away with. We're not to ever again come under the ceremonial law. And so when we read the kind of language we begin to sense that there is some symbolism here, that God is not talking about something literal, but that He is talking about something symbolical.

Actually, we are a priesthood and our priesthood is an eternal priesthood. And it goes on into the New Heaven and the New Earth. And in a sense we are a completion of the Levitical priesthood. We read in Jeremiah 33:17 "David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel" Well that's Christ, of course. He sits there eternally. "And the Levitical priest shall never lack a man in My presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn cereal offerings and to make sacrifices continually" (forever is really the word that is in view here).

This is talking about the born again believers. We are an eternal priesthood, and it's using that figure here in Zechariah 14. Now verse 16 specifically: "Everyone that survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem." And you'll remember that Jerusalem is a figure of the Body of Christ. In fact, the Body of Christ in its fullness is spoken of as the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21. Now the nations that have come against Jerusalem, they are the world, that is, slaves to Satan. Remember Revelation 20:8 declares that the nations from the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, shall assault the camp of the saints. They are the peoples of the world that are found amongst the various political nations. They wanted to destroy Jerusalem.

Now out of these political nations, which comprise all of the peoples of the world, there are born again believers. They are sprinkled throughout the political nations. They are the ones that survive of all the nations because the nations, of course, are cast into hell. And they shall go up year after year to worship the King. Well, this is using again an Old Testament figure of coming to Jerusalem annually to worship, but actually it's emphasizing the fact that we are the only ones who will worship Christ as King, the Lord of Hosts, and keep the Feast of Booths. In other words, we are a priesthood that goes on forever.

"If any one of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, there will be no rain upon them." Okay now. Of all the people who have ever lived on the earth, only those who are born again will worship Him. The rest will be in hell. And here rain is used in the sense of God's blessings coming upon them. They will not be objects of God's blessings. They will not be in the presence of God's blessings. This is not a conditional kind of a thing. This is just putting it this way. But actually it is the nature of what eternity will be. Born again believers will worship Him. The rest will be in hell, where there is no blessing coming on them.

Then it goes on in verse 18: "And if the family of Egypt do not go up and present themselves, then upon them shall come the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths." Now who are the family of Egypt? Egypt was the house of bondage. It's the figure of sin, that we come out of when we are saved. And so the family of Egypt in this context, therefore, would be the unsaved. It's another figure speaking about the unsaved. And they are in hell. They are under God's judgment.

Verse 19: "This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths." And that is that no rain will fall upon them. In other words,

God's wrath abides on them. And in verse 20: "On that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses HOLY TO THE LORD. The pots in the house of the Lord shall be as bowls before the altar, and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be sacred to the Lord of Hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the flesh of sacrifice in them."

In other words, the whole Body of Christ will be holy. Everything that they are involved in is holy, because we are now in the New Heaven and the New Earth where there is no sin. "And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of Hosts on that day." Now this is speaking of false prophets. Remember the moneychangers. They were cast out by Jesus, and they were called a den of robbers. And from Jeremiah 7 we know that this is a figure of speech used to speak about those who follow after other gospels. And so God is saying in this last phrase that there will be none in the New Heaven and the New Earth who are false prophets, who are bringing another gospel. Everything will be holy to the Lord.

Now there's nothing at all in this context that speaks about a millennium. There's no thousand years mentioned here, nothing related to that. And if Christ were going to reign on this earth and re-institute the priesthood of Levi and the offering of the ceremonial laws, then we would have a complete reversal of everything that the Bible teaches.

Zechariah 13 and 14 Explained (645C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I would like to ask you if you could explain Zechariah 13 & 14 to me. I have a very hard time understanding when it says that His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives. I heard you say there is no future for national Israel. But how do you explain these two chapters?

HC: The question is raised concerning Zechariah 13 and 14. Verse 1 of Zechariah 13 tells us what Zechariah 13 is all about: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Now when was there or will there be a fountain opened for national Israel or for anyone else to have their sins paid for?

CALLER: That's at the cross.

HC: That's at the cross, at the cross, precisely. In other words, Zechariah 13 is prophesying concerning the coming of the Messiah as He goes to the cross. That we can be very certain of. And if you look at verse 9 it emphasizes this. Or look at verse 7: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd." Now who is God's shepherd, that came to pay for our sins? The Lord Jesus Christ. And was the sword against Him? Yes, indeed. He is the one who died for our sins. And of course the church was scattered. The disciples were scattered at the time that He went to the cross.

But the ones who are saved, typified by the third of verse 9, "I will bring the third part through the fire and will refine them as silver is refined and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on My Name and I will hear them, I will say, It is My people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Now we have been refined because Christ has endured hell, the furnace of fire, if you will, on our behalf. And so we can say, "The Lord is my God." And Christ says of us that we are His people.

So Zechariah 13 very distinctly is talking about the cross. Now Chapter 14, however, is talking about Judgment Day. It talks about all the nations against Jerusalem to battle. And Jerusalem in this context is not literal Jerusalem. And if you read it carefully, you can see that

it could not be, because it says the city shall be taken and the houses rifled and the women ravished. And yet it says half the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Well, how can it be taken and have half the people still remain there? It doesn't make any sense. If it is taken, it means that the whole city would be destroyed.

But this language is talking about the church, the congregations that will be assaulted at the last time by other gospels, by Satan. And those who go forth into captivity are those who fall snare of these other gospels. And yet half will not be taken. That is, the true believers will remain faithful to the Word of God.

And then it says in verse 3 that the Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations. Now this is picked up in Revelation 19 and Revelation 20, where it talks about Christ coming in judgment. Ant He speaks of it as warfare, as a battle, because the whole relationship between the dominion of Satan on the one hand and the Kingdom of Christ on the other is one of warfare, and this is going to talk about the final battle. And the final battle is Judgment Day. It's not really a battle, but it's the time when Satan is judged, and is cast into hell.

Now let's look at verse 4: "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives." And it goes on and talks about how the mount is going to be split and then in verse 5 it says, "Ye shall flee to the valley of the mountain, for the valley of the mountain shall reach unto Azazel. Yea, ye shall flee as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Aziah, king of Judah. And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." Ah... Now at the time that He sets His feet on the Mount of Olives, it says, "The Lord my God (that's the last part of verse 5) shall come and all the saints with him."

All right now, in the New Testament God speaks about this. God tells us what this is going to be. We read in 1 Thessalonians 3:13, "to the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." Now when is He coming with His saints?

Well 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 tells us this. It says in verse 14, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." That's at the end of time, you see, because it says that the dead in Christ shall rise, and the resurrection of the believers is the last day, we learn from John 6.

And so Zechariah 14 is talking about the end of time. It's talking about Judgment Day, when Christ comes on the clouds of glory and He gathers in His elect, and at the same time the resurrection of those who have died occurs.

CALLER: But this is not literal then.

HC: No. You see, His feet standing on the Mount of Olives is a figure to indicate that He is coming in judgment. We find the same kind of a figure, for example, in Micah 1:3: "For behold, the Lord cometh forth out of His place and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under Him, and the valleys shall be cleft as wax before the fire and as the waters that have poured down in a steep place. For the transgression of Jacob is all this and for the sins of the house of Israel," and so on. In other words, God is talking about judgment coming and using a figure of Him coming down and treading, or putting His feet on the high places of the earth. And that is the figure that's used in Zechariah 14:4. It is a figure employed to indicate that Christ is coming in judgment.

But as He comes in judgment He comes with His saints, as verse 5 teaches, because it is also the time of the Rapture.

And that agrees precisely with the New Testament.

CALLER: Yes. How about verse 16?

HC: Verse 16 says, "And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." Now you see, the ones who are left are the true believers. They are the remnant chosen by grace out of all the nations of the world. And they are the ones who continue to worship God eternally. God is using Old Testament language of the ceremonial worship in speaking about our worship of the Lord throughout eternity.

CALLER: I thank you so much, Mr. Camping.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

MALACHI

Malachi 4:2-3 Explained (463B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I would like you to read Malachi 4:2 & 3 and tell me what you think about it.

HC: Yes. The question is raised concerning Malachi 4:2 & 3. There we read, "But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings. And ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked. For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Now this is speaking about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as He came when He went to the cross. He is the Sun of Righteousness. He came with healing in His wings. He is the one who made it possible that we could have victory over our enemies, the kingdom of Satan, because that's what we belonged to before we were saved. And for us who are born again because Christ went to the cross, Satan is a defeated foe. We tread upon him. We have no fear of him any longer. He has been vanquished by Christ's going to the cross.

Now you'll notice in verse 5 of the same context, God goes on, and He says, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." This chapter opens in verse 1 talking about the day, the day that is coming. And now He talks about Elijah the prophet being sent before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers."

Now we know from Luke:17 that this prophecy of verse 5 was fulfilled by John the Baptist. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah. Notice the very similar language in Luke 1 to what we have just read in Malachi 4:5 & 6. There we read, as God is telling Zachariah about his son, John the Baptist, who would be born to him: "And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," almost identical language, you see, to Malachi 4, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Now the "great and terrible day of the Lord" that's in view in Malachi 4 is the atonement, the day when Christ hung on the cross, when He paid for our sins, when He became sin for us and God poured out His wrath on Him. But before Christ went to the cross, before this dreadful day of the Lord came, John the Baptist came, as a fulfillment to the promise that Elijah would come and turn the heart of the fathers to the children. That is, John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, to preach

repentance and to cry out to Israel that they had to turn away from their sins.

Now this is when Christ came with healing in His wings, when He came as the Sun of Righteousness, when He vanquished Satan so that Satan is as ashes under our feet. Now while He defeated Satan in principle, and we read in Hebrews 2:14 that through Christ's death He destroyed Satan, and we read in Revelation that He dealt a death blow to the head of the dragon, and while this was accomplished in principle, we will not see it in its full impact until the judgment of the last day, when Satan is removed into hell.

CALLER: At that time, at the end of the world, we will grow up as calves of the stalls.

HC: No. Malachi 4 in its totality is being fulfilled throughout the New Testament period. We grow up as calves of the stall now. The body of Christ is growing, and it's flourishing. It has been for 2,000 years. Of course in the Old Testament calves were given as a sacrifice, but in Romans 12:1 we are commanded, as born again believers, to lay down our lives as a living sacrifice. And this is occurring amongst all the nations of the world. There are those who are coming into the body of Christ and those who are born again are those who have surrendered their lives to Christ, to serve as ambassadors of His.

CALLER: About John the Baptist. Also, at the end of the world there are also many many true Christian people that are preparing the way of the Lord just before His second coming. Many Christian people are preparing the way of the Lord.

HC: But that is not in view in Malachi 4. And actually, the believers are preparing the way of the Lord. And incidentally, the Bible does not use that language of Christians in connection with the second coming of Christ. The Bible does not say that as we bring the Gospel we are preparing for His second coming, although in a sense we are. As we bring the Gospel, and witness to the world, God brings in the elect, those who are to be saved. And when the last one has been saved, then the end will come. The Bible says in Matthew 24:14, or thereabouts, that when this Gospel has been preached to every nation, then the end will come. And in that sense we are preparing for the end of time. But God does not use that kind of language in speaking about the work of the believers insofar as I know.

CALLER: You don't have the attitude that everyone will be saved.

HC: Oh, no. The Bible teaches that "Broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are thereon," and "Narrow is the way that leads to everlasting life, and few there are that find it." It's only a remnant chosen by grace out of all the peoples of the world that actually become born again believers.

CALLER: Back at verse 3, it isn't the devil that is burned to ashes. He will be burned right along with the wicked, but it says "the wicked." It doesn't separate the devil and the wicked. They will all burn together.

HC: Yes. You see, when Christ went to the cross, He actually guaranteed damnation upon all of the unsaved of the world who would die unsaved. By virtue of the fact that Christ endured the judgment of God for our sins, this guaranteed that judgment would also come upon the unsaved. And so they automatically are under condemnation, if they do not become saved. Every man is a sinner, and the wages of sin is death. It is eternal damnation, and so that condemnation rests upon the unsaved. And so in that sense they are already identified with hell.

It's interesting, you know, in the New Testament that God in three or four places speaks about the angels who

rebelled. And He speaks of them as if they are already in hell. Now they aren't actually in hell, because they're still active in the world throughout the New Testament period. And even as the New Testament was being written, they were very active as demons, and so on. But nevertheless God uses language as if they're already in hell, because their damnation is guaranteed at the cross, and it's as if they are already in hell.

We read in Jude 6, And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. In II Peter 2:4 he says, For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment." He's using language as if they're already in hell, as, if they're already being consumed, as if they are ashes. And that's the language of Malachi 4.

Now they're not actually there, but their judgment is certain. Ever since the time of the cross, there's no way that they can escape the judgment.

CALLER: When fire is in the process of burning them to ashes, that isn't the same as being ashes, which will annihilate all, we're told in the Bible that the affliction will never arise a second time. There will never be another devil developed.

HC: Now you've introduced two questions. First of all, the Bible does not teach annihilation. That is not taught in the Bible. When the Bible uses language like ashes, or burning, or I'll remember them no more, or whatever, God is not speaking about annihilation. There are too many passages in the Bible that would make that an impossible idea. There are too many passages in the Bible that speak about everlasting damnation, that say that "the worm dieth not," that say, "there is weeping and gnashing of teeth," that speak about eternal torment, and so on and so on.

But as God speaks about hell, and the wrath of God, and the terrible condition that will prevail, we must remember He's talking about a condition that's outside of time, that's outside of our ability to really fathom, because we don't know what eternity is. We don't know what it is to be without any blessing whatsoever from God. We have no idea about these things, because these are not part of our experience in this world.

But God does give us word pictures, of burning and of ashes, and of worms that do not die, and so on, outer darkness, and a lake of fire, and so on. God gives us these word pictures in order to indicate to us the awfulness, the dreadfulness of hell. And yet, as He gives all of this, there's no question at all that He talks about eternal damnation. It's not something that is annihilation. Annihilation is just not taught in the Bible. If you might find a number of verses, if you grouped those together and took them out of the Bible, without letting the rest of the Bible be a commentary on them, you could find verses that might seem to teach annihilation.

CALLER: Well, we are told what eternity means, as far as the devil and all his subjects are concerned. Sodom and Gomorrah were burned with everlasting fire. Sodom and Gomorrah are in the bottom of the Dead Sea, and they are not burning now. No place is there perpetual fire.

HC: Oh, I know. But remember that Sodom and Gomorrah have not come to an end. The peoples of Sodom and Gomorrah have ceased to exist momentarily on the face of the earth, but they will be raised on the last day. And their damnation is not complete. Just because we see them destroyed by fire back 4,000 years ago, that doesn't mean that that's the end of their damnation.

CALLER: I agree with you there, but I'm just referring to the term everlasting.

And there's another thing that brings up the same thought, what is the definition of everlasting?

HC: You see, we don't even have to struggle with that. If you read Revelation 14, for example, God says there in verse 10, speaking about the unsaved, "The same shall drink the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation. And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb." And notice: "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. And they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

Or again, we read in Revelation 22, where it's talking about those who are in the New Heaven and the New Earth, which of course is going on eternally. And it says in verse 15 of Revelation 22: "For without are the dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." In other words, they continue having existence, but they are not a part of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

And there are other phrases of this nature in the Bible that assure us that hell is eternal. It is not annihilation. Now many people want to believe in annihilation. Perhaps they want to believe it because they are not really certain of their salvation. And after all, if I'm annihilated, that finally is not so bad because then I have no conscious existence. I may be missing Heaven, but I don't know that I'm missing it, and there is certain peace in death.

But that is a figment of our imagination. That is not the wrath of God. That isn't the way that God portrays His wrath. It is not to cease to have conscious existence. It's to cease to be under any blessing of God. When Christ hung on the cross... He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and that's hell. And no human being has ever experienced being totally forsaken of God.

CALLER: It would be a very uncomfortable feeling. But ashes, as everybody knows, represent something that has been and no more exists. If you burn up a box, and have ashes, and walk on those ashes...

HC: Yes. Now if you took a verse that speaks of ashes, and isolated it from the rest of the Bible, then I would agree with you. God is indicating annihilation, because something that is burned up physically is annihilated. It ceases to exist.

But that is not hell. We have to read about those ashes in the light of everything else the Bible speaks about in connection with the nature of hell, in connection with the nature of eternal damnation, or in connection with God's wrath. And then we get a vastly different picture. Then we realize that there is existence of the unsaved after Judgment Day and while the New Heaven and the New Earth continue to exist. And there of course there is eternal bliss, and all is marvelous and wonderful, because we're in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But while this is going on, there is also conscious existence of the unsaved. But they are in a place of torment. They are in a place bearing the wrath of God, because they have violated the justice and holiness of God. And we don't know exactly what that punishment is. All we can do is look at the language of the Bible and realize that it must be super awful. It must be super terrible. And there's no escape. There's no way out. There's no end to it. It's like a person who has been consigned to jail for the rest of his life, because he's committed a crime. He's in jail. He can't get out. And regardless of what's happening out in the world, the beautiful things, the marvelous things, he's in jail. And he has

to stay there until he dies. Now his life may be circumscribed by, let's say, seventy years. And so he may spend fifty years in jail. But for mankind who is unsaved, his conscious existence will continue forever and ever. And he will be outside of all of the blessings that come to those who are born again believers.

CALLER: So God will perform a miracle to keep people burning, actual burning, and suffering in burning hell. He'll perform a miracle to...

HC: The problem that you're raising is that you must remember that our minds are conditioned to think in terms of space, length, width, height and time. These are the dimensions that we understand. When the Bible speaks about eternity, when the Bible speaks about life after death, we can't really know what this is. There is no way that our minds can really fathom that, any more than we can fathom an angel. We don't know what a spirit is. We can't draw a picture of a spirit. We can't describe a spirit, actually. We really do not know what an angel is. We know they're ministering spirits. The Bible says that. But we, could never really detail or draw a picture or make a diagram of any kind of what an angel is, because our minds are not qualified. God has not designed our minds to think in terms of spiritual beings and to think in terms of eternity. We can just get a little bit of an idea, and that's all.

And so when God talks about hell, or when He talks about Heaven, God uses language. He uses word pictures of things that we know about. But that still does not really describe what it is.

For example, in Revelation 1 there's a beautiful description of the Lord Jesus Christ, with His hair of white wool and His feet of burnished brass, and so on. And of course it's a word picture. It's not a real picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ has a spiritual body. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him worship Him in spirit and truth. And yet as we look at this word picture that God describes in Revelation 1, we begin to get insights as to the nature and the character and the marvelous beauty, and so on, of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work that He came to do. But we're never going to get a real picture of what He looks like, because our minds can't get hold of any kind of a picture of what He really looks like.

Now the same thing is true when God describes hell. He uses figures of a burning furnace, and a lake of fire, and of ashes and of a place of outer darkness, and a place where the worm dies not, and a place where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. And all of these figures of speech are pictures to indicate one central truth, and that is that hell is terrible. Hell is awful. Hell is the worst kind of punishment that our minds can get hold of, and it goes on forever and ever.

Just what it is, I don't know. I don't know what it is. We see the essence of hell, we get a real insight, if we get any kind of an insight into the essence of hell, on the cross, as Christ says, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? Now He was enduring hell for our sins. He was not literally burning. He was not literally in a place of fire. And yet He was enduring hell. The awfulness of God being rejected by God, abandoned by God, was torment that is absolutely indescribable. There's no way that we could ever know how grievous this really was for Christ. And yet that was the essence of hell.

And so as we read all of this language about hell, we must not think of eternity as somehow identified with time. We have this song that we will praise God 10,000 years, and so on, and it will just be the beginning, or words to that effect. Well actually, that's a word picture again of eternity. Eternity is something that is outside of our ability to understand,

however. It's something far more glorious than just a continuation of time, because eternity is not identified with time. It's a concept beyond our ability to take hold of.

And so is hell. But we know that hell is super terrible, and the marvelous thing is that God comes with His message of salvation, and He says that if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if we will humble ourselves before Him and acknowledge our sins and turn away from our sins and abandon ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, then we need not go to hell. We need not experience the wrath of God. We can be His children, and we can have eternal life. And that is the wonder of the Gospel.

CALLER: There was something said about time tonight, and the definition of time in the Bible is found about Nebuchadnezzar. He went out and ate grass like an animal for seven years.

HC: No, for seven times.

CALLER: Seven times. And so that's the definition of time. There was something said that the Bible said nothing about what time meant.

HC: No, I don't think that was said. Time is something we understand. The Bible indicates that God gave the sun to rule over the day and the moon and the stars to rule over the night. And therefore we have a very excellent knowledge of time. We can very accurately calculate the passing of seconds and minutes and days and years. We can relate one historical incident to another by the passage of time. God has put this within our minds. We really can know time.

But that's quite different from eternity. We often think of eternity as just being infinite time. Well, that's one way of speaking about it. But actually, eternity is outside of time. Eternity is unrelated to time. Eternity is a concept that our finite minds, that are created in terms of time, cannot understand. It is outside of time. The sun is no more in the New Heaven and the New Earth. There are not time keepers. And so all we can do is leave it to the Lord that whatever it is, it is super glorious for the believer and super terrible, super awful, for the unbeliever.

But thank you so much for calling.

Malachi 4:1 and Everlasting Hell (528A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I'm very glad to hear your voice again. I'd like you to dwell upon Malachi 4:1 please.

HC: The question is raised concerning Malachi 4:1. Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. And we read in Malachi 4:1: "For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble. And the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

Now you're wondering what this refers to.

CALLER: Well, if there's anything else to understand other than the wording there, I'd like to know about it.

HC: I think the problem that is suggested here is, what does it mean that these who do wickedly shall be left with neither root nor branch? Now obviously this is talking about God's judgment on the wicked. "All that do wickedly shall be stubble. And the day that cometh shall burn them up." "The day that cometh" is Judgment Day. And it is at that time that God will cast the unsaved into the lake of fire, as we read in Revelation 20, which is a synonym for hell.

Now there are those who believe that when God says that He will cast them into the lake of fire, this will be annihilation. They will simply burn up and cease to exist. And they would use a verse like this to prove that particular

idea, that they are left without root or branch.

The problem, however, is that when we look at all the language of the Bible that deals with hell, we find that God does not teach that there is annihilation. The Bible talks about eternal damnation. The Bible speaks of those who will be tormented forever. The Bible says there's a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and the worm dieth not.

And so we have to read a verse like this in the light of these other passages, that there is no cessation of existence for those who are under the damnation of God? but that they are in eternal punishment of some kind. Now actually, man was created on this earth to live here and to have an eternal relationship with this earth. And of course in the time before the end of time there is also to be procreation. There is to be the bringing forth of progeny from the loins of mankind. But the idea is that he will be here eternally.

Now of course because of the sin of man he dies. But those who have become saved still have an eternal relationship with this earth. We read in the Beatitudes, in Matthew 5, where Christ declared, "The meek shall inherit the earth." And of course this is the New Heaven and the New Earth. And so we who are born again believers do have a root. We do continue in a living relationship to this earth.

But for the unsaved, they are removed from this earth. They have no relationship forever with this earth. They cannot remain here because they are not a part of the Kingdom of God. They have to be removed to another place called hell, and there they suffer eternal banishment from God. They suffer eternal damnation. And in that sense they have neither root nor branch.

Now the word branch carries a double meaning. The word branch is a synonym for the Lord Jesus Christ. He in Isaiah 11 is spoken of as the branch of the root of Jesse. And the word root here incidentally also has a double meaning. The word root refers to the Lord Jesus Christ also. Remember in Isaiah 53 God declared that He would be as a root out of dry ground.

And so the ultimate spiritual meaning that's in view here is that they do not have the Lord Jesus Christ. They have neither root nor branch. They are outside of Christ eternally.

CALLER: That's right. When it comes to evil, everlasting is as long as it exists, in the hottest fire that can be made. That's how long everlasting is, as far as evil is concerned, the same as Sodom and Gomorrah was burned with everlasting fire. And it's in the bottom of the Dead Sea, so the scientists tell us, at the present time. It is ashes in the bottom of the sea.

HC: Ah! Now you've pointed out a very interesting phrase, that Sodom and Gomorrah were burned with everlasting fire. But you see, we only saw the down-payment, the first picture of that everlasting fire, when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone back there 4000 years ago. But there is more to it than that, you see.

It's just like death. When man dies, when Adam died, when mankind dies because of their sins, that's not the whole picture. It isn't just physical death that's in view. There is also eternal death. There is the second death, which is the lake of fire. And so when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by literal fire and brimstone, that was only the down-payment. There's more to say, because those inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (and you would not doubt this for a moment) were not annihilated. They perished physically. They lived not again in their present existence, but they will be resurrected on the last day, at Judgment Day. And they then will have to give an account of all

of their sinful lives. And then they will come under the judgment of God, to answer for their sins.

That fire and brimstone that destroyed them was merely an indication of what was going to happen to them eternally. And it was a guarantee that this was going to happen to them eternally. But that in no way annihilated them. The city might have gone to the bottom of the Dead Sea, or been covered by the Dead Sea. But the inhabitants of the city, with whom God particularly was dealing, are the ones who must stand for judgment on the last day and receive the full brunt of the punishment of God.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was not the end of Sodom and Gomorrah. The fact that there was a literal city that once existed and now cannot be found does not mean that the full payment has been made for their sins. A city consists of people, not of buildings. A city consists of people. And you'll remember when Abraham talked with God about Sodom and Gomorrah, he was saying, "If there are ten righteous in the city." These are the ones that God has in view when He talks about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now the fact that they came under this awful punishment of fire and brimstone was the means by which God brought the first death upon them. But there is still the second death that has to be visited upon them in its full wrath of God. And that will occur when the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah are resurrected on the last day. "The hour cometh when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth, some to the resurrection of eternal damnation." And Revelation 20 says that the sea gave up the dead in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead in them. And you can rest assured that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah will also be resurrected to stand for judgment. And then eternal damnation will be visited upon them.

That activity that happened 4000 years ago was simply the beginning of an eternal damnation. And when God uses that word everlasting, He is speaking about eternity. He is speaking about something that goes on forever.

CALLER: What you've just presented sounds reasonable. But it's just a matter of definition of the word everlasting.

HC: You see, when we talk about the damnation of God, we read, for example, in Revelation 14:11: "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever." Now there's no way that we could understand it as anything but a continuous torment, when we read the language of everlasting damnation. On the one hand, in Matthew 25 God speaks about everlasting life. Well, everlasting life means it's life without end. It is life that goes on forever and ever, throughout eternity. And everlasting damnation then would be damnation that goes on forever and ever. That is the picture of the Bible.

And we read, for example, in Revelation 22, where it's talking about the New Heaven and the New Earth. And in that context it still has something to say about the unsaved. They're still in existence: "Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers," and so on and so on. They have not been annihilated.

This idea of annihilation is a very convenient idea, and certainly for those who are not really sure whether they're saved or not it's a very hopeful idea, because after all, then the worst that can happen to me if I happen not to be a born again believer is that I just cease to exist. Like an animal, I cease to exist. So I can bear that. After all, there's no pain, there's no penalty being paid if I simply cease to exist.

CALLER: If you die in a fire you live a good many minutes or hours.

HC: Well, my, you know, all kinds of Christians, where were born again believers, died in a fire. They were tied

to a stake, and they died with the fire burning all around them. Now were they subjected to the same punishment that is spoken of when God speaks of eternal damnation? In other words, are you suggesting that these Christians who were burned at the stake actually suffered hell, and yet are born again believers? That wouldn't follow at all, would it?

CALLER: But they will be saved, because they're saved.

HC: Well, I know, but the fact is, if you're saying that the essence of hell is to die in a fire, then effectively you're saying that a Christian who is burned at the stake has suffered hell. And a Christian does not suffer hell. There's no way that a Christian suffers hell.

A Christian's sins have been covered. And so dying in a fire is not hell. That's an impossibility. That would make no sense at all. Hell is infinitely more terrible than dying in a fire, or to cease to exist. Hell is eternal damnation. It's awful. It's a terrible thing. That's why the Bible uses such ugly language in speaking about hell.

CALLER: The Bible made one mistake then when it said everlasting punishment instead of everlasting punishing. According to what we've just now discussed, it would be everlasting punishing. They would continue to be punished throughout the endless ages.

HC: I think that's just a matter of semantics. When a man has committed a crime and he is sent to prison for the rest of his natural life, which is really an analogous situation to what hell is, if a man has a life expectancy of, let's say, seventy years, and he has to spend most of those years until he dies in prison, that is punishment for the rest of his life. Now the life expectancy, or the existence expectancy of an unsaved person is forever. His existence is unending. And his punishment is for the rest of his life expectancy, or his existence. I don't use the word life because technically speaking we are not really alive in the full sense of the word unless we are in the Lord Jesus Christ, because we were created in the image of God. And so maybe we should use that word existence. His existence expectancy is forever. And the punishment for his sins is that he is to endure the wrath of God forever.

Now we see that. I think sending a man to jail for the rest of his natural life is directly analogous to God's statement of everlasting damnation.

But look. We've talked quite awhile together, and we should give someone else an opportunity. Thank you so much for calling. Good night.

MATTHEW

Christ Came to "Bring a Sword" in Matthew 10:35 (100B)

CALLER: Would you explain Matthew 10:35?

HC: In Matthew 10:34 we read: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I have not come to bring peace but a sword." And then verse 35 goes on: "For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And man's foes will be those of his own household."

Now, you see, when we are unsaved, we are at peace with our unsaved friends and neighbors and loved ones, because we're all citizens of the same kingdom. We're of the kingdom of Satan, and we together are antagonistic toward Christ. But among ourselves, while we might fight and squabble and quarrel amongst ourselves, basically we are at peace with each other, and our common foe is the kingdom of Christ. That is the nature of the world. The unsaved are the slaves of Satan, and Satan is the bitter enemy of

Christ.

Now if I'm in that kind of a situation, and now I become saved, I have changed my allegiance. I have moved into the other country that we have been at war with, and have become a citizen of the other country, namely, a citizen of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so I am no longer at peace with my friends and my loved ones. I'm at war with them. I have joined the enemy.

And it may be that I'll have to leave my family. In some lands there is great tolerance toward the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you can be the only one who is saved in your household. But in other lands, this would not be possible at all. In many lands, if you become a born again believer, you will be ostracized by your village. You will be driven out of your family. You cannot remain.

And then you've got to make the decision. Do I love father and mother more than Christ, so that I can't stand to leave them, I'm going to turn in my resignation to Christ, which shows that I've never been saved? Or do I love Christ more than my family, so that I'm willing to be ostracized, I'm willing to be run out of town, so to speak, for the sake of Christ?

And so verse 37 goes on: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me." And the cross that we take is the suffering that we will experience as we live for Christ. And it's the cross that we take as we crucify the flesh and its desires, the things that appeal to our eye, to the lusts of the flesh, which we must put to death in our life.

CALLER: Thank you very much

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

How Does Christ Deny Men in Matthew 10:33? (100D)

CALLER: Would you explain Matthew 10:33?

HC: Matthew 10:33. There we read: "Whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny before My Father Who is in Heaven."

Now, you see, we are supposed to be ambassadors of Christ, if we are born again. We represent Christ. We therefore are going to be carrying the Gospel to others. We're going to be living as Christians, as citizens of God's kingdom. And that's why it says in verse 32: "So everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father Who is in Heaven."

We are identified with Christ. We are those whose sins have been covered by Christ's blood. And therefore we are valid ambassadors of Christ.

Now on the other hand, if we are unsaved, then we are not going to be ambassadors of Christ. We are going to be denying Christ. Oh, we may talk about Christ. We may be trying to live like the Bible tells us to live. But if we're not born again, actually our purpose for our relationship to Christ is not to glorify Him, but it's because we are in it for ourselves in some way. We are trying to get to Heaven by our good works, or whatever.

And this effectively is a denial of Christ. And therefore we continue to be denied by Christ in Heaven. We have not come to that born again relationship. We have not become a new creature as yet.

Blessed are the Poor in Spirit in Matthew 5:3 (130C)

CALLER: I have a question about Matthew 5:3, where it says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." I would like you to explain that, and I'd like the answer on the air please.

HC: All right. Fine. The question that is raised is the matter of Matthew 5:3. In Matthew 5:3 we read, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." What does God mean by "Blessed are the poor in spirit"?

You see, in Psalm 51 we read, "A broken and a contrite heart I will not despise." Before we are saved, and this is true of natural man wherever we find him, natural man is very proud in his spirit. He really thinks that he is in control of his life. He really thinks that he is the master of his fate, the captain of his soul. Whether he's a rich man or a poor man, whether he's an intelligent man or a less intelligent man, whether he's young or old, whatever it is, there is a natural pride that is part of man's nature, so that in his spirit he is actually arrogant against God. He doesn't recognize God at all. He really believes that he is in control.

Only when we realize the sad truth about ourselves, that we are not so great after all, as a matter of fact, we are in deep and terrible trouble with God, we are spiritually bankrupt, we are under the wrath of God, we've messed everything up, every action we've ever taken has been sinful and this has only loaded on the guilt and increased the penalty that we must pay, namely, that the wages of sin is death, and so we are really in terrible trouble, and so our spirit has been broken, we are poor in spirit, there is no self-pride anymore, do we come penitently to God. We come humbly before God and sue for His mercy. We beseech Him, "Oh God, have mercy on me. I'm a sinner."

Only when we actually come to that state of mind in our life, in one person it is more real in its expression in his life than in another. But ultimately everyone who is born again must come to that realization, that he is spiritually bankrupt. And only when we come to this are we going to be on the threshold of salvation. And here is the promise: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

The Kingdom of Heaven is that wonderful wonderful kingdom that we enter when we are saved. Our homeland is Heaven when we are born again. And the entrance into Heaven is not on our merit, not by our worthiness, not because we are justly proud of anything that we are. Our entrance into Heaven is because we have become totally aware and have recognized and have admitted the sad fact that we are bankrupt, that we are in terrible trouble with God, and we are ready to throw ourselves on His mercy.

On Being Least in the Kingdom of God in Matthew 11:11 (136A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Good to talk to you again. I'm puzzled about the verse that says that John the Baptist is least in the Kingdom of God. It would appear from the context that there were others among the disciples that would be above John in the Kingdom. I can't quite see a class distinction in the Kingdom, and yet I am puzzled.

HC: In Matthew 11:11 we read, "Truly I say to you, among those born of woman there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." And the question is: Why is John the Baptist called greater than anyone else that had come before? And why does it go on and say that he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he?

I think we can immediately see why John the Baptist is called greater than anyone before. The prophets in the Old Testament longed to see this salvation. They announced the coming of the Messiah. They prophesied concerning the coming of the Messiah. And now John the Baptist finally arises. And he has the distinct honor and privilege of

being the one who is on the scene to announce that the Messiah has actually come. He is the last, if you will, of the Old Testament prophets, because he definitely is on the Old Testament side of the cross. And he is actually the one who has been given the privilege of baptizing Jesus, of providing the ceremonial waters so that Jesus might be ceremonially cleansed, so He can go about His job as the High Priest who will offer the Lamb, and that is Himself.

And so in that sense John the Baptist is greater. Now when it says, "Yet he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he," there are two possibilities as to what this means. It can be talking about the most humble Christian who comes on the scene after the cross, after John the Baptist. Every born again believer, after the cross, is qualified to be a witness. He is a prophet just as definitely as John the Baptist was, or Isaiah or Jeremiah. And we have the distinct privilege of declaring that Christ has gone to the cross, and He has risen again. We have the full story to tell, which no Old Testament prophet could tell. And so in that sense it could mean this, that the most humble Christian is greater than John the Baptist. Now that's one possibility.

The other possibility is that sometimes the language of being "least in the Kingdom of Heaven" is synonymous with being under the condemnation of hell (not always, but sometimes). We read in Matthew 5:19, "Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Now in Matthew 18:6 we read, "If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." Now if we are teaching commandments that are contrary to the Word of God, then we are causing a little one to stumble, and it shows that we are subject to hell.

And so the term "least in the Kingdom of Heaven" can be talking about someone who is subject to hell. Now when Christ came, He became sin for us. He became one who became subject to hell and went to the cross on our behalf.

And so in that sense it could be that it's talking about the Lord Jesus Christ, who of course is greater than John the Baptist, although He was least in the Kingdom of Heaven, in that sense, that He endured hell.

However, I tend to lean toward the first possibility rather than the second, although either one has biblical possibility.

CALLER: Thank you very much. I appreciate your Question and Answer program very much, and I appreciate that you're always referring us back to the Lord Jesus Christ.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

The Two Genealogies of Christ in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 (136C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. In Matthew 1 and in Luke 3 we have two different accounts of the ancestors of Christ. And I'd like to know why they are different, and also, if the one in Luke is complete. It seems like kind of a short span of time. And I'd like to know if it is complete or not, and the comparison between the two, why they are different.

HC: Okay. Your question deals with the differences that exist between the two genealogies we find in the Bible concerning Jesus. We find one in Matthew 1, that begins with Abraham and goes down through to Joseph. And the other one begins with Adam (that's

found in Luke 3), and goes all the way through to Heli, who is not Joseph.

Now when you study these two genealogies, you will find that they are identical from Abraham to David. You'll find the same names. But from David on, you will find a radical departure. In Matthew's genealogy, it goes through Solomon, through Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, all of the kings of Judah, right through to Jeconiah, and then from Jeconiah through some other names, all the way through Joseph.

Now in Luke's genealogy, it goes to David. And then it doesn't name another king. It goes to Nathan, who was a brother of Solomon, and goes right on through the whole series of other names, coming to Heli. And so this is the genealogy, in Luke 3, of Mary. The one in Matthew is the genealogy of Joseph, who was not the father of Jesus.

CALLER: The one in Luke goes all the way back to Adam.

HC: Yes. Because it is the genealogy of Jesus, and it relates Jesus to Adam. It carries all the way through the whole human race. It really begins with God, because it speaks of Adam, the son of God, and goes all the way through. Now it doesn't mean that every single name in the genealogical line-up has been named. There are one or two or three that are absent, as we compare with other Scriptures. And I think there may be several reasons for this. But one of the reasons is that in so doing you end up with exactly 77 names in that genealogical table. And seven is the number of the perfection of God's plan. And therefore I think, in that sense, it was contrived. That is, the names are named, and enough have been left out to end up with 77, to emphasize that number seven in that context.

And also, incidentally, Jesus was born at the end of the eleventh millennium. There were 11,000 years before Christ, and it was right at that time that Christ was born. And so you find the number eleven featured and the number seven featured in the number 77.

CALLER: Thank you. Good night.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

The Rich Young Man in Matthew 19 (212B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like to ask a question about Luke 3:11 and also the passage that talks about the rich young ruler whom Christ told to sell everything and to follow Him. How can we relate this to today's life? How should we as Christians relate it to our lives today?

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you.

The question is raised concerning Luke 3:11. There we read, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none. And he who has food, let him do likewise." This is John the Baptist who is speaking to the people who are coming to him as he preaches the gospel of repentance. And he is saying that they are to start loving their neighbors. They are to start sharing.

Jesus said in another place that we must "love our neighbor as ourselves." Now God has put within our being a self-love, which is part of God's program, so that we will preserve ourselves. We're always a little extra careful that we aren't going to get hurt, if we're doing something. We're always careful to make sure that all is going to go well with us. And God wants us to have an equal concern for others.

And here it is put in the language, "If you have two coats and you meet with someone who has none, then share with him what you have," because if he does not have a coat, then he is in real trouble. He can't meet the cold. Now ultimately there's a deeper meaning here. The fact is, God has lavished the Gospel upon us.

And we have been clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness. And now we meet someone who is unsaved. He stands spiritually naked before God. And we are to be ready to share this marvelous Gospel that God has lavished upon us. We are to share with him, so that he too might become saved, so that he too, if he is exercised by it, might be clothed by the robe of Christ's righteousness.

And notice the second phrase: "And he who has food, let him do likewise." And when we are saved, we have come into an abundant harvest of food, as we feed on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God is the Bread of Life. And we meet someone who is unsaved. They are spiritually famished. They are dying of malnutrition, because they have no spiritual food to eat. And we very generously are to share this. In a real sense this is getting right to the responsibility of the believer to be available to share the Gospel, to make all that he has available to share the Gospel.

Now this gets us into this matter of the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler was a young man who really thought that he was rich in his good works. He was rich physically, too. But he was also rich in his good works. When Jesus asked him what he had to do to have eternal life, he said that one has to keep the commandments. And he answered, "I've kept all of these from my youth."

In other words, he was very satisfied that he was worthy before God. Probably he was seeking a commendation from Christ, looking upon Christ only as a Rabbi, where Christ as a Rabbi would say, "My, you're a fine young man. And certainly God ought to be grateful to have you in the Kingdom. You are rich in your good works, even as you are rich in your money."

But Christ, of course, has come with a different kind of salvation. We are not saved by our good works. We are not saved by our personal worthiness. The Bible teaches that even our best works are "as filthy rags." If we have committed even just one sin, we stand guilty of hell. And the only way we can ever get into Heaven would be, first of all, to spend an eternity in hell. And since eternity is forever, we would never make it into Heaven.

And so anyone at all who thinks that he's rich in good works, who thinks that he's really worthy before God, is in deep and terrible trouble. And so Christ has to show this young man that he is in trouble, that he is not qualified at this point, in any way, to go into Heaven.

And so He says, "Sell all that you have and give to the poor, and come and follow Me." Now there's a two-pronged implication here. First of all, Christ is talking about physical riches. In another place, in Luke's Gospel, we find the same kind of a statement to all of us. It's bad enough when we read it about the rich young ruler, but actually God is giving this command to all of us.

In verse 32 of Luke 12: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms (that is, give to those who are poor). Provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

In other words, Christ is effectively saying, "Make your possessions available to the spiritually poor." He's not talking about the physically poor. He's talking about the spiritually poor, because these are the ones to whom we bring the Gospel. We are stewards of God, ambassadors of God, to get the Gospel out. And we are to make everything that we have as available as possible to bring the Gospel.

And so there is this physical sense, therefore, that we must understand when Christ replied to the rich young ruler

that he was to sell his possessions and give to the poor. He was to make himself a disciple of Christ by this obedience, that is, by placing his trust in Christ. And he was to make himself totally available, that all that he had might be ready to be of service to God in bringing the Gospel to others.

But there was another sense that God had in view here. "Sell all that you have and give to the poor, and come and follow Me." In other words, your riches are not going to get you into Heaven, your rich deeds, your good works. That isn't going to get you anywhere, except to hell. You strip yourself of all of this. You come as a spiritually bankrupt sinner before God. None of these good works are meaningful at all. Christ did not come to call the righteous, that is, the self-righteous. He came to call sinners to repentance. And when you have become spiritually stripped of anything that you think is good or worthy, then you're going to be ready to follow Me. Then you're going to be ready to understand the salvation which I have to offer.

And the young man went away "exceedingly sorrowful, because he had great possessions." On both counts he was still trusting in his good works. He liked his physical riches too much. He was not ready to surrender his will to Christ as King and Lord of his life.

Now if we're going to be born again, we must be ready to obey Him. We must count the cost of discipleship. The cost of discipleship means that we have to turn our back on the world. Our security no longer is in the things of this world. Our security is no longer in the pursuit of pleasure and all of these things that are so attractive to unsaved men. Our security is going to be in Christ. We're going to find that we're to live as strangers and pilgrims here. We're just passing through.

But we also are going to find that we have a real task, a real mandate. We are to be stewards of all that Christ has given us, so that we might share that Gospel with others to the very highest possible degree.

And if we're not ready to face this kind of life, it means that we're not ready to belong to Christ. We have not really understood what it means to call upon God for mercy and to repent of our sins and trust in Christ only.

Witnessing to Children — The "Little Ones" in Matthew 18:14 (247A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I have a question concerning children. I do child evangelism work. On the basis of Matthew 18:14, what do you think of that message? Secondly, assume that you went to a village and there were ten children there, and you saw those children, and you knew that you never would pass that way again. What would you do about their salvation? I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you.

Let's answer the second question first. Suppose that you came to a village, and there were ten children, and this is the only time that you would ever be able to be with them. What would you try to do concerning their salvation?

Of course the first thing that you would do would be to begin to pray that God would give you wisdom, and that God would give you an open door to speak with them. These children might be so occupied with their play, with their preoccupation with the things they are doing, they don't even want to listen to you. So first of all, you have to pray that God might bring their attention to what you have to say.

Secondly, as you pray, you want to pray that what word you brought to them

would be applied to their heart by the Holy Spirit, by God the Holy Spirit. We have the promise that God's Word will not return void, but it will accomplish the purpose for which it was sent. And so you would also beseech the Lord that His purpose in this case might not be the purpose of judgment, not be the purpose of a savor of death unto death, but that it might be a savor of life unto life.

And so then you would begin to look for opportunity to speak with these children. Now the message of salvation is one. There's not one message of salvation for adults and another for youngsters. There's not one message of salvation for people with an intellectual mind and another for someone else. When we read the Bible, we find that God has one Gospel, and that Gospel is that we are in trouble with God. We are sinners.

And we can talk to children about sin. They know that there is wrongdoing. And they know about punishment. They know about justice. They know that if someone has done wrong, then there has to be punishment. And so, of course using language that they can understand, we can tell them about the fact that all men are sinners, and that there is a God in Heaven. And of course even before we begin talking about sin, it might be well to talk about God in Heaven. And that is easily a conversation opener, as we make reference to the beautiful flowers in the garden or the fragrance of the roses that are nearby, or the song of the bird that is singing in the trees, or any other object that reveals the glorious God in creation.

And from there we can go into the fact that God created man too, and that man has rebelled against God, that man is a sinner. And these children can know this, when you see how often you disobey your parents, how you feel anger in your heart when your mother asks you to help with the dishes, and what have you.

Now the Bible gives very solemn truth concerning this. It says that we must be punished for our sins. And this is something that is a terrible thing. But there is a way that you can know the love of God. There is a way that you can really pass up any kind of punishment for your sins, and that is if you'll place your trust in the wonderful Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. And then you can begin to talk about how God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Now I'm not sure that you would have the attention of all ten children throughout this lengthy discourse. There might be one or two who really become eager, who really are listening with rapt attention. There might be more than one or two. And you will really sense that the Word of God perhaps has found root somehow in the hearts of these youngsters.

Now concerning Matthew 18:14, if we read this and isolate it from the rest of the Bible, which is a typical thing that we do if we're not reading the Bible carefully, we would arrive at the conclusion that every little one is going to be saved, because it says here, "It is not the will of My Father who is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Now that says very plainly that it's God's program that every child be saved.

Now immediately, however, having said that, we sense that that cannot be the full story, because we look all around and we see people who are grown, and they're not saved. In fact, most of our friends, and most of the people around us, are not saved. And they were all once babies. There isn't a man living today that didn't start out as a baby.

Also we have learned, as we've studied the Bible, that once we are a child of God, once we are born again, once we have eternal life (and all of this is required in order to be saved, in order to

be right with God, in order to go to Heaven), then we will never perish. We have eternal life. And so we immediately sense, "Boy, there has to be another meaning to this. It can't mean that, that it's God's program that every little one is going to go to Heaven, because then all the grown people would be saved, because once we are born again we can't lose that salvation."

But even if we didn't think of that, we still must examine this in the light of the context. And when we just look at the context, we find that God isn't really talking about little children. He's not talking about physical babies. We go back to verse 1 of Matthew 18: "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?'" Now that's the question Christ is going to answer in these first 14 verses. "And calling to Him a child, He put him in the midst of them and said, 'Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children . . .'" In other words, He's making the child the parable, if you will. He's making the child the historical fact, but he's using that child as an illustration of the way we must become in order to be born again, the same as He healed the blind man. Even though He healed the blind man of a physical ailment, He's showing by this the fact that God has the power to heal us of our spiritual blindness. There is the salvation side of the story that is being unfolded when God does a miracle.

Now here, too. Here is the physical side of the story. Here is a little child, sitting on Jesus' lap, or standing there in the midst of the disciples. And now Christ is going to unfold the spiritual story, the salvation aspect of this physical demonstration. And He says, "Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you shall never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."

And so now He is saying, therefore, that anyone who is to become born again must be like a child. That is, even as the child has a naive trust in his parents, he has a wide eyed astonishment at the creation of the world all around him, he is simple in his beliefs, and so on, so we spiritually are to have a naive, child-like trust in God. We are to have wide-eyed astonishment in our eyes as we see the wonders of God's love, of His saving love. We are to walk humbly and simply before God, even as a child does. A child knows he's a child, and does not put on airs. He does not ordinarily try to arrogate for himself the standing of an adult. But he is a very humble personality, as compared with people in general.

And so it is as a born again believer. We must be humble. We must walk humbly, with that child-like trust. And so now He goes on in verse 5, and says, "Whoever receives one such child in My Name receives Me." Now He's talking about those who become born again believers. He's not talking about physical children now, although they can be included. They too can be saved. But the focal point has shifted very quickly from this child to the born again believer, who must be like a child. "Whoever receives one such child in My Name receives Me. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

In other words, make sure that if you are teaching those who are children of God, those who are born again believers, make sure that you are teaching Bible truth. Otherwise you're going to have to do some reckoning with God.

And finally, let's go down to verse 10: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones." Which little ones? Well, the born again believers, those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, regardless of whether they're young or old. "For I

tell you that in Heaven their angels always behold the face of My Father who is in Heaven." In other words, this is picking up the story of Psalm 91, that He gives His angels charge over us.

Now notice how in verse 12 God very neatly emphasizes again that He's talking about born again believers, because now He goes on and says, "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them is gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go in search of the one that went astray? If he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of My Father who is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish." You see? He's talking about the whole message of salvation. The lost sheep is anyone who is becoming born again. And these are the little ones that Christ came to seek and to save. God has chosen us in Christ from before the foundations of the world, and it's not His will that we are to perish. He is going to seek for us, and He's going to find us.

I'm reminded of Ezekiel 34, where God said in verse 15, "I Myself will be the Shepherd of My sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled. And I will strengthen the weak. And the fat and the strong I will watch over. I will feed them in justice."

Thank you so much for that call.

"Least in the Kingdom of Heaven" in Matthew 5:19 and 11:11 (262A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I would like you to explain Matthew 5:19 and then Matthew 11:11.

HC: In Matthew 5:19 we read, "Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." And then in Matthew 11:11: "Truly I say to you, among those born of woman there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he."

Now the question that is raised is concerning this phrase "least in the Kingdom of Heaven."

In Matthew 5:19 it is stating here that someone who is frustrating God's will, who is teaching something contrary to the will of God, shall be called "least in the Kingdom of Heaven." And he, on the other hand, who is obedient to the will of God, and who is teaching this, shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now how does this relate to Matthew 11, where John the Baptist is spoken of in very high and glowing terms by Christ, and yet He goes on and says that he who is "least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he"?

Well, let's look at one more verse, and that's in Matthew 18. That also impinges on this question. In Matthew 18:6 we read, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck, and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

Now I read Matthew 18:6 because it relates to Matthew 5:19, which is speaking about someone who is frustrating the commandments of God, and actually teaching something contrary to the will of God, thereby causing people to sin.

So we know immediately that from one standpoint the Bible is speaking of those who are under the curse of God as being the "least in the Kingdom of Heaven."

We immediately sense how this ties together. But then how are we to understand Matthew 11:11? Here He

says, "He who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he."

If we follow this line of reasoning, that someone who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is someone who is under the curse of God, and subject to hell, then we would have to conclude that Matthew 11:11 is speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Actually, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is identified with the Kingdom of Heaven, in that He became the King of the Kingdom of Heaven, is also identified with the Kingdom of Heaven by the fact that He descended into hell in order to become the King of the Kingdom of Heaven. He became under the curse of God. He became more sinful than any single individual in the world, because He became loaded with the sins of all who would ever believe in Him.

And so while John the Baptist is called very great here in Matthew 11:11, in that he is a prophet who has been invited to announce the Lord Jesus Christ and who prepared Christ for His ministry in that he baptized Him (he therefore was signally honored, and is called greater than anyone who had come before), and yet Christ, who went to hell, who became sin for us, is greater than John the Baptist. And you'll remember that John the Baptist is the one who said, "I must decrease, but Christ must increase." John the Baptist sensed this very definitely.

Now that's one way of answering the question of Matthew 11:11, and answering it in the light of two other passages that clearly indicate that someone who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is someone who is corporately a citizen of God's Kingdom but is not born again, and is actually cursed by God. He's headed for hell. And the proof of this is that he is teaching that which is contrary to the Word of God.

But now there's another way of looking at this, and we must also examine that for just a moment, so that we'll get everything possible that the Bible speaks about in relationship to this kind of a question.

In Luke 9:48 we read, "Whoever receives this child in My Name receives Me. And whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great." Now God is speaking of someone who is least, not in the sense that He used in Matthew 5, but in the sense of someone who is humble in the Kingdom of Heaven, who has humbled himself, and who realizes that whatever he is it is in Christ. This now is not talking about someone who is merely a citizen of God's Kingdom corporately, that is, because he has joined the church, one who is organizationally identified with the Kingdom of Christ. But rather it is someone who is personally born from above. Personally he has become a child of God. And in his humility he is looked upon as one who is "least among you." Putting it in another way, the Bible says, "He who is last shall be first," and so on. This conveys the same kind of an idea.

Now if this is the direction that Matthew 11:11 is going, then we would arrive at this kind of a conclusion, that while John the Baptist is the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, inasmuch as he was privileged to be the actual announcer of the Lord Jesus Christ, in a very literal way, all the Old Testament prophets looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, but John the Baptist was raised up by God to actually be present to point out to the world, "Behold, the Lamb of God" yet the born again believer who comes after John the Baptist, he who is walking humbly before the Lord because he is a child of God (I'm using the language of Luke 9:48 now) is greater than John the Baptist, in this sense - in the sense that John the Baptist could announce the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we are privileged to declare that Christ has come and actually announced to the world the finished

work of Christ, that He went to the cross. He overcame death. He endured hell for our sins. And He rose again. And He ascended back to the Father. And He is coming again. This is detail that John the Baptist was not knowledgeable of.

And so in that sense we have a far greater privilege and task than John the Baptist. He announced the fact that Jesus had come. We announce the fact that He not only had come, but that He went to the cross, and He actually provided the atonement. And we have all the details concerning this.

Now I'm not really certain which is these two explanations is the one that God has in view. Perhaps He has both, because Christ of course is identified very intimately with the Christian. At least both explanations have Biblical validity.

But thank you for that question.

Understanding Matthew 24 (305B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I'm reading Matthew 24, and it's a little puzzling. And according to this New American Standard, it says, "See that no one misleads you," and that there will be wars and rumors of wars, and tribulation, and false prophets will arise, lawlessness, and so on.

And down farther it says, "Let him who is on the housetop not go down," and "Woe be to those who are with child," and "Pray that your flight not be in winter or on the Sabbath." Now the way I figure that out, that can't be the last days.

HC: Why can it not be the last days?

CALLER: If it would be the last days, why would it tell you not to come down off the housetop, and "Woe be to those who are with child"? Because if it was the very last days, what difference would it make where you were?

HC: First of all, immediately when we read these passages, we start thinking about a particular moment in time. But look at Luke 17. Leave your finger in Matthew 24. And if you turn to Luke 17, where Jesus is talking about Judgment Day itself, He's using as a figure the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. And you'll remember that Lot and his family were driven out of Sodom and Gomorrah. And right on the heels of them leaving Sodom and Gomorrah, fire and brimstone were rained down on these cities, and they were destroyed. The fact is, Lot's wife looked back, and she was enveloped in that very destruction.

Now notice what it says, in verse 29 of Luke 17: "But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take away. And he that is in the field, let him likewise not turn back. Remember Lot's wife."

You see, God is not talking here about taking time to go down into the house. He's really talking about an attitude. What was Lot's wife's interest in?

CALLER: She was interested in the city. That's why she turned around.

HC: Yes. She was more concerned about the things of this world than she was about a right relationship with God. And she was consumed in the judgment.

So at the Last Day, when Christ comes again, if we are still worshipping the creation, which the unsaved man does (he finds his security, his joy, his hope, in the things of this world) if that is our attitude, that we find our hope, our joy, our security, in the things of this world, we are going to be consumed in the Judgment Day, even as Lot's wife was.

This language, of not going down into the house, is not speaking about us literally standing on the roof of the house and running down. From this context we learn that it is really addressing itself to the question of where is our love, where is our concern?

Lot's wife's concern was in the things in her home, in the city that she lived in. She couldn't bear to leave them. And because of this attitude, she was consumed in the judgment. If our attitude, when Christ comes again, is that kind of an attitude, we also will still be subject to judgment.

CALLER: Yes, I can see that. But why would it speak about, "Woe to those who are with child"?

HC: Well, again, we have a commentary on that in the Gospel of Luke. Remember when Jesus was carrying the cross? And as He carried the cross, the women cried out after Him. And then Jesus turned on them and said, in Luke 23:28, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming in the which they shall say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck.' Then shall they begin to say to the mount; ins, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'" Now in Luke 23, just as in Luke 17, Christ equated going down into the house with the very moment when Judgment Day had come. So here He is equating the language of "Blessed are the barren" (or in other words, "Blessed are those who do not have children") with Judgment Day, because "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'" From Revelation 6:15 or 16, we know that that is the time when Christ comes, and the unsaved are in mortal fear of Him, and will be calling to the rocks to crush them and the hills to cover them.

Actually, again Christ is teaching here an attitude. You see, there are a couple of factors in view here. First of all, an unsaved parent couldn't care less about his children, insofar as how they are going to be brought up spiritually. And yet he has a certain love and concern for his children.

Now remember in Sodom and Gomorrah. What happened to the babies there? They were destroyed. What happened in the Flood of Noah's day? What happened to the babies? They were destroyed. Now can't you see a parent that has children, and Judgment Day has come, and suddenly he realizes that he has done nothing to, it's bad enough that he himself must be thrown into hell, under the wrath of God. But what an awful thing to know that his family, his whole family, is going to go there. It's just going to add to the turmoil and the awfulness of his predicament. It would be far better if he had no children, if he had no responsibility toward these.

You see, Judgment Day is the final moment. There's no escape, there's no turning around, there's no more time to correct any past mistakes. He has made no effort to train his children in the fear and the knowledge of the Lord. He has made no effort to bring them the Gospel. And their eternal destiny, in all likelihood, is going to be very similar to his own.

CALLER: Well, that's the reason I wondered. I know it's supposed to be in the twinkling of an eye. And why would you worry about coming down off the housetop to get your coat?

HC: You see it's not talking about an actual thing that we would do, but it's talking about an attitude, the same as when it talks about, "Pray that your flight will not be in winter." Now again, a "flight in winter"? That talks about an escape of some kind.

You see, Jesus equates His coming with summertime, in Matthew 24:32. "Now

learn a parable of the fig tree. When its branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the door."

Okay. Christ is equating His coming with summertime. Now anyone who is not ready is not seeing that it is summertime, that it is time for Christ's return. They are as if they are in winter. They are still thinking that it's a long time before Christ will return, or at least, whatever they're thinking, they're not ready for His return. They are like those who are in winter. Only the true believer will be like those who are in summer. We will know that it is time. We will be ready at any moment that that might happen.

CALLER: There were a few things in there that kind of had me baffled. And another one was verse 30, when it says, "All the tribes of the earth will mourn." Well, the tribes of the Jews were not considered tribes, and I thought it was speaking more about the fall of Jerusalem, or something like that.

HC: No. In verse 30, where it says, "All the tribes of the earth will mourn," look at the language carefully. "All the tribes of the earth will mourn." That is, this is another way of saying, all the nations of the world, all the peoples of the world, will mourn.

Now why will they mourn? Well, Revelation 6 tells us why they will mourn, why they will weep. Because Judgment Day has come. They will be in terrible trouble. In hell they will weep and gnash their teeth. And already, just anticipating judgment, there will be great weeping, because the time of retribution has arrived. It will be a terrible, terrible moment for those who are unsaved. Words cannot describe the awfulness of Christ's return for the unsaved.

CALLER: Well, I just wondered, because Matthew 24 is quite a chapter to study.

HC: Well, you know, I remember years ago, when I had not worked as long in the Bible as I have at the present, I struggled with Matthew 24. Of course I read whatever commentaries I could lay my hands on, and I found that virtually every commentary related Matthew 24, at least to a high degree, to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. And so for a long time, for several years, I tried to piece through Matthew 24, to identify. What verse refers to AD 70, and what verse refers to the return of Christ? And I always had great difficulties.

I must confess that as I have continued to study the Word, and compare scripture with scripture, and just generally become more acquainted.

You know, you keep reading and reading and reading. And pretty soon you get a little better idea of the way God speaks, I suppose. But at any rate, presently I am altogether convinced, altogether convinced, that Matthew 24 does not have AD 70 in view at all, not a bit, that the whole chapter of Matthew 24 has the end of time in view. It begins this way, and it goes all the way through.

Remember, already in Matthew 24:3, "And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us. What shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world?'" And that sets the context of Matthew 24. It's the end of the world.

CALLER: This says, "the end of the age."

HC: Or the end of the age. But you see, elsewhere in the Bible we read that the New Testament period is the end of the ages. We are the last days, the whole New Testament period. Remember Hebrews 1:1?: "In these last days He has spoken by His Son." Now before the coming of Christ we have the period from Adam until the Flood, which

actually works out to be a little over 6000 years. And then we have a rather bleak period, from the Flood until Abraham is called out of Ur of the Chaldees, a period of about 3000 years. And then we have a period of about 2000 years, during which God dealt through the nation of Israel.

And now we come to the Christ, to the cross. And the Bible speaks about the "last days," or the "end of the ages." In Matthew 24:13 it says, "This Gospel must be preached to every nation, and then the end will come." So it's the end, you see.

CALLER: That's what's kind of confusing, if you haven't studied any more than I have. Another thing that threw me back to thinking it was Jerusalem was when it says, "Pray that your flight not be in winter or on the Sabbath." Well, if it was in winter, they had to hide in caves. Or if it was on the Sabbath, the Jews weren't allowed to travel. So they'd be stuck.

HC: But that isn't what's in view.

CALLER: You see, there's little things like that that crop up, that kind of had me a little bit confused.

HC: Well, join the party. These are not easy verses to understand. But I really believe that in these verses, "Pray that your flight be not in winter or on the Sabbath," "Do not go down into the house," that you will be included amongst those who will be saying, "Blessed are the barren," all four of these references are language that is being addressed to the question: Be careful that you are saved! All four of these are speaking of those who are unsaved, who are not ready.

Later on in Matthew 24 Jesus became more specific. He said in verse 42, "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord cometh." And this is really the focal point. Be sure that you are ready. Be sure that you will not be included amongst the unsaved.

CALLER: Well, of course there are a lot of hidden things in here. If it was too plain, we'd never read it. We'd just read it once and put it down and say, "Oh, I understand that."

HC: Well, God has His own purposes for writing the way He did. That's for sure.

CALLER: That's what I mean. You have to search the scriptures daily.

HC: Exactly. That's what God wants us to do.

CALLER: You read a novel once, and you say, "Oh, I read that?" and put it back on the shelf, where you forget it. But this way, you have to keep searching. Anyway, that helps a lot. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

CALLER: Good night.

Who Was Mary Magdalene? (328F)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. My question is in regard to Mary Magdalene. Was she ever married, and who was it that condemned her, where Christ said, "Whoever is without sin can cast the first stone." I'll take my answer over the air.

HC: Thank you. Good night.

The question is concerning Mary Magdalene. Was she ever married, and is she the one about whom Jesus said, "Whosoever condemns thee, let him cast the first stone?"

We know this about Mary Magdalene, and this is all we know of her. She originally had seven demons within her. In other words, she was demon possessed. We know that later one she was saved. We know that she became a very personal friend of the Lord Jesus Christ, even as Mary and Martha and Lazarus, and Peter, and some of the others became very personal friends. We

know that she is one of the first persons that the Lord Jesus greeted after He rose from the grave.

But beyond that, we don't know any more about Mary Magdalene. We don't know whether she ever did marry, whether she had ever been married before. We know nothing of whether she had ever been taken in adultery. The Bible is silent on all of those questions. All we know, however, is that before she was saved she actually was possessed by demons. She was firmly in the clutch of Satan, and she did become saved.

Now there was a woman that was taken in adultery, unnamed, her name is not given, as near as I recall. And the Jews brought her to Jesus, to test Jesus. They were trying to put Him on the spot. Now in the Old Testament the law declared that if any woman was taken in adultery, that woman was to be stoned to death, or a man likewise. Here Jesus came, claiming that the Bible, the Old Testament, was the Word of God and was to be obeyed. And so now they were going to test Him.

It was a test because under Roman law, under which the nation of Israel existed in the days of Jesus, no one could stone someone. That person had to have a trial, and that person had to be condemned by Roman authority. That's the reason Jesus was condemned to death by Pontius Pilate, the Roman ruler. And so they thought they were putting Jesus on the spot.

If He said, "Stone her," then He would disobey the Roman rulers. If He said, "Don't stone her," then He would be disobeying, they thought, the law of Moses. And so Jesus very neatly walked out of their trap. He wrote on the ground. What words He wrote we do not know, but we know that He is the lawgiver. He is the one who wrote the law. He is above the law, in other words.

When Jesus was writing on the ground with His finger, I think this is demonstrating the fact that Jesus is the Word of God. Then He said, "Whoso among you is without sin, let him cast the first stone." And in the presence of the lawgiver, they all stood condemned. They all stood condemned. No one could cast the first stone because there was no one there without sin. And so, to walk out of the snare that Jesus had turned against them, they thought they were going to box in Jesus, but He instead boxed them in. And so, one by one, they silently left, until finally Jesus looked up and said to the woman, "Who is there to condemn thee?"

Is Adultery Grounds For Divorce? – Understanding Matthew 19:9 (599B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like to know what is the difference between an annulment and a divorce?

HC: What is the difference between an annulment and a divorce? An annulment is supposed to be an action whereby it is recognized that a marriage has not taken place. For example, if someone had a marriage license to marry somebody, and yet officially they never became married, they never completed the legal procedures they had to follow, if a Justice of the Peace or a minister or somebody did not actually marry them, then they are not really married, and that marriage license could be annulled.

Or, let's suppose that someone was married by a minister of the Gospel, and they had a marriage license, but they never came together as husband and wife. Right after the marriage something happened so that they were separated, and they never did live together in the sexual union, even for a moment. Then a marriage did not really take place. And therefore it could be annulled.

But unfortunately, there are many annulments taking place today where in actuality there was a marriage. There was a marriage license, according to the eyes of the law they were married, and they lived together in sexual union. But to avoid the blight of calling it a divorce, it is called an annulment. But in that case the annulment is a divorce, and there really isn't any difference at all.

CALLER: But isn't there a reason to get a divorce in Matthew 19:9?

HC: The question is, doesn't Matthew 19:9 give us a reason for divorce? Well, if we took that at face value, if we isolated that verse from the rest of the Bible, it would appear to say that for the cause of fornication a divorce could take place.

Now the Greek word for fornication is *pornea*, from which we get the word pornographic. Now Jesus said in another place, if any man thinks adulterously about a woman, he already has committed adultery in his heart. Therefore, if anyone engages in any kind of conversation or thinking concerning pornographic material or action, he would already be guilty of fornication.

And that would mean that any woman who ever caught her husband telling a dirty story, which would be fornication, or looking at a "girlie" magazine, or making some remark that was an immoral remark, would have cause for divorce. And by the same token, any man who found the same kind of a thing in his wife, that she was repeating some story that was of a pornographic nature, he would have cause for divorce, if that is what that verse is saying.

In other words, there could be divorce all over the place, because who is there that is not guilty of fornication to some degree at some point in his life?

But this is not what that verse is teaching. This was a cause for divorce in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 24:1 we read that if a man found some uncleanness in his wife, he could put her away. Now the word uncleanness was normally translated nakedness, and it had to do with sexual impropriety, with sexual impurity. If some man engaged in a sexual action with his mother, let's say, it was said that he saw the nakedness of his mother, or of a brother or a sister. And the word nakedness is the same Hebrew word that is translated uncleanness in Deuteronomy 24:1.

So effectively what God is saying in Deuteronomy 24:1 is, if any man found any fornication in his wife, then he could put her away. Well, in Matthew 19:5 and 6 Jesus declared, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." There is not to be divorce for any reason. Well then, in verse 7 the Jews reminded Him and said, "What about Moses?" They were referring to Deuteronomy 24:1. "Didn't he allow divorce?"

And then Jesus answered them in verses 7 and 8, "From the beginning it was not so. But because of the hardness of your hearts God gave that law." In other words, because you were in rebellion against God, God allowed this, that if a man found fornication in his wife he could put her away. But that was not God's intention. "From the beginning it was not so."

And so in verses 7 and 8 God is very clearly indicating that fornication is not a cause for divorce. It had been a cause for divorce for a rebellious nation, that was in rebellion against God, but that was not pleasing to God. That was not God's will. And Christ is setting that possibility aside when He said, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

And then in verse 9 Christ is simply saying, and there's no other reason except fornication, or besides fornication. He's already talked about fornication in verses 7 and 8. And there's no other reason besides fornication whereby you could have a divorce. There

is no reason for divorce, in other words. And then He concludes the argument in verse 9 by saying, "If anyone marries a divorced person, they commit adultery." There is no grounds for divorce that the Bible knows about.

CALLER: None whatsoever?

HC: None whatsoever. The Biblical rule is, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." And no Christian marrying must know the word divorce. That ought to be a word that is unknown in his vocabulary.

CALLER: My mother has written down here for me something to ask you. Let me let her ask you this . . .

HC: Hello.

CALLER: Hello. Just because you've been married before a Justice of the Peace or a preacher, does this always mean that God has put you together, or sometimes can men put a couple together?

HC: Well, that's a good question. When God says, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder," how can we know if a marriage is one that God has put together?

Well, notice that God goes all the way back to the beginning. He says that in the beginning the two became one flesh. In other words, He's talking about all of mankind. Therefore, regardless of whether we're a Christian or not, if we are married in accordance with the law of the land and if we are living together as husband and wife, then we are married in the eyes of God. If the law allows a marriage to be true, if it's by a Justice of the Peace or by a ship's captain, or whoever it is, then that is marriage, if they've come to live together.

You see, if that were not so, then we would have to conclude that the only people who are married in the eyes of God are those who are born again believers. Everyone else in the whole human race would not be married, because they're unsaved. How could that be what God has joined together?

But remember what Jesus said about the Samaritan woman in John 4? She was very unsaved. She was an adulterous woman. And Christ said, "You have had five husbands." And so He recognized marriage for those who were altogether unsaved, just as much as marriage for those who are saved.

CALLER: Thank you.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Parables Concerning Salvation in Mt 25 & Lu 17 (384B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Would you explain Luke 17:10 and Matthew 25:29 & 30?

HC: In Matthew 25 we read, "For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Now this of course is the conclusion of the parable of the ten talents is it not? Actually, he gave one servant five talents, another two, and another one. And then the man with the five talents used his talents to gain five more, the one with two talents gained two more, and the one with one talent hid the talent and gained nothing from it. And then when the master came and they gave their account, then the lord commended the man with the five talents who had gained five more, He commended the man with the two talents who had gained two more. But He said of the one, "You should have put your money into business and gained additional. But

instead you have hid it, and therefore you are to be cast into hell."

And then in that context He said, "Therefore take the talent and give it unto him which hath ten talents." Now the parable is talking about the offer of salvation that God gives to all men. He comes to some more abundantly than to others. But to the whole human race there is sufficient information, just in the fact that God has created this world so that man knows that he needs a Savior, that man knows that he's a sinner and that he ought to become right with God somehow.

The man with the one talent is like someone who is offered the way of salvation, or he knows that he ought to do something about his sins, but he does nothing about it. There is no fruit that comes from his life. He simply disregards the fact that he has to become right with God. And of course he is subject to hell. What blessings he did have on this earth because he enjoyed the blessings of creation, he enjoyed the blessings of being in a church, perhaps, or a Christian family, or whatever, all of this will be taken away from him, and he will be cast into hell. Whereas the man who responded to the Gospel, and his life became fruitful to the Gospel, God will lavish His blessings upon him, so that he becomes free from his sins, he becomes a son of God, he receives eternal life. He is an heir of all the blessings that God speaks of, all the promises that God speaks of in the Bible. The Bible just goes on and on about the marvelous blessings that come to those who become born again believers.

Now that's really, I believe, in a nutshell, the sense of this parable.

Now in Luke 17, what was the verse that you were concerned about? Verse 10?

There we again have a parable, where Christ is saying in verse 7: "But which of you having a servant plowing or feeding cattle will say unto him, by and by, when he comes from the field, Go and sit down and eat, and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve me, until I have eaten and drunken. And afterward thou shalt eat and drink. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded? I trow not. So likewise ye. When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants. We have done that which was our duty to do."

Yes, there's a very distinct relationship to Matthew 25. We do not obey Christ and become a born again believer, that is, respond to the Gospel, become exercised by the Gospel and therefore receive eternal life because we deserve it. Nor do we receive all kinds of rewards on top of eternal life. We don't receive any of these things because we deserve it. We receive these things as an act of God's grace. It's totally an act of God's grace. Our response to the Gospel is what is to be expected when God the Father is drawing us, when He has become our Savior and Lord. It is the expected response. Under no circumstance is it a response that ought to bring credit to us or make us worthy, or give us the idea that now we're entitled to something just a little bit more than somebody else.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you so much for calling and sharing that. Good night.

"Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth" in Mt 16:19 (394C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Mr. Camping. I have a question. In Matthew 16:19 and in Matthew 18:18, in two different settings, it gives the words, whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven. And I was wondering if that relates to

John 20:23. And if so, what does it all mean? I'll take my answer over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you very much. Good night.

The question is raised concerning the statements that we find in three places: Matthew 16, Matthew 18 and John 20:23. And indeed, these three passages are very much related.

In Matthew 16 Jesus has just asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" And then Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And then Jesus responded by saying, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven." And then He said, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock" This rock of course is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the foundation. "I will build My church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom, that whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven."

Actually, the tense of the verb, I think, if read absolutely correctly, should read, "And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall having been bound in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall having been loosed in Heaven."

You see, the keys of the Kingdom that God gives the church is the Gospel. Now these keys work in two directions. As we bring the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, there are those who are slaves of Satan, who are in Satan's prison house, if you will. And the Gospel is the key that unlocks that prison house, so that that individual is free to come out of Satan's kingdom.

But it is also the key that unlocks the gate into the Kingdom of God, into the body of Christ, if you will, into the holy eternal Jerusalem. They are the keys of the Kingdom. It is the Gospel that unlocks hell and opens up Heaven for those who respond to it.

Now the Gospel is a two-edged sword. It is never neutral. Never is it neutral. As it goes out it does one of two things. It either binds men more tightly in their sins. That is, they face the Gospel, but they don't want the Gospel. They don't want to leave their sins. They don't want to humble themselves before God. And therefore they stand under greater condemnation, so that they were already bound and now they are even bound more tightly in their sins.

Or the Gospel is the fragrance of the Lord so that it causes them to be freed, to be loosed from their sins, so that they are free to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. They become a child of God.

Actually, it is God who is ultimately doing the loosing and the binding. All the church really is, is the vehicle that God is using. We are the custodians, the stewards, of the Gospel. We share it, and it is God who applies it to the hearts of those who are listening. But the church takes credit in a real sense, because it is they who are the ambassadors of Christ as the Gospel goes forth.

The fact is, when someone does become saved, it is the church, the corporate body, as we find it amongst the congregations and denominations and groups of believers, which officially welcomes this person into the body of Christ. Now actually, he came into the body of Christ when he became born again. This is altogether the act of God. But to give official recognition to this, the church accepts this person into its membership, the church baptizes this person, the church hears the confession of this person that indeed he has become a child of God. It is ultimately, however, God who is doing it all.

Now we see the same thing in Matthew 18:18, and in John 20:23, where Christ indicates, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever

sins ye retain, they are retained." That's saying the same thing in slightly different language. As we bring the Gospel, those who are exercised by the Gospel, as God applies the keys of the Kingdom to that person's life - their sins are remitted. Their sins are forgiven. And as for those whom God does not exercise, that is, who do not respond to the Gospel, their sins are retained. There is no change in their position before God. They still stand guilty before God with all of their sins.

Do Not Misapply the Bible & Mt 7:1 (413C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I have two questions, and I'll take my answer over the air. I'm a born again believer, and I'm living in Sacramento. But I went to live in Stockton with my aunt for a while. And I feel that God wanted me to come back to Sacramento. And so I was reading in the Bible, and it said, "Go now." And I prayed that God wouldn't want me to go to Sacramento again, because I was afraid. And then it said, "Go now or you will be cursed." And I just want to know, could I be cursed?

And also, I know that the Bible says, "Judge not lest ye be judged." So what about judges and the people on jury trials?

HC: Fine. Thank you for sharing those good questions.

In relationship to your first question, never read the Bible that way. Just because you happen to find a phrase in the Bible that seems to relate to a decision that you must make, that isn't the way God brings truth to you. Suppose you were contemplating committing suicide. This is a dumb thing, of course, but I'll use it as an illustration. Or suppose you were contemplating doing some other sin. And then you were reading the Bible, or you opened the Bible and the phrase popped up in your eyes and it said, "Do it now," or "Go now." Then is God giving you a message that now you should go ahead with this sinful act? You see, that doesn't make any sense at all.

The decision whether you should live in Stockton or in Sacramento, or any other city, has to be based on an evaluation of how you can live most definitely to God's glory. There are certain rules that you read about in the Bible, as, for example, the Bible says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Is it easier to seek the Kingdom of God, is it more beneficial to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in Stockton or in Sacramento? Well, maybe you can't determine that. The Bible says, "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The Bible says, "Ye are My witnesses," and so on.

As you read the Bible, you try to find anything at all where God has laid down rules for our life. And then you examine the question at hand in the light of these rules. Is it possible to live more to the glory of God? Is it possible to witness better there? Or is there someone I can help there? Is it possible that there I might make myself more available to the service of the Lord? These are the kinds of questions you must face, not look for a phrase that seems to leap out at you as you read the Bible.

Now in answer to your other question, when Jesus said in Matthew 7:1, "Judge not lest ye yourselves be judged," we must follow the Biblical rule of always interpreting scripture by scripture. If we isolate Matthew 7:1 from the rest of the Bible, we could easily conclude that under no circumstance could we serve on a jury, or could we serve as a federal judge of some kind. But when we study the rest of the Bible, we find that while the general rule is, "Judge not lest ye

yourselves be judged," there are exceptions to the case.

Those who are in governmental employ as a judge, that is, if you serve on a jury or if you are a federal judge or a civil judge, that is permitted in the Bible. The government has been given rule over the citizens, and therefore they can make judgments. You read about the role of the government to the citizens in Romans 13, the first six or seven verses.

In the case of the church, those who rule in the church, the elders and the deacons, and the pastor, those who are given that rule or authority, may make judgment concerning the spiritual activities of the members of the church. If they are not living in accord with the Word of God, then they may make judgment, and if necessary they can excommunicate such a person. You might read I Corinthians 5 to see this kind of activity in action.

We parents of course can judge our children, whether they are living for God or not, whether they're doing right or wrong, and we can apply the necessary discipline to them.

These are areas where God allows judgment to be made. These are exceptions to the general rule. The general rule, however, is that we are not to judge our fellow man. That's somebody else's business. We find this is true in our political arena, don't we?, in our civil relationships. We can't go to a neighbor whom we think might be committing some kind of a crime and put him in prison. We might decide that it's wise to tell somebody about the activities going on next door, so that the proper investigation can be made. And if this person does look guilty, he can be brought before the judge, who is rightfully authorized to make judgment, and he can be examined by this judge to discover whether indeed he's doing wrong. And if he were doing wrong, he might be cast into jail.

But it is not our role to make judgment. And incidentally, I can't underscore this enough. This is a luxury that many people in the church really hate to give up. It is such a sweet moment, it is such a desirable idea, when we can look at someone else in the congregation who is doing something sinful, or doing whatever they are doing, and we can pass judgment on them "Oh, my, look what Mrs. Jones is doing now. And something really ought to happen to her because of what she is doing," or whoever it might be. This kind of activity is altogether opposed to what the Bible teaches.

If we see someone living in sin in the congregation, it's not our job to go to that person and point out his sin. Now some of you are going to be violently unhappy with this, but this is the fact. It is not our job to go to that person and point out his sin. What we think is sin might not be sin at all. Maybe we don't understand the whole situation. We're not appointed in that role. We can pray for that person. We can pray, "Oh Lord, is it possible that Brother 'so and so' or Sister 'so and so' is having a problem? And if they are, 'Oh, Father, wilt Thou undertake on their behalf?" and so on. And we certainly can try to visit with that person in general, and maybe try to have some Bible study, or whatever. And if they begin to talk about their problem, then counsel can be given. But if they do not talk about their problem, then it's not our role to get into this matter at all.

Now if it became a flagrant kind of a thing, the rulers in the church would know about it, of course. And they, logically and legitimately, can make judgment. They can go to this person and begin to ask questions and try to discover what is going on. And if there is sin that's going on, they can counsel with this person to turn away from his sin and to cry out to God for mercy, and to discontinue living in this wrong way.

The Resurrection in Matthew 27:51-52 (430B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: In Matthew 27:51 & 52, what does the Holy City refer to?

HC: We have this very intriguing question that comes forth from Matthew 27: 51 & 52. Jesus is hanging on the cross, and then we read that the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom, that great curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the holy place. And then we read those words in verse 52: "And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the Holy City and appeared unto many." What could this be referring to?

Now we know, first of all, that the Holy City has to be something else than Jerusalem. Why do we know that? Well, the reason is that once Christ hung on the cross, once He shed His blood for our sins, then God's work was finished insofar as national Israel was concerned as being the representation of the body of Christ. National Israel, of course, had as its key city Jerusalem. And in Jerusalem its key place, was the temple. And in the temple was the Holy of Holies the most holy place, which the priest entered once a year. And in the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, representing God Himself. It was symbolically representing the place where God came down to man. In the temple the blood sacrifices were offered, which were pointing to the offering of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

But Christ completed all these Old Testament sacrifices. He completed the usage of the temple as the holy place, and Jerusalem as the Holy City. Never again would it be the Holy City. The Holy City now can only be the body of believers. If you go to Ephesians 2, you find there that God speaks of the body of believers as being, as it were, building blocks in the temple of God. We're built into a most holy temple.

In I Corinthians 3 and in I Corinthians 6 the believers are called "temples of the Holy Spirit." In I Peter 2:4 or 5 God speaks of us as lively stones, or living stones, in the house of God. The temple is the body of Christ from this point on. And the body of Christ from this point on will be represented by the congregations and churches that encompass all the nations of the world.

The Holy City no longer is Jerusalem. More than that, in Revelation 21 we read of the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, coming down out of Heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband. This is a reference to the whole body of Christ that comes down out of Heaven. And it's called the New Jerusalem because it is the perfect Jerusalem. It is the Jerusalem without spot or wrinkle. It is the Jerusalem, the City of God, that is made up only of born again believers. And it is called the Holy City.

So we sense that the Holy City is not Jerusalem. It's the body of believers in some sense. Now notice what came out of these graves: "Many bodies of the saints which slept arose." These are bodies that came out of the graves. It doesn't say, "Many saints were resurrected." Lazarus was resurrected when God raised him from the dead. He came forth, as a body and a soul, a totally integrated being. This speaks of bodies of the saints which slept, which arose.

You see, this is the language really of the last day, when we will experience the resurrection of our bodies.

Actually, I believe that God is bringing to pass here a resurrection that is like the resurrection of the last day, the resurrection of the bodies of certain saints. They may have lived a hundred years before, or a thousand years, or two

thousand years before. It's immaterial. Ever since they had died, or they had fallen asleep, in their souls they had been living with God in Heaven. But now their bodies are resurrected. And following Jesus' resurrection, they appeared in the Holy City, that is, in Heaven, where the body of Christ is, the same Holy City that's referred to in Revelation 21.

"... and appeared unto many." You see, Jesus gave His life a ransom for many. Now we can speculate as to why they were resurrected. We know that the believers in Heaven have very deep and fervent interest in Christ's redemption, the redemption that He offers on the cross. We know that this has to be, because only by virtue of the finished work of Christ on the cross can the believers be in Heaven. Those Old Testament believers, of course, are in Heaven in their souls, anticipating the work of Christ on the cross.

That they are deeply concerned with the work of Christ on the cross is seen adequately in the conversation that took place on the Mount of Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah came from Heaven and appeared to the Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of three of the disciples. What did they talk about together? They talked about, the Bible says, His coming decease, of the fact that He was going to the cross.

One can completely understand this. If Jesus in any way is unsuccessful in paying for their sins by going to the cross, these believers cannot remain in Heaven. They are only in Heaven by virtue of Christ's finished work on the cross. But now, you see, Christ has gone to the cross. And this we know was a terrible, terrible, an awful thing that Jesus did, to endure the wrath of God for our sins, the equivalent of an eternity in hell. Would He be consumed in this? Would He really be successful?

Even in the Psalms we read where Christ Himself anticipated His suffering. And He cried out to God not to leave His soul in Sheol. We see where He asked God to be sure to rescue Him once He had paid for our sins. The terror, the awfulness of enduring God's wrath. It's beyond human comprehension.

It is true that when Jesus hung on the cross and He said, "It is finished," in His Spirit He left His body and went into Heaven. And so in that sense you could say, "Well, then at that point in time the believers in Heaven could rejoice, because Christ had finished His work on the cross."

Yes, in a sense He had. But in another sense He had not. The proof of His finished work was the fact that He would rise again on Sunday morning. His body was still in the grave. And His body was a very real part of Christ. And the proof of Christ's victory on the cross was the resurrection. We read this in 1 Corinthians 15: "If Christ had not been raised, we would still be in our sins."

Therefore, there would be a period of forty days, from the time of the resurrection until the ascension of Jesus into Heaven, when the believers in Heaven, it would seem, would not really know how successful Jesus had been.

Had He really been able to overcome death so that He actually did rise again? And I believe, and now I'm speculating, at this point I'm going to start speculating. I believe, based on all that we have talked about now concerning these events, that God in His mercy resurrected a number of the Old Testament saints, so that they (and remember, they had been living in Heaven in their soul existence for many years; they were really people in Heaven, but they were without their bodies), but now, right after Jesus rose from the grave, they appeared in Heaven in their bodies and were reconciled with their souls, so they would take their place along with Enoch and Elijah and Moses,

who also are in Heaven in their glorified spiritual bodies, their resurrected bodies. And this would be tremendous evidence, tremendous indication, to all that were in Heaven, that the victory of the cross was complete. Otherwise how could they be resurrected, if Christ had not risen? They knew it was time for Christ to rise. And now, by virtue of the fact that Christ is the first-fruits, because He rose, therefore these bodies could appear in Heaven. The resurrection was a tremendous success.

Now we don't read anywhere else in the Bible about this resurrection. These believers did not appear in any city on this earth. There's no suggestion anywhere in the Bible that this is so. The language that is used here indicates that they appeared in Heaven.

"Lead us not into temptation" in Mt 6:13 (459B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Would you give me the translation of the Lord's Prayer? I'm puzzled about the last two verses of it: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

HC: All right. Your question is, what does God mean when He says, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." That is the phrase you're troubled by?

CALLER: Yes.

HC: I'll be glad to speak to that, if you'd like to hang up.

Actually, the word that's used for temptation here is the word that is ordinarily translated either temptation or testing, or trial. Now the trial that all mankind must come into is to stand before the tribunal of God on the last day and answer for their sins. When we are saved, then we have been taken out of that possibility. We will not be delivered to trial, because God Himself, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, has already stood for trial for our sins. And so we have been delivered from evil, that is, from the wrath of God, and from the sin that has beset us, because God has paid for our sins. I really believe that this is the essential meaning of this phrase, that it's really talking about the fact that we have become saved.

Matthew 18:15-20 Explained (582B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I'd like you to explain to me Matthew 18:15-20, please. And I'll listen on the air.

HC: All right. The question is concerning the discipline set forth in Matthew 18, beginning with verse 15: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Now let me stop right here and let us focus our eyes on what God is saying here, because frequently we read this superficially and come away with a conclusion that is not in accordance with the Bible.

We read this and we say, "Oh. If we see somebody sinning in the congregation then it is our beholden duty, our bound duty, to go to that person privately and tell him his sin between the two of us. And then if he doesn't listen to me, then to follow the prescription that follows." But that isn't what God is saying here. God is saying, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee." If someone else is sinning in the church, and we're just a regular church member, not an officer in the church, an elder or a deacon or a pastor, then it's not our business if somebody else is sinning in the congregation; it's not for us to make judgment. We don't have all the information concerning it. We'd better keep our eyes on our own sins and our own Christian walk.

But if a situation arises that someone in the congregation is sinning against me personally, and I feel injured by this, now God gives a prescription. First of all, I am to talk about this to my brother, privately. I'm not to talk about it to all of my friends, "Oh, Brother Jones - he did this to me and he's a 'so and so,'" and make a scandal of it. I am to go privately to Brother Jones and tell him about it.

If he hears me, that is, if as I come tenderly and kindly to him, confessing also my sin (if I have been less than God-glorifying toward him, I must also confess my side, also) this does not end up with reconciliation between the two of us, then I am to take one or two others. Now the purpose of one or two others, we read here, is that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

Of course, you see, when I bring one or two others into the picture, they may decide that Brother Jones hasn't really sinned against me. And they may decide that I don't have a case at all. So that would be the end of the matter. But let's suppose that they listen and they say, "Yes, you do have a case." And so the two or three of you go again to Brother Jones, to talk to him about his sin against you. And again he does not wish to listen. He says, "Forget about it. It's none of your business. I'll live my life, you live yours," and so on.

Then the next stage is that the church is to be told. Now again, you take it to the ruling body of the church and tell them what the situation is, and they listen and they say, "Well, as we really study this matter, Mr. Jones hasn't really sinned against you, and you really shouldn't be agonizing about this." Then of course you are to listen to the church because you are under their rule and you want to be obedient to their conclusion.

On the other hand, they may decide that yes indeed, Brother Jones has sinned against you. And so they counsel with him and say, "Brother Jones, you have to make restitution," or "Brother Jones, you have to straighten out this matter with this other brother." If Brother Jones refuses to be obedient to the edict of the church, then it indicates that he does not want to be under that kind of rule or authority. It indicates that he is not submissive to Christ at all, because in the church this line of government has been established by Christ Himself. And so he is to be excommunicated. By his action he indicates that he is not properly a member of the congregation, and so he is to be a heathen and a publican.

Then God sums this up in verse 18, and He said, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth [and the verb form here really is] shall *having been bound* in Heaven and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall *having been loosed* in Heaven." In other words, the action is first of all in Heaven and it is the church that is simply following through. God does the saving and the church receives those who are saved into the congregation. God also indicates those who are not saved in the congregation, and it is the church that eventually will excommunicate them.

And then in verse 19 God indicates the size of the church. And many many people take verse 19 of Matthew 18 completely out of its context and try to do something altogether else with it. They simply read it as this, "Again I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven." And completely out of context they say, "Well, therefore if two believers with any kind of a desire on their hearts agree together that this would be wise, then they can pray to God about it and God will faithfully carry through, and give what they have asked."

Now that is not the context here at all. God is simply indicating that God works in the church. And when the church,

whether it's two or three or a mighty congregation, works in this matter of discipline, and it is done by God's principles, then they are carrying out the will of God. And this of course we see when we carefully investigate if a person should become a member of the church and as we try to decide whether he is born again. And this also has to do with excommunication.

"Prayer and Fasting" to Remove Demons in Mt 17:21 (856C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. How would you interpret Matthew 17:21?

HC: The question is concerning Matthew 17:21, where we read, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." The question is concerning the removal of an evil spirit from a child. We read in verse 14 of a certain man saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and sore vexed." A "lunatic [that means he is insane] and sore vexed. For oftimes he falleth into the fire and often into the water. And I brought him to Thy disciples and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to Me. And Jesus rebuked the devil.'" [God now is opening up the curtain and we see that this child was under the power of Satan.] "Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, 'Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, 'Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.'"

Now the question that has been asked is, what does it mean "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting"? Remember the Biblical rule is that when you see words or phrases or concepts that apparently have nothing to do with salvation, then you are to look for a deeper spiritual meaning. First of all, the casting out of the evil spirit is a picture of someone becoming saved. When we become saved, or before we are saved, we are under the power of Satan. We are being destroyed by Satan, as this child is being destroyed. And under the power of the Gospel, we are set free from the power of Satan. We no longer are under that power.

Incidentally, let's talk about verse 20 as we go along. What does it mean to have faith as a grain of mustard seed? Well, in another place Christ had declared, "The kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed. Though it is the smallest of the seeds, yet it grows into a great tree," or words to that effect. In other words, God is likening the kingdom of Heaven to a mustard seed. It was very very tiny as it began in the world, with the apostles, but it grows until it is found all over the earth. And so effectively He's saying in verse 20, "If you have faith as that that belongs to the kingdom of God, because the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, 'ye shall say to this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place...' " Now to remove a mountain from one place to another in itself has nothing to do with the kingdom of God or with salvation, just as a mustard seed in itself has nothing to do with salvation. We couldn't understand this word mustard seed until we find the other statement in the Bible that the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. And then we can substitute the word kingdom of God, and we're beginning to see the deeper spiritual meaning.

Likewise the word mountain in itself has nothing to do with salvation of any kind. But when we search the Bible we find that frequently God uses the word mountain as a figure of kingdom, as a figure of a kingdom. And Satan rules as a king over his dominion. And if we have the faith of the kingdom of God, that is, if we have saving faith, then we can see the kingdom of Satan moved over. That is, we can see that there can be those who are freed from the dominion of Satan, who are taken out of the dominion of Satan and brought into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we read in Colossians 1:13.

"And nothing shall be impossible to you." In other words, even though it is impossible for you and I in ourselves to assault the kingdom of Satan, so that we are able to free someone from the kingdom of Satan, if we have the faith of the kingdom of God, that is, if we have saving faith, the faith of a grain of mustard seed, then we have the power of God on our side. And through the Word of God, and God working through His Word, He will free those whom we witness to from the mountain or from the kingdom of Satan. That is the truth that God is developing in verse 20.

Now verse 21, we find two words that are emphasized prayer and fasting. Does the word prayer relate immediately to salvation? And indeed it does. Prayer is an integral part of the salvation program. We are to pray for one another. We are to pray for forgiveness of sins. Prayer stands. And as we bring the Gospel, one of the things we do is that we pray. We pray, because God works through our prayers to accomplish the salvation of those who are to be saved.

But now the word fasting, the fact that we would stop eating food, does that have anything to do with salvation? The answer is, no. No, the fact that I don't eat a few meals doesn't have anything in itself to do with salvation. So immediately we sense that the word fasting is like the word grain of mustard seed, or the word mountain. We have to find out what is the deeper spiritual meaning to the word fasting.

Now we find when we study the word fasting that it means that we have to send forth the Gospel, we have to proclaim the Gospel. This is shown to us in Isaiah 58:6. God declares "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke. Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out of thy house, when thou seest the naked that thou cover him?" Every one of these statements has to do with bringing the Gospel. Those who are unsaved are under the bondage of wickedness. They are under the burden of sin. They are oppressed by sin and by Satan. And they are spiritually hungry for the righteousness that they can have in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are spiritually poor, and they are outside of the commonwealth of Israel, and have to be brought into the house of God, which is Christ Himself. Spiritually they are naked, and they have to be covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness. All of these statements are identified with fasting. In other words, God is explaining that to fast means to share the Gospel.

All right. Let's go back here to Matthew 17: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." We've already seen that this young man, who was under the power of Satan, is a picture of an unsaved person, who is a slave of Satan. And Satan is destroying him, as Satan does. When he became freed of that devil, he is a picture of someone who has become saved. He has been spiritually cured of his illness that is going to send him to hell, the illness of his sin.

And how is that salvation accomplished? By prayer and the presentation of the

Gospel, prayer and fasting. Any time we see anyone who is unsaved, there is only one way of attack to accomplish the salvation of that person if indeed it is God's will to save that person. And that is to pray for that person and to try to witness to that person, because God works through His Word to accomplish that salvation, and He works through our prayers, to accomplish that salvation, if it indeed is God's plan to save that person. And this is the beautiful, beautiful truth that the Lord is developing here in Matthew 17.

First and Last in the Kingdom of God in Mt 19:30 & What Does "Believe" Mean?

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I don't have the Bible reference for this question, so I hope you will be able to remember where this is. I think I recall Jesus in at least one of the Gospels talking about someone being the "least in the kingdom of God", and there is another reference for "the first will be last and the last will be first". The point I am trying to get at here is this: Is there a possibility of some being greater than others in heaven?

HC: No. First of all, let's talk about that phrase that we find in a number of places, "The first shall be last, and the last shall be first" [Matthew 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30]. There are those like Ancient Israel, for example, who for 2,000 years were in a favored position with respect to the Gospel because virtually all of the holy men of old, who spoke as God the Holy Spirit moved them, came from National Israel. So, the people of Israel were the first ones who heard the Gospel. Also, God used Ancient Israel very frequently as types, or pictures, or representations of the Gospel.

For example, David, who was one of their greatest kings, was a picture (a portrait if you will), an example, or a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. More than that, Christ Himself came out of the nation of Israel.

So they were first. They had all the priorities. They had all the advantages, and yet most of them perished at any time in their history because of unbelief. Whereas many Gentiles – who had never heard the Gospel and had none of the prerogatives and none of the privileges that National Israel had – very quickly after they heard the Gospel became saved.

We see this particularly in the book of Acts, where we find that Paul and Barnabas would go to a synagogue and the Jews, in the main, would not want their Gospel at all; but many Gentiles heard them gladly. In that setting, the Jews, who were first, became last – that is, they never did become saved – and the last, those who had not previously heard the Gospel, became first. They became those who did become saved.

That, incidentally, is also true in churches today. There are individuals who have grown up in Christian families, who have gone to churches where the Gospel has been reasonably presented in truth, and they never became saved. They were first because all their lives they heard the Gospel.

Yet, on the other hand, that same Gospel goes out and here is an individual that never heard the Gospel before. His whole family is not saved. Then he hears the Gospel and things begin to happen in his heart. He realizes he is a sinner, and the next thing we see him as having become saved. He is the last who became first. The individual in the church who never did become saved was first, and he became last.

Now, the phrases "great in the kingdom of God" or "least in the kingdom of God" [Matthew 5:19; 11:11; Luke 7:28]

do not indicate that there are degrees of greatness in the kingdom of God. We all stand on the same ground. No one is greater than another – except the Lord Jesus, of course. He is our King. He is the Head of the whole kingdom of God. But insofar as believers are concerned – whether we are the Apostle Paul, or Mary the mother of Jesus, or Mary Magdalene, or the thief on the cross who became saved in the last hour of his life, or whoever – we all stand on the same ground in that we have eternal life. So, when we read about the "great in the kingdom of God" that is what God has in mind – that is, everyone in the kingdom of God is great. Not in the sense of their own personal greatness, but because they have become identified with Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

However, God also speaks of the kingdom of God frequently in a corporate, or external, sense. The churches, for example, that we belong to and that carry the Gospel with some degree of truth, corporately are identified with the kingdom of God. That does not mean that everyone in those churches are eternally in the kingdom of God (there may be a few that are eternally in the kingdom of God), but corporately all the people in those congregations are identified with the kingdom of God. However, even though they are in those churches and are identified with the kingdom of God, if they are not saved, they are least in the kingdom of God. That is, they are not going to be there eternally. They are only there temporarily in an external fashion, but they have never become eternal residents, or citizens, of the kingdom of God.

CALLER: Thank you for that. I do have one more quick question, and I will listen to the answer on the air. I was wondering about the verse in one of the Gospels, and again I don't have the reference, where Christ asked Peter, or the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" One said "a great teacher" and another said something else. Then Peter replied, "You are the Son of the Living God." I believe that is the way he put it. Now, I believed from the beginning of when I was saved that Jesus is God, and I am wondering if that is given by the Holy Spirit. Is that the same as when Jesus said, "Flesh and blood has not revealed it to you?" [Matthew 16:13-17]

HC: Well, you see the word "believe" is a very misunderstood word. In the New Testament, where we find the word "believe" used very frequently, there is only one Greek word that is translated as "believe". And we find, for example, it says that the devils "believe" [James 2:19]. Well, they are in rebellion against God, and yet they "believe". We also read about those who "believe" for awhile, and then, when the cares of the world come, they fall away [Luke 8:11-18]. That is the same word "believe". We also read about those who "believe" because they have become saved [Acts 13:48]. They are called "believers" [Acts 5:14].

Now, what does the word "believe" really mean? You see, we normally think of "believe" as acknowledging something – that is, we agree that something is true. We agree that we are sinners. We agree that Christ is the only One who can save us. We agree that He is the Son of God and the Son of Man. We agree on a lot of these principles. However, Satan knows all of those things too. He knows about Christ better than we do because he was living in heaven with Christ. "We know who You are," the devils say, "Thou art the Son of God" [Matthew 8:29; Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41; 8:28]. So, just agreement with all of these principles is not "believing". It is acknowledging, but it is not "believing".

Now, there are those who really think that they have come to a "belief" where they truly have become saved because they think they have hung their lives on

the Lord Jesus, and they really want to follow Him. That is a result of true "faith". That is what would happen if they were truly saved. But in their case, that "faith", or that "believing" (and believing is just another way of saying we have "faith"), or that trust is a product of their own desire to be right with God and did not come from God. Because it did not come from God, in time they will fall away because they get tired of trying to do it themselves. They don't realize that it came out of their own personality and not from God.

Now, on the other hand, there are those that God begins to draw. He begins to deal with that person, and we read in Philippians 2:13, which is talking about someone that God is working with, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." So "believing" begins to show up in that person's life. That person is not necessarily saved yet, but he begins to trust more and more in what the Bible says – "I'm a sinner." He is not just acknowledging it; but he begins to come under conviction – "I know I'm a sinner!" He is not just acknowledging that Christ is the only One who can save him, and it begins to penetrate into the very core of his being that he has to get right with God. He has begun to hang his whole life on Christ. Christ is increasingly Number One in his life. He is still not saved necessarily; but then at some point, God saves him.

Because he has begun to trust in God more and more and because he realizes that he is going to hell for his sins, he also begins to turn away from his sins. He begins to repent. Yet all of that "believing" activity is not a precondition for salvation. God does not require any of that in order to save someone. Because, on the other side of the coin, here is a little baby that is just a day old, or maybe not even born yet, who knows nothing about all of these things; and yet God can save that person just as readily as the one that has been learning more and more about his sins and is beginning to get more and more of a desire to turn from his sins.

None of this is a precondition for salvation. At some point God is going to save the ones that He wants to save. That is strictly the work of God. Whether it is a baby in the womb, or whether it is a child that does not have a mind at all, or whether it is an adult who has been seeking the Lord for a long time and has begun to trust God more and more in his life and has begun to turn away from his sin – it is all the same action. God makes that person a brand new personality by giving him a brand new resurrected soul. That is what happens at the moment of salvation; and at that moment, he is justified. That is, the fact that Christ paid for his sins long ago is applied to his life, and from that moment on he is no longer under the wrath of God.

Now, the consequences of the fact that he has truly become saved is that he will have an earnest desire to do the will of God. He will trust God. He will know that Christ is everything and that He has to be Number One in his life. He will be turning away from his sins like he never did before, and that will go on for the rest of his life. At the moment of salvation, these things get locked in because he has been given eternal life and never again will he turn away.

While God is drawing him before he is saved, there may be periods when he is not that interested in the Gospel. Then God draws him some more, and maybe he becomes somewhat more interested in the Gospel. But when he has truly become saved, he has eternal life in his new resurrected soul. From that point until he dies, there will always be an ongoing, earnest desire to do the will of God. There will be an ongoing trust, or faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ; and that faith (or trust, or believing) as well as

the doing of God's Law are all works that are seen in his life. These are the results of – not the bases for nor the causes for – God's salvation.

CALLER: That's very good. I appreciate that information. Thank you so much.

HC: Thank you for calling and sharing, and shall we take our next call please.

MARK

The Cursing of the Fig Tree in Mark 11:12-14 (178C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I would like to ask a question about Mark 11:12-14.

HC: Mark 11:12-14. There we read, "And on the following day, when they came to Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if He could find anything on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And He said to it, 'may no one ever eat fruit from you again' And His disciples heard it."

CALLER: What was His purpose behind doing that? I could perhaps understand it if it was time for fruit to be on the tree, but it wasn't, evidently.

HC: You see, in the Bible the fig tree is a figure of Israel, national Israel. This can be shown in a variety of ways. Now back in Isaiah 6, God had already cursed Israel, and said that except for a tiny remnant chosen by grace, Israel would remain blind and hearing they would not hear, and seeing they would not see.

The same curse was emphasized by Jesus. He used the same language of Isaiah 6. And later on, the apostle Paul, in the last chapter of Acts, quoted the same words. In other words, God prophesied, already 600 or 700 years before Christ came, that when He came, Israel, national Israel, would be essentially in unbelief and would not turn to Him.

And so the fig tree that He is cursing is a figure of Israel. He comes to it, and all he finds is leaves. There's no fruit. Israel was a nation in the days of Christ. It was a nation, but there was no fruit. They essentially were opposed to Christ as Messiah, because it was not the season for figs. Well, Israel would not be bearing fruit because God had already anticipated, in Isaiah 6, that they would be cursed in this way so that they would not bear fruit.

Now there is a further curse here, and it's got very sad implications. He said, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again", the implication being that Israel would never again bear fruit. Now this is excluding the remnant chosen by grace. That is the exception that God constantly refers to in the Bible. But as a nation, as a nation we will never expect a turning to the Lord Jesus Christ by the nation of Israel.

Now significantly, when we look at the nation of Israel today, we see this prophecy, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again," being fulfilled before our eyes. Almost miraculously, Israel is a nation, for the first time, after 2000 years. And you would think if there were ever a time that they would really call attention to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is one of their own, and turn to Him as their Messiah, you would think this would be the time. But they've been here since 1948, and they are no more interested as a nation in Christ as Messiah than any nation in the world. They are not bearing fruit. And the implication of this is that they will not bear fruit as a nation. The fig tree has been cursed for ever.

Thank you for calling.

The Rich Young Man in Mark 10 (212B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like to ask a question about Luke 3:11 and also the passage that talks about the rich young ruler whom Christ told to sell everything and to follow Him. How can we relate this to today's life? How should we as Christians relate it to our lives today?

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you.

The question is raised concerning Luke 3:11. There we read, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none. And he who has food, let him do likewise." This is John the Baptist who is speaking to the people who are coming to him as he preaches the gospel of repentance. And he is saying that they are to start loving their neighbors. They are to start sharing.

Jesus said in another place that we must "love our neighbor as ourselves." Now God has put within our being a self-love, which is part of God's program, so that we will preserve ourselves. We're always a little extra careful that we aren't going to get hurt, if we're doing something. We're always careful to make sure that all is going to go well with us. And God wants us to have an equal concern for others.

And here it is put in the language, "If you have two coats and you meet with someone who has none, then share with him what you have," because if he does not have a coat, then he is in real trouble. He can't meet the cold. Now ultimately there's a deeper meaning here. The fact is, God has lavished the Gospel upon us. And we have been clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness. And now we meet someone who is unsaved. He stands spiritually naked before God. And we are to be ready to share this marvelous Gospel that God has lavished upon us. We are to share with him, so that he too might become saved, so that he too, if he is exercised by it, might be clothed by the robe of Christ's righteousness.

And notice the second phrase: "And he who has food, let him do likewise." And when we are saved, we have come into an abundant harvest of food, as we feed on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God is the Bread of Life. And we meet someone who is unsaved. They are spiritually famished. They are dying of malnutrition, because they have no spiritual food to eat. And we very generously are to share this. In a real sense this is getting right to the responsibility of the believer to be available to share the Gospel, to make all that he has available to share the Gospel.

Now this gets us into this matter of the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler was a young man who really thought that he was rich in his good works. He was rich physically, too. But he was also rich in his good works. When Jesus asked him what he had to do to have eternal life, he said that one has to keep the commandments. And he answered, "I've kept all of these from my youth."

In other words, he was very satisfied that he was worthy before God. Probably he was seeking a commendation from Christ, looking upon Christ only as a Rabbi, where Christ as a Rabbi would say, "My, you're a fine young man. And certainly God ought to be grateful to have you in the Kingdom. You are rich in your good works, even as you are rich in your money."

But Christ, of course, has come with a different kind of salvation. We are not saved by our good works. We are not saved by our personal worthiness. The Bible teaches that even our best works are "as filthy rags." If we have committed even just one sin, we stand guilty of hell. And the only way we can ever get into Heaven would be, first of all, to spend an eternity in hell. And since eternity is forever, we would never

make it into Heaven.

And so anyone at all who thinks that he's rich in good works, who thinks that he's really worthy before God, is in deep and terrible trouble. And so Christ has to show this young man that he is in trouble, that he is not qualified at this point, in any way, to go into Heaven.

And so He says, "Sell all that you have and give to the poor, and come and follow Me." Now there's a two-pronged implication here. First of all, Christ is talking about physical riches. In another place, in Luke's Gospel, we find the same kind of a statement to all of us. It's bad enough when we read it about the rich young ruler, but actually God is giving this command to all of us.

In verse 32 of Luke 12: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms (that is, give to those who are poor). Provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

In other words, Christ is effectively saying, "Make your possessions available to the spiritually poor." He's not talking about the physically poor. He's talking about the spiritually poor, because these are the ones to whom we bring the Gospel. We are stewards of God, ambassadors of God, to get the Gospel out. And we are to make everything that we have as available as possible to bring the Gospel.

And so there is this physical sense, therefore, that we must understand when Christ replied to the rich young ruler that he was to sell his possessions and give to the poor. He was to make himself a disciple of Christ by this obedience, that is, by placing his trust in Christ. And he was to make himself totally available, that all that he had might be ready to be of service to God in bringing the Gospel to others.

But there was another sense that God had in view here. "Sell all that you have and give to the poor, and come and follow Me." In other words, your riches are not going to get you into Heaven, your rich deeds, your good works. That isn't going to get you anywhere, except to hell. You strip yourself of all of this. You come as a spiritually bankrupt sinner before God. None of these good works are meaningful at all. Christ did not come to call the righteous, that is, the self-righteous. He came to call sinners to repentance. And when you have become spiritually stripped of anything that you think is good or worthy, then you're going to be ready to follow Me. Then you're going to be ready to understand the salvation which I have to offer.

And the young man went away "exceedingly sorrowful, because he had great possessions." On both counts he was still trusting in his good works. He liked his physical riches too much. He was not ready to surrender his will to Christ as King and Lord of his life.

Now if we're going to be born again, we must be ready to obey Him. We must count the cost of discipleship. The cost of discipleship means that we have to turn our back on the world. Our security no longer is in the things of this world. Our security is no longer in the pursuit of pleasure and all of these things that are so attractive to unsaved men. Our security is going to be in Christ. We're going to find that we're to live as strangers and pilgrims here. We're just passing through.

But we also are going to find that we have a real task, a real mandate. We are to be stewards of all that Christ has given us, so that we might share that Gospel with others to the very highest possible degree.

And if we're not ready to face this kind of life, it means that we're not ready to

belong to Christ. We have not really understood what it means to call upon God for mercy and to repent of our sins and trust in Christ only.

The Signs that Follow Believers in Mark 16:17-18 (244A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have five scripture references I wish you'd comment on. They're Mark 16:17 & 18, John 14:12, II Corinthians 3:5,6, Hebrews 13:8 and Jude 20. And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. I'll try to speak briefly about each one of these

The question is raised concerning Mark 16:17 & 18. There we read, "And these signs will accompany those who believe. In My Name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them. They will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover."

Now as we do with the rest of the Bible, any time we read a verse, we want to begin to read it in the light of everything else the Bible teaches. If we read this verse all alone, it would seem to indicate that God is teaching here that when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then we should begin to be able to do certain miraculous things. If we would pick up a rattlesnake, it would not hurt us. If we would happen to drink strychnine, either accidentally or because someone gave it to us, to kill us, it would not hurt us. And certainly when it says that we can lay hands on the sick and they will recover, we should have the power to be able to go into any hospital and go from bed to bed and lay our hands on the sick, and there should be recovery. That is apparently what this is teaching.

But when we begin to look at these verses in the light of everything else in the Bible, we find that it isn't quite like that. We do find that there were a few signs that did accompany the early church as it first began to spread out with the Gospel, just a few. The ability to do miracles was confined, insofar as we can discover in the Bible, to just a few of the apostles. They indeed were able to heal the sick as God gave them power. They were able to speak in foreign languages, as we read in Acts 2. And we do read of the apostle Paul, when he was shipwrecked, that a poisonous viper clung to his skin, and yet he was not hurt by it.

But we also read that we're not to walk by signs and wonders. We're to walk by faith. We're not to walk by sight. The fact is, Jesus said to the Pharisees, "An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a sign." This means, therefore, that it was not God's intention that we live by miracles. We are to live by faith in the Lord, humbly trusting Him.

And these signs that are related in the Bible were related and recorded in order that we might have insights into the nature of salvation which God has provided. In other words, when He healed the blind man, He was showing that even as He was able to physically heal that blind man, so He is able to spiritually heal those who are spiritually blind.

So I do not believe that this passage is suggesting in any sense that today we could find those who could lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover. The fact is, I don't know anyone who could go into the hospital and empty it, because he could go from bed to bed. Actually, we don't try to understand doctrine by experience anyway. And just strictly from a Biblical vantage point, we know that this would not be possible.

Now the second question was raised concerning John 14:12: "Truly, truly I say to you, He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do, and greater

works than these will he do because I go to the Father."

Now this verse is widely quoted by many who are convinced that Mark 16:17 & 18 is normative for the believer today, that Jesus did miracles and therefore we can expect to do miracles, and even greater miracles than He did.

Well, let's examine that for a moment. Jesus not only healed the sick. He raised the dead. He healed the lepers. He multiplied the loaves and the fish, a tremendous act of creation. He turned the water into wine. He stilled the storm. He walked on the water. He raised Lazarus from the dead, after he had been dead for four days.

Now when we search the Bible, not only do we find that there is no one who did miracles as great as these consistently, but we also, when we look around, find that no one anywhere does miracles of this nature. And so immediately we know that God is not talking about the doing of miracles when He is speaking about the work that we would do.

When we search the Bible further, we find that Christ had two major tasks to do. There were two major areas of work He had to accomplish. And this is where we're going to find our answer as to the meaning of this verse 12 of John 14. And both of these areas of work are quite related.

One aspect is something that we have no part in. And that is His work of going to the cross and dying for our sins. We have no part in that. That is, we do not add in any sense to the salvation that Christ has provided for us. That work was unique. He went to the cross alone.

But Jesus also came as the one who preached the Gospel. We read in Luke 4, where He said in verse 43, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose. And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee." Now that was the work that God gave Him, to be a preacher of the Gospel.

Now what is the work that God gives us to do? He says, "Ye are My witnesses." We are His ambassadors, Christ as it were making His appeal through us. He says, "Go ye into all the world and bring the Gospel, making disciples." So you see, that identifies with the work that Jesus did.

Now when we examine the success of Jesus, we find that it was very marginal. He preached for over three years, and there were only a handful of believers in all of Judea. But then Jesus went to the Father, and the Holy Spirit was poured out. God began His program to evangelize the world. And Peter preaches one sermon on Pentecost afternoon, and 3000 are saved. You see, literally this promise came true. "He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do [I work to bring the Gospel, and you will bring the Gospel]. And greater works than these will he do." We will be more successful than Jesus, because "I go to the Father." That is, "inasmuch as I go to the Father, God's program to evangelize the world will begin." And therefore you can expect to see far greater success of your efforts to share the Gospel than were realized when Jesus was still on this earth.

Now the third question that was raised is relative to II Corinthians 3:5 & 6. There we read, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us. Our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit. For the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Now I'm grateful for this verse, because this points up a very insidious lie, a very insidious doctrine that is being taught by many without realizing that it is something that is very terrible in nature.

There are those who read II Corinthians 3:5 & 6, and they're saying, "The written

code, which is the Bible, that kills. That's the letter of the law. But we have to trust the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit, He will give us light." Effectively they're suggesting that we are freed from the shackles of the Bible. We don't really have to pay too much attention to the Bible. We can trust that that Holy Spirit, working in a very unstructured and free way, uninhibited by the rules of the Bible, can do a much more mighty and wonderful work than that which is suggested by the Word of God. This is frequently the implication that comes out of this.

Now this is a very unfortunate and deceitful kind of an idea. This is exactly the kind of thing that would appeal to Satan very greatly. If he can only draw us away from the Word of God, if he can only make us look with some disdain upon the Word of God, if he can only get us into an arena, into a state of mind, into a practice where we are not listening to the Word of God, but we are susceptible to thoughts that might come into our minds, or susceptible to outside influences of one kind or another. And bear in mind that Satan is not limited by the rules of God, that He will not break the silence between the supernatural and the natural. God permits Satan to come with his occult practices of bringing the supernatural into the real life.

And so this just leaves the door wide open for his kind of activity. Now the fact is, the Bible is the living Word of God. It is the articulated, verbalized voice of God, whereby God has declared what we want to know. It is the holy Word of God.

And when it's talking here about the written Word or the written code, or the letter, it is true that it kills. The Bible does kill. The Bible shows us that we're sinners and that we're under the wrath of God and that we're subject to hell. It should drive the sword home, right into the very vitals of our hearts, that we're in deep and terrible trouble.

But it is God the Holy Spirit who gives life. Now how does He give life? Well, He gives life through the Word of God. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit. It not only convicts us of sin, which is the beginning point in our path to salvation. But it also convicts us of the fact that through Christ we can be saved of our sins. It convicts us of the fact that we desperately need this salvation, ere we spend eternity in hell. The Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, convicts us that God is holy and perfectly just, and sin is a terrible thing in the eyes of God.

The Word of God is the means by which God effects our salvation. Remember what Ephesians 5 declares? That we are washed with the washing of the Word. It is the Word of God that is identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, who went to the cross for our sins. And it is God the Holy Spirit who takes that Word and applies it to our hearts. He cleanses us of our sins. But He does this through the written Word.

So check your life. If in any way you find a disdain for the written Word, if in any way you hold it on a little lesser level than anything else in the Bible, or let me put it in another way. If in any way you hold it equal to anything else in the world, then you know that the Bible is no longer the infallible Word of God to you. It is something else. And that means that in all probability you have another Gospel than the true Gospel.

Now another verse that was offered for an understanding is Hebrews 13:8. We read there, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Now this verse, again, is frequently quoted by those who would want to say, "After all, Jesus healed all kinds of people during His day. And since He is the same today, we would expect that He would heal people from their illnesses today." Or,

"He will do other works of miracles today, even as He did then."

Now the Bible isn't saying here in this passage that Jesus' program is the same today as it was yesterday and forever. The details of His program will change from time to time. Jesus Christ is the same. He is Eternal God. He never changes. He's immutable. He is Eternal God. But His program changes.

Now in the days of Noah, did he do miracles? We don't read of any. Jesus Christ is the same. He existed then, too. Did He heal any lepers in the Old Testament? He healed 10 of them, just like that. Well, He did heal Naaman the Syrian. That was all. And there were many many lepers in the Old Testament. Jesus is the same. His program is different.

For 400 years, from the days of Malachi and Zechariah, until John the Baptist was born, there was absolute silence. And yet the Bible was not complete at that time. Was Jesus the same? Yes, He was the same but His program was different. You see, the fact that Jesus did something back when doesn't mean He's going to do the same thing today. His program will change from time to time.

If you are going to say that Jesus healed 2000 years ago, and therefore He heals today, then you're saying that His program is the same today as it was then. And then I should be able to go to Jerusalem and find the God-man Jesus still teaching over there. But He isn't there, because His program is different. He had completed that aspect of His program and had left this earth and had gone to be with the Father. And so His program is changing, depending on what God has in view.

And it will continue to change. Today the Gospel is still going to every nation. The Bible teaches that God's program will change again. There will be a brief period before Christ returns when the Gospel is silenced all over the world. Well, Jesus is the same. He's absolutely the same. He doesn't change. But His program will change, as God gets His preordained work done.

And then we have a last question concerning Jude 20. "But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith. Pray in the Holy Spirit." "Pray in the Holy Spirit." Now who is the Holy Spirit, He is Eternal God. He is Eternal God Himself.

Now when we become saved, we enter into God. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We are washed in the Holy Spirit. We enter into God Himself, whatever God means by that kind of language. And I'm not able to explain all of this, because I can't understand God that well. But I know that God uses this intimate and wonderful language to indicate the precious relationship we realize with God when we are born again. When we pray in the Holy Spirit, it means that as children of God who are in Christ, we are communing with God our Father, in whom we dwell. It's this marvelous oneness that exists in the life of the believer in relationship to God Himself.

The fact is, in Romans 8 we read that the Holy Spirit takes our incomplete prayers, our prayers that we hardly know how to pray, and brings them perfectly before the throne of grace, because we belong to Him. As a born again believer, if we are communing with God, we are praying in the Holy Spirit.

This is the only way that we can pray to God, if we're really going to commune with Him.

Well, thank you for those good verses. They're all excellent verses that teach wonderful truths from the Word of God. We must be carefully, however, that we read them in the light of the whole Bible.

Clean and Unclean Foods in Mark

7:19 (290A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Mr. Camping. I'm a bit confused about what the Word is telling me to do here. You're familiar with Leviticus 11, where God is telling Moses and Aaron about the unclean foods?

HC: Yes.

CALLER: Well, I and a friend of mine have been wondering about that. In Mark 7:19 it mentions that Jesus declared all foods clean.

HC: Yes, and this is particularly reiterated in I Timothy 4, where we read, "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with thanksgiving. For then it is consecrated by the Word of God and prayer."

Now if you go to Acts 9 or 10, you'll discover why God had the clean and unclean foods in the Old Testament. In Acts 9 or Acts 10 Peter has this vision, where this sheet comes down out of heaven, and upon it is all manner of food, or of animals. And they're unclean animals. And God tells Peter, "Rise, kill and eat" (Acts 10:13). And Peter said, "No, Lord. For I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." So the implication is that these animals were unclean, and Peter recoils at this. "And the voice came to him again a second time, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to Heaven."

Now Peter is being prepared to go to the Gentiles with the Gospel, to bring the Gospel to the Roman centurion, Cornelius. Up until this time the Gospel was mainly in the nation of Israel. And even when the disciples went out, they were told to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. God was using the laws of unclean and clean animals to emphasize the separate relationship of Israel and the rest of the nations. And it was pointing to the separate relationship that the Kingdom of God has, of course, from the dominion of Satan.

But when Christ came, God set aside this ceremonial law. And it no longer was to be followed to emphasize the separation. The Gospel was to go to every nation.

CALLER: So He is saying that all foods are clean?

HC: Yes.

CALLER: That's the idea I got, too. But what confused me was, when Jesus said this in Mark 7, I thought, well, Peter must have been there. And if he got that message from Jesus then, why wouldn't he again say that he wouldn't touch anything that's unholly or unclean.

HC: Jesus told the disciples again and again that He was going to die, and that He would rise the third day. Did the disciples get the message? They didn't get it at all. Jesus said a lot of things, and the disciples didn't hear Him because their spiritual eyes were not opened for those truths as yet.

CALLER: Okay. I see. My mistake is that I had thought that by the time Acts was written, or by the time that all this had taken place, Peter and all the disciples had received all of Christ's messages. But I guess maybe not.

HC: They heard it, but there was a tremendous lot they did not understand at all. But afterwards God opened their ears, after the resurrection, and much of this came back to them as truth.

CALLER: Okay. Does this refer to meat with blood, or is that something completely different?

HC: That's a different question. The matter of blood is a moot question in the Bible. I'm not really certain how to handle that. I really don't know. In the Old Testament they were told not to eat anything with blood in it. That is, they

were not to eat blood. The animals were to be killed and bled, which of course is the way that we eat meat today. We don't eat meat with blood in it. There's a little red juice in meat, but that isn't really like eating blood.

But in Acts 15, when the early church after Pentecost met to consider the problem (then it was a problem) of the fact that the Gentiles were being saved, they debated together as to what rules would be laid upon the Gentiles. And they finally concluded that, in verse 28 of Acts 15, "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things, that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood, and from what is strangled and from unchastity."

Now I don't understand the implication of this statement. It certainly has some deep spiritual implication, but I don't really know what it is. To be on the safe side, I would not want to eat blood. I would feel that this is still prohibited, although, I must admit that it may not be prohibited, because the first phrase, "that you abstain from that which has been sacrificed to idols" was set aside by the language of I Corinthians 8, where God indicated that what was sacrificed doesn't mean anything in itself, unless someone was offended by it. And so does this mean also that abstaining from blood has been set aside? I really don't know. To be on the safe side, I would not want to eat blood or something that was just the blood of animals.

CALLER: Just the blood by itself?

HC: Yes. There are foods that are prepared just from blood, the blood of animals. There's sausage that has a very high content of blood in it, a certain kind of sausage.

CALLER: I never thought about that, the sausage.

HC: Not any kind of sausage. I'm saying there is, if I remember correctly, a sausage that's called blood sausage, and it is composed of a high content of animal blood.

CALLER: Okay. Well, that helps a lot.

Jesus Heals the Sick Man in Mk 2:9 (357B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question on Mark 2:9.

HC: Let's look at that a moment. Mark 2:9: "Whether it is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, take up thy bed and walk." What is your question concerning this?

CALLER: I was wondering if Jesus was insinuating that people other than He could perform healing, but that only God could forgive sins.

HC: Is Christ insinuating here, suggesting here, that only He could forgive sins, but others could perform miracles of healing? No, He is not suggesting that. The context here is that here is a man who is an unsaved man. That's obvious, as we shall see in a moment. He's an unsaved man, so that spiritually he is sick. Spiritually he is dead. But also he is physically sick. He's got the palsy, some kind of a paralysis. His friends bring him to Jesus. And then Jesus says, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Now here before our eyes, therefore, we see the miracle of regeneration. Jesus of course is God. He is the one who can forgive sins. He is the one who does save us. And right before our eyes here we see Him saving this sick of the palsy.

Spiritually now this man is whole. Now the scribes, the Jewish leaders, who are watching here, reasoned very correctly, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" Nobody else can forgive sins. Only God can. And rightly so, because only God

knows the heart of man. God has made provision for the forgiving of our sins. So they were very correct.

But in order to show them that He was God, Jesus therefore said, "Is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, take up thy bed and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, He sayeth to the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all."

Here Christ is saying, "Look, you can't really know whether I am God, or whether I am just blaspheming God, because I said, 'Your sins are forgiven.' But so that you may know that I am God, I will show you a miracle that you can recognize as being from God, one that you can see with your eyes. You can't see this man's heart. You can't see that his sins have been forgiven. You can't know that he's born again. I do, because I forgave him. But you don't see this. But I'll show you a miracle that you can see with your naked eyes, so that you will know that I am God, and that I have the power to forgive sins." And so instantaneously He healed this man who was sick of the palsy.

"The Eye of a Needle" in Mk 10:25 (581A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I'd like for you to explain Mark 10:25.

HC: Mark 10:25. There we read, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." Is that the verse?

CALLER: Yes.

HC: All right. Let's see what this might mean.

Now there are those who try to soften the impact of this particular verse by saying that the eye of a needle was a small gate in the wall of the city. And in order for a camel to go through that gate, it would have to crawl on its belly through the gate, if it could go through it at all, and perhaps it could not go through it at all. And so for that reason God is using the phrase, "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle."

However, when we let the Bible be its own interpreter, we don't find anything like this in the Bible, that God is talking about a very small gate that's in the wall of the city. When God speaks of the eye of the needle, as near as we can tell from anything else in the Bible, He's talking about the eye of a needle. And so you say, "Well, that's ridiculous! The eye of a needle you have a hard enough time pushing a thread through it if your eyesight is bad at all. How could a camel, a large animal like that, ever go through the eye of a needle?"

Well, actually, it's impossible, isn't it? It's absolutely impossible for a camel to go through an eye of a needle. And so it's impossible for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God, that is, if he is going to remain rich in his own resources, if he's going to remain rich in his own good works, in his own things which he has done which he believes ought to merit God's favor. These things are an impossible means by which he can go into the Kingdom of Heaven. And of course those who are physically rich, those who are materially rich, like the rest of the human race, this is where they have put their trust. This is normative for the human race.

The only way that we can go into the Kingdom of Heaven is by becoming poor not physically poor or materially poor, necessarily, but that we become spiritually poor, that we become broken before God, that we recognize our spiritual bankruptcy, that we see that our material riches have nothing at all for

us. And our good works can buy us nothing whatsoever. And we come to that point of spiritual bankruptcy where we're ready to trust altogether in the Lord Jesus Christ. Only then can we go into the Kingdom of Heaven. Then we're going altogether into the Kingdom of Heaven on the merits of Christ, which is become our Substitute.

LUKE

The Two Genealogies of Christ in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 (136C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. In Matthew 1 and in Luke 3 we have two different accounts of the ancestors of Christ. And I'd like to know why they are different, and also, if the one in Luke is complete. It seems like kind of a short span of time. And I'd like to know if it is complete or not, and the comparison between the two, why they are different.

HC: Okay. Your question deals with the differences that exist between the two genealogies we find in the Bible concerning Jesus. We find one in Matthew 1, that begins with Abraham and goes down through to Joseph. And the other one begins with Adam (that's found in Luke 3), and goes all the way through to Heli, who is not Joseph.

Now when you study these two genealogies, you will find that they are identical from Abraham to David. You'll find the same names. But from David on, you will find a radical departure. In Matthew's genealogy, it goes through Solomon, through Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, all of the kings of Judah, right through to Jeconiah, and then from Jeconiah through some other names, all the way through Joseph.

Now in Luke's genealogy, it goes to David. And then it doesn't name another king. It goes to Nathan, who was a brother of Solomon, and goes right on through the whole series of other names, coming to Heli. And so this is the genealogy, in Luke 3, of Mary. The one in Matthew is the genealogy of Joseph, who was not the father of Jesus.

CALLER: The one in Luke goes all the way back to Adam.

HC: Yes. Because it is the genealogy of Jesus, and it relates Jesus to Adam. It carries all the way through the whole human race. It really begins with God, because it speaks of Adam, the son of God, and goes all the way through. Now it doesn't mean that every single name in the genealogical line-up has been named. There are one or two or three that are absent, as we compare with other Scriptures. And I think there may be several reasons for this. But one of the reasons is that in so doing you end up with exactly 77 names in that genealogical table. And seven is the number of the perfection of God's plan. And therefore I think, in that sense, it was contrived. That is, the names are named, and enough have been left out to end up with 77, to emphasize that number seven in that context.

And also, incidentally, Jesus was born at the end of the eleventh millennium. There were 11,000 years before Christ, and it was right at that time that Christ was born. And so you find the number eleven featured and the number seven featured in the number 77.

CALLER: Thank you. Good night.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Why was Jesus Evasive in Luke 22:67? (203B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I wanted to comment about the time in the Bible when they asked Jesus if He was the Son of God. In Luke 22:67 it was really interesting. It

says that they asked Him if He was the Christ, and He said, "If I tell you, ye will not believe. And if I also ask you, ye will not answer Me, nor let Me go. Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then they said all, 'Art Thou then the Son of God?' And He said unto them, 'Ye say that I am.'"

And I was wondering if you could explain that. It sounds like He's telling them that no matter what He says, they're not going to believe Him. So He just says, "Well, you're the one that said it."

HC: I'm not really sure why Christ uses this particular language here. It's very interesting the way He says this. Let's reconstruct if we can. They say, "If you are the Christ, tell us." He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe." In other words, "Anything I tell you doesn't mean anything to you anyway." "If I ask you if I am the Christ you will not answer." Now the implication of that is that they had a really sneaking suspicion that He was the Christ. And this would have put them right on the spot.

In fact, it could well be that when Christ asked them that question, "Do you believe that I am the Christ?" just because He is Eternal God, they would not be able to lie in front of Him with that kind of a question. I don't know whether we can read that much into it.

But then He says, "But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." And they all said, "Are you the Son of God then?" And He said to them, "You say that I am." And He's really building on what He has said just earlier. "If I ask, you will not answer." And so He's implying here that they knew very well that He was, and He is simply underscoring this.

Now it's interesting that He says, "You say that I AM." I AM is a Name for God. Exodus 3 we read where Moses was told by God, "Tell the children of Israel that I AM has sent you." And so there's a double implication here. "You say that I AM." That is, you say that I am God. But He's also saying you're using the very words of God, you see.

CALLER: I've heard a lot of people say, "Well, He's not saying that He is, and He's not saying that He isn't." But it sounds to me that He's not really tricking them, but He is really putting them on the spot. And a lot of people don't understand that.

HC: You know, we have to read some implications in this, and it's not nearly as direct as, for example, your quotation from Mark 14, where they said, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I AM." Notice that "I AM" again there. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven." That was as strong a statement as He made anywhere that He was God.

The Rich Man and the Steward in Luke 16 (207A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question, and I'll take my answer over the air. It involves Luke 16. The verses that I particularly want to know about are verses 8, 9 and 10, especially 8 and 9.

HC: The question that is raised is this interesting question raised by the parable in Luke 16 of the rich man who had a steward. And this steward was very dishonest. He was going to be fired because he was wasting his master's goods. And so before he was fired from his job, the steward made provision for what he would do after he had no job any longer.

And so he called one of the debtors of his master, and he said, "You owe hundred measures of oil. But you take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty." In other words, in a dishonest way he's befriending this man, so that

afterwards he can go to him and seek favors from him. Another one owed a hundred measures of wheat, and he said, "Take your bill and write eighty."

When the master heard about this (in verse 8), he commended the dishonest steward for his prudence, for his wisdom. "For the sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into eternal habitations."

Now let's first of all look at verse 8. "The master commended the dishonest steward for his prudence, for the sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light." Now what is "their own generation"? Well, the Bible speaks of the generation of evil. This phrase, "generation of evil" is found, for example, in Luke 11:29: "This generation is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah."

You see, amongst evil men they have a code of ethics that is also evil. But within that evil code of ethics, within that sinful set of rules that they follow, they are very wise. They work it out so that they are concerned about the future. And so Christ is really pleading here with us to make sure, as a born again believer—you're of a different generation, of course; you're not of the generation of evil now you are a child of God—that you are wise in your own generation. You too must be concerned about the future and about using your opportunities as wisely as possible.

Now in verse 9 He begins to describe what He has in view. He says, "I tell you [now He's talking to born again believers], make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations." Well now, what's unrighteous mammon. That's money, it's property, it's anything at all that we own, anything that the world covets after. That's unrighteous mammon. There's not a nickel of it that is ever going to go into Heaven. When we die, we can't take any of it with us. It's the oil that lubricates the desires of natural man. It's unrighteous mammon. It in itself is not righteous. But you are given charge of this. As born again believers we're not paupers. We have land, perhaps. We have property. We have a job, in which we receive our salary. We are given charge of this. And we're not to despise it. We're not to be careless with it. We have got a job to do with it.

Now what job is that? Verse 9: "I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon." Well, what kind of friends? You mean I'm just to enlarge my circle of acquaintances? I'm to make sure that more people know me? Is that what's in view? No. Notice the last phrase: "so that when it fails." And of course it will fail when we die. There's not a penny that we can take with us. When it has served its purpose, and we go to Heaven to live with Christ, "they" (Who are they? These friends that we've made with unrighteous mammon) "they may receive you into the eternal habitations."

This means that those friends that God particularly has in view are those who have become born again. In other words, God effectively is saying, you are the custodian of property, of a salary, of the energy to make money. Now with this, you are to get on with the task of evangelizing the world. You are to get on with the task of being a witness.

Not everybody is called to be a preacher. Not everybody is called to be an evangelist. Not everybody is called to go from door to door, or to sit behind a microphone, or whatever. But we all are called upon to evangelize the world. And so whatever means that we have,

whatever property that we have, we are to lay down on the altar of service and use it to the highest degree possible, with the greatest efficiency possible, that others might know about the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way we are making friends. In this way we are being the wisest possible stewards of the unrighteous mammon God has entrusted to us.

And if we do this, if we make our property available to causes that do bring the Gospel as efficiently as possible, then when we go to Heaven, we're going to be greeted by those in Heaven who are going to tell us, "You know, I have become born again believer because you were willing to lay your property on the altar. You were willing to make it available. And so the Gospel came to me, and God saved me. And now I am here." And this is really the message.

You know, it's interesting, as you go through the Bible, that again and gain there are two major themes. Oh, there are many themes. But there are two major themes. One is the theme of salvation, the fact that we must be born again. And this of course is set in the light of God's justice and God's judgment and the wrath of God, and the fact that we can know the love of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and so on and so on. And that theme is found in every book of the Bible, whether we're reading in Genesis or whether we're reading in the Book of Kings, or in Ezekiel, or in John, or Revelation. We're going to find that theme of salvation.

But the other thing I find again and again in the Bible is another theme. And that is that once we have become born again, particularly in the New Testament, because this became effective with Pentecost, we have a task to evangelize the world. Again and again this comes through, that we are to evangelize the world. We're to be as available as possible, with our talents, if we have talent to speak, or whatever, with our property, with our means, and so on, so that this task might be done. That is the glorious privilege, that's the glorious heritage of the born again believer, to complete the sufferings of Christ. Christ came to preach the Gospel, and He suffered as He brought the Gospel. And the Bible teaches that we complete His sufferings. And we do this as we lay down our lives on the altar of service and bring the Gospel.

Sharing in Luke 3:11 (212B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like to ask a question about Luke 3:11 and also the passage that talks about the rich young ruler whom Christ told to sell everything and to follow Him. How can we relate this to today's life? How should we as Christians relate it to our lives today?

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you.

The question is raised concerning Luke 3:11. There we read, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none. And he who has food, let him do likewise." This is John the Baptist who is speaking to the people who are coming to him as he preaches the gospel of repentance. And he is saying that they are to start loving their neighbors. They are to start sharing.

Jesus said in another place that we must "love our neighbor as ourselves." Now God has put within our being a self-love, which is part of God's program, so that we will preserve ourselves. We're always a little extra careful that we aren't going to get hurt, if we're doing something. We're always careful to make sure that all is going to go well with us. And God wants us to have an equal concern for others.

And here it is put in the language. "If you have two coats and you meet with someone who has none, then share with him what you have," because if he does

not have a coat, then he is in real trouble. He can't meet the cold. Now ultimately there's a deeper meaning here. The fact is, God has lavished the Gospel upon us. And we have been clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness. And now we meet someone who is unsaved. He stands spiritually naked before God. And we are to be ready to share this marvelous Gospel that God has lavished upon us. We are to share with him, so that he too might become saved, so that he too, if he is exercised by it, might be clothed by the robe of Christ's righteousness.

And notice the second phrase: "And he who has food, let him do likewise." And when we are saved, we have come into an abundant harvest of food, as we feed on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God is the Bread of Life. And we meet someone who is unsaved. They are spiritually famished. They are dying of malnutrition, because they have no spiritual food to eat. And we very generously are to share this. In a real sense this is getting right to the responsibility of the believer to be available to share the Gospel, to make all that he has available to share the Gospel.

Now this gets us into this matter of the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler was a young man who really thought that he was rich in his good works. He was rich physically, too. But he was also rich in his good works. When Jesus asked him what he had to do to have eternal life, he said that one has to keep the commandments. And he answered, "I've kept all of these from my youth."

In other words, he was very satisfied that he was worthy before God. Probably he was seeking a commendation from Christ, looking upon Christ only as a Rabbi, where Christ as a Rabbi would say, "My, you're a fine young man. And certainly God ought to be grateful to have you in the Kingdom. You are rich in your good works, even as you are rich in your money."

But Christ, of course, has come with a different kind of salvation. We are not saved by our good works. We are not saved by our personal worthiness. The Bible teaches that even our best works are "as filthy rags." If we have committed even just one sin, we stand guilty of hell. And the only way we can ever get into Heaven would be, first of all, to spend an eternity in hell. And since eternity is forever, we would never make it into Heaven.

And so anyone at all who thinks that he's rich in good works, who thinks that he's really worthy before God, is in deep and terrible trouble. And so Christ has to show this young man that he is in trouble, that he is not qualified at this point, in any way, to go into Heaven.

And so He says, "Sell all that you have and give to the poor, and come and follow Me." Now there's a two-pronged implication here. First of all, Christ is talking about physical riches. In another place, in Luke's Gospel, we find the same kind of a statement to all of us. It's bad enough when we read it about the rich young ruler, but actually God is giving this command to all of us.

In verse 32 of Luke 12: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms (that is, give to those who are poor). Provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

In other words, Christ is effectively saying, "Make your possessions available to the spiritually poor." He's not talking about the physically poor. He's talking about the spiritually poor, because these are the ones to whom we bring the Gospel. We are stewards of God, ambassadors of God, to get the Gospel out. And we are to make everything that we have as available as

possible to bring the Gospel.

And so there is this physical sense, therefore, that we must understand when Christ replied to the rich young ruler that he was to sell his possessions and give to the poor. He was to make himself a disciple of Christ by this obedience, that is, by placing his trust in Christ. And he was to make himself totally available, that all that he had might be ready to be of service to God in bringing the Gospel to others.

But there was another sense that God had in view here. "Sell all that you have and give to the poor, and come and follow Me." In other words, your riches are not going to get you into Heaven, your rich deeds, your good works. That isn't going to get you anywhere, except to hell. You strip yourself of all of this. You come as a spiritually bankrupt sinner before God. None of these good works are meaningful at all. Christ did not come to call the righteous, that is, the self-righteous. He came to call sinners to repentance. And when you have become spiritually stripped of anything that you think is good or worthy, then you're going to be ready to follow Me. Then you're going to be ready to understand the salvation which I have to offer.

And the young man went away "exceedingly sorrowful, because he had great possessions." On both counts he was still trusting in his good works. He liked his physical riches too much. He was not ready to surrender his will to Christ as King and Lord of his life.

Now if we're going to be born again, we must be ready to obey Him. We must count the cost of discipleship. The cost of discipleship means that we have to turn our back on the world. Our security no longer is in the things of this world. Our security is no longer in the pursuit of pleasure and all of these things that are so attractive to unsaved men. Our security is going to be in Christ. We're going to find that we're to live as strangers and pilgrims here. We're just passing through.

But we also are going to find that we have a real task, a real mandate. We are to be stewards of all that Christ has given us, so that we might share that Gospel with others to the very highest possible degree.

And if we're not ready to face this kind of life, it means that we're not ready to belong to Christ. We have not really understood what it means to call upon God for mercy and to repent of our sins and trust in Christ only.

New Wine into Old Wineskins in Luke 5:37-39 (242C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I would like to have you explain for me Luke 5:37-39.

HC: Luke 5:37-39. Now this is the passage where it talks about putting new wine into old wineskins?

CALLER: Yes.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. The question is raised concerning Luke 5:37-39, where we read, "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'"

Now the question is, what is God speaking of in this tiny little parable we find here in Luke 5? Certainly God is not giving us a lesson in how to run a vineyard, or how to run a winery. That obviously cannot be the import of this.

But you see, Christ here is talking about the very essence of salvation. Salvation is not a situation where we are simply made over a little bit, where we are modified because of the fact that the Holy Spirit is present with us. The Bible

does teach that when we have become saved God the Holy Spirit takes up His abode with us.

No, the Bible teaches that when we have become born again, or born from above, which is a more proper way of translating John 3, "Ye must be born again," or "Ye must be born from above," this means that in order to become a child of God we have to become a brand new creature. Previously, in verse 36 of Luke 5 He said, "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it upon an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new and the piece from the new will not match the old." God is not teaching here, you see, that when we become a child of God we simply have the rough edges knocked off of our character, of our personality, and gradually we grow in sanctification, gradually we become more and more like God wants us to be, and this is what salvation is.

No, that's not what it is at all. We must become a brand new creature. We must become a new creation. Now we don't become a new creation in our bodies. A man who today is not saved and tomorrow has become born from above will still have exactly the same body. And yet in some part of his life there will be a tremendous change. He will be an entirely new personality. It won't be in his body, but it will be in his soul, in his spirit, that part of him that leaves the body at death and goes to live and reign with Christ in Heaven. It is here that he has become a new wineskin, which the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in. It's here that he becomes a brand new garment, not one that's an old one just patched over, but a brand new one.

Now it's true that in his body he still must experience the resurrection. And the time when he will be like a new wineskin or like a new garment in his body will not occur until the last day, when he is resurrected from the dead in his body. But now in his soul he is like a new wineskin.

Now in verse 39 it says, "No one after drinking old desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'" If we are satisfied with our old souls, if we are essentially satisfied the way we were, but we know that yes, there are a few things in my life that ought to be cleaned up, we're not going to be on the path of salvation. If we believe that essentially we're a good person, that substantively we have been living in accord with the Word of God, recognizing however that there are some mistakes, there are some errors, there are some things in our life that aren't what they ought to be, and yet we ought to come to Christ in order to get these things cleaned up, we're like those who continue to drink the old. We like the old and we're not going to desire the thought, the ugly truth about ourselves, that we are unworthy before God, we're dead in our sins, we're absolutely in rebellion against God and we must become born from above. If we like the old, we're not going to desire these things, and we're going to continue to say the old is good, essentially I'm worthy before God, essentially God ought to have concern for me because I am a very fine person. But this is not the path toward salvation.

The path toward salvation is where we look at ourselves absolutely honestly and see sin, sin, sin. We see that we are in rebellion against God. We see that we're under the wrath of God and that something drastic has to happen in our life. And that's why Jesus said we must be born from above. We have to become a new creature, a new creation. And we actually experience this as a fact of life in our souls, at the time we are really saved. At that time we have eternal life. At that time we have been taken out of Satan's dominion and transferred into the Kingdom of His dear Son. These verses are speaking of the nature of salvation.

Thank you for that call.

The Trinity and Abraham's Bosom in Luke 16:22 (257E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I was talking to someone at lunch today, and He said, "How can the Trinity be three Persons in One, when Christ sits at the right hand of God?" And I didn't really know how to answer him.

CALLER: And the other question I have is, when the Bible speaks about Lazarus being in Abraham's bosom, it uses the feminine gender. And there are other places in the Bible where it uses the word bosom. Does God have a dual gender, or what?

HC: I'm not certain about that latter question.

CALLER: Bosom, that's a feminine term. And there are other feminine terms in the Bible. Could God indeed be both genders?

HC: Let me try to speak to that.

The question is raised: How can it be that Christ is seated at the right hand of God, if actually there is only one God? Now this is all part of the mystery of the Godhead. The Bible clearly points out the fact that there is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. But the Bible also insists that there are three Persons in one, or that there's only one God. It really puts it that way. There is only one God.

Now I know this, that when it uses the phrase, He is "seated at the right hand of God," we must not conjure up the picture of two thrones, with God in the center one and the Lord Jesus at His right hand, seated on another throne. That's a human picture. That's a picture related to this earth. That's a creature picture.

But we must remember, God is Spirit. Can you imagine a spirit sitting on a throne? That will help you to see the difficulty we have here. Actually, when we study this language, to be seated is language the Bible uses to indicate that we rule, or that God rules and has authority. "At the right hand" implies that . . . well, I'm not sure of everything that the right hand implies. It implies, actually, that He is equal in power. He is Number One in a relationship to this matter of rule or authority.

Now we can't explain God. And if anyone doesn't understand, simply say, "Well, join the party. No human being understands." Now there are plenty of people who claim they understand God. But invariably you'll find that they do not face, really, all kinds of verses in the Bible. They claim they can answer all the verses. But when they're really pinned down, they cannot face all the verses of the Bible, because we have very finite minds, while God is infinite.

The other question that was raised was concerning a phrase in Luke 16, where it talks about Lazarus, who was the beggar, whose only friends were the dogs that licked his sores. In other words, he was a poor man, without any helper of any kind on this side of the grave. And he ends up in Abraham's bosom. Now we use the word "bosom" in a feminine term, in a feminine context. But I'm not really sure. I have never researched this particular word, but I'm not really sure that it has to be a feminine word, necessarily, even though we normally use it as a feminine word.

I might do the same thing with the word breast. Now ordinarily the word breast is a feminine word. And yet we sometimes use it in relationship to a man. I think that's correct, if I know the English language at all. So I don't really think that bosom is necessarily a feminine word.

Abraham, incidentally, in this context, is a figure of God Himself. Now why do I say that? Remember what Romans 4 says? That Abraham is called the "father of all believers." Now who is our Father?

Well, God is our Father. And if Abraham is called the "father of all believers," then we know that Abraham is a figure of God Himself.

And so Lazarus was brought into the very most intimate relationship with God Himself, typified in this parable that Jesus is offering in Luke 16 by Abraham.

Well, I hope this helps a tiny bit.

The Kingdom of God is With Us in Luke 17 and 24 (265A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: For my Bible Study lesson, I have to prove that Christ's Kingdom is here now. And I have three verses. I have Luke 17:20 & 21: "Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the Kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, 'The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs that can be observed. Nor will they say, Look, it is here, nor There it is. For behold, the Kingdom of God is in your midst.'"

And then I have Luke 24:26: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and entered into His glory?" And then I have Hebrews 1:3: "Who, being the brightness of His glory and the expression image of His person, and upholding all things by the Word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins sat down on the right hand of God, the Majesty on High."

Now are those correct answers?

HC: Yes, those are good verses. Your question is, "How can we prove that the Kingdom of God is right now?" Remember what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3?: "You cannot see the Kingdom of God unless you are born from above [or born again]." And then in verse 5 He tells us how we enter that Kingdom. He says, "Verily, verily I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." And so anyone who is born again, or who is born of water and the Spirit, has entered the Kingdom of God.

Now if we've entered the Kingdom of God, then it must be now. Then also read Colossians 1:13, where God says that we have been transferred from the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son. And then remember that John the Baptist, and also Jesus, said repeatedly, "The Kingdom of Heaven [or the Kingdom of God] is at hand." In other words, it's present right now.

You have a good start. And if you have a concordance, you might look up the word kingdom.

CALLER: This is helpful. Thank you very much.

HC: Well, I hope so. Thank you. Good night.

Hating Mother, Father, Wife, etc. in Luke 14:26 (288C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, good evening. I have a question to ask. Would you explain to me, Luke 14:26? I know we have to love, but I don't understand this where Jesus is telling the people that we have to hate our mother, brother, sister, and so on. If you will explain it to me, I'll take it on the air.

HC: You don't think it's a very good idea to hate your mother and father.

CALLER: You see, I have a friend that called me today, asking me this question. And I didn't exactly know how to explain it to her.

HC: All right. I'll try to help you. If you'd like to hang up, you may.

Actually, Jesus is teaching here the price that we must pay if we are going to be a child of God. You see, there are two kingdoms in this world, and only two, only two. Oh yes, there are many political nations. But sprinkled through these political nations there are two

kingdoms, and only two. One is the dominion of darkness, headed up by Satan. Most of the peoples of the world belong to this.

The other is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The remnant chosen by grace, from all the nations of the world, belong to this.

Now these two kingdoms are absolutely poles apart. They're totally antithetical to each other. Satan is the head of the first kingdom, and he is in complete rebellion against Christ. He hates Christ. He wants to destroy Christ and all that He does. He is at war with Christ.

Christ, on the other hand, in His program, is going to get total victory over Satan. And finally all of the wicked, all who follow Satan, will be vanquished and cast into hell.

So that's the conflict that exists. Now if you are in an unsaved family, if your father and mother and brothers and sisters are all unsaved, as well as yourself, you're all citizens of the dominion of darkness. You're all slaves of Satan. And so while you may bicker and fight among yourselves to some degree, nevertheless there is common agreement. None of you love God at all, none of you are concerned about the Lord Jesus Christ, none of you are on God's side at all. Characteristic of every unsaved person, you are deep in your heart in rebellion against God.

And so there can be really filial love, and relationships existing in an unsaved family, under God's providential care. But now something dreadful happens. One of you becomes a traitor. One of you goes over to the enemy's side because, you see, the unsaved are under the rule of Satan. And Satan is at enmity with Christ.

So, therefore, whether the unsaved know it or not, they also are enemies of Christ. When God says, "Love your enemies," He's speaking of the unsaved. He's not speaking about those whom we happen to single out as being "so and so's." He's actually speaking about any unsaved person. They are our enemies.

So now you become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. You've become a traitor to the dominion of Satan. You've gone over to the kingdom of light, the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now how is this going to relate then to the rest of your family? You have two rules that apply. First of all, you are to love your enemies. And so you have to continue to love your parents, and love your brothers and sisters, simply because that is God's program for you.

But in another sense you have to make a decision. Now these decisions aren't faced very regularly in our land, because we tolerate almost all gospels and religions. We live in that kind of a land, and we can praise God for this. But in many lands this is not so.

In many lands, for example, if this family that we're talking about were a Mohammedan family, and now one of that family became a Christian, immediately he would be faced with a terrible choice. His parents would come to him and say, "Look. You're an infidel Christian. And if you remain a Christian, if you don't renounce this, then you are no longer our child. We will ostracize you. We will cut you off. We will drive you from the village. You cannot be a Christian and remain in our family." So you have to make a decision. Do I love God more, or do I love my parents more? Am I going to throw in the towel and say, "Well, that's too big a price to pay. I can't leave my father and mother. I must repudiate this Gospel that I have been hearing about. I really can't go through with this, to be a Christian?" And so in that case you hate Christ yet. And you haven't learned to turn away from your father and mother.

On the other hand, if you became a Christian, and your parents come to you

this way, effectively you're saying, "I love Christ, and therefore I am at war with you. And I have to leave you, if you want me to. I want to be here to witness to you and to pray for you and to help you. But you don't want me here. You're an enemy now. And even though deep in my heart I still love you, I have to live as if I hated you, because you hate me now that I have gone over to the other side."

And so you see, in another place Jesus said that He did not come to bring peace upon the earth, but a sword. Now He did come to bring peace upon the earth in the sense that He came to bring peace with God. But as He brings peace with God, He brings the sword, because the moment that we become saved, then there is a division between us and our family. And there is no longer peace. There was peace as long as we were all unsaved. We were all in agreement in our rebellion against God. And there was that kind of peace. But we were not at peace with God.

The moment we became saved, we came to a point where we were at peace with God, but we were at sword's point with our family, because now they are the enemy. They are in Satan's kingdom while we are in Christ's Kingdom.

The Two Thieves in Luke 23:39-44 (336B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I would like to ask you a question, Mr. Camping. In the Book of Matthew and in the Book of Mark, the two thieves that were crucified with Christ reviled Him. But in the Book of Luke, the one thief rebuked the other thief.

HC: Then he turned to Jesus and said, "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom."

CALLER: And Christ said, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Would you please explain that? I would certainly appreciate it.

HC: The question is raised concerning the two thieves that were hanging on the cross. Now when we read all of the accounts concerning these two thieves in the Bible, we get this picture that shines through. We see that, first of all, both of these thieves reviled Jesus. They began reviling Him.

But then, as we continue to analyze the sentences that we find in the Bible concerning them, we find that finally one of the thieves repented and turned to the Lord Jesus Christ, and said, "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." He recognized that Jesus was the Savior, or that Jesus was the Lord, whereas the other thief continued to revile Him until his death, as far as we can tell from the Bible.

Now in this particular case, it's not too difficult to see the spiritual lesson that God is teaching us. These two thieves, in a real sense, represented mankind. All of mankind stands before the cross, and all mankind begins as abject sinners under the wrath and the curse of God, sentenced to hell for our sins. We all stand in open rebellion against God, even as these two thieves did.

A percentage of the world goes to its death continuing to revile God, continuing to be antagonistic toward the Law of God, continuing to turn a deaf ear to the Lord Jesus Christ. These are the unsaved of the world, who never turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. And they are typified by this one thief that continued to revile Jesus.

On the other hand, we have the account of the thief who did turn to the Lord Jesus, and that is a figure, or he typifies those who finally, by God's grace, have their spiritual eyes opened. They see that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, and they turn to Him as Lord and Savior, so that effectively Jesus says, "Today thou shalt be with Me in My Father's Kingdom." In

other words, if we are saved, when we die we go to be with the Lord Jesus Christ in Heaven.

In this drama of the cross, and the two thieves, we have a real picture of mankind.

The "Mammon of Unrighteousness" in Luke 16:9 Explained (759A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I have a question on Luke 16. I was wondering, it talks about the unjust steward, and he gave away half of what his lord's debts were. And then in verse 9 it says, "Make yourself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." I was wondering exactly what that means.

HC: The context is that Jesus is teaching that the unsaved people, living by the principles that the unsaved live by, do have a concern for the future. They are always protecting themselves insofar as the future is concerned. But He is faulting the believers that they do not have a proper concern for the future.

Now our concern for the future is entirely different than the unsaved man's, and the principles that we live by are altogether different. But nevertheless God is underscoring that we have to do a lot better job in being concerned about the future.

Now in verse 9 He points out what He has in view for us. The mammon of unrighteousness is the wherewithal that exists in the world, our money, our property, our inheritance, the things of this world. That is the mammon of unrighteousness. There is nothing righteous in itself about money or land or buildings or property that we own. These are the tools of the world to get on with their unrighteous practices.

But we are to utilize this to make friends. Now what kind of friends does God have in view? He says, "that when ye fail" Now at what point do we fail? Well, we fail at the point that our work has ended. We no longer can get on with the task God has assigned to us. Our time has ended. And what is going to happen when we fail? "They . . ." Who are "they"? These friends that we have made, "May receive you into everlasting habitations." That means that God is focusing our eyes on the fact that we are to use the things of this world, the money that God has entrusted to our care, the property God has entrusted to our care, to get on with the task of sending forth the Gospel, so that others might become saved. Then, when we are through with the task of sending forth the Gospel, these who have become saved because we have generously given that the Gospel could go out, will greet us. They will have become saved, and they will greet us as we come into Heaven. And that is the planning for the future that God has in mind for the believers. We are to keep our eyes focused on Heaven. We are to realize that there is no point in building a lot of financial successes in this world for ourselves. We are to utilize the money that God has entrusted into our care to send forth the Gospel. And when we get to Heaven, then we will see the results of the fact that we have been faithful stewards. And every believer of course to some degree will be faithful.

CALLER: A lot of Christians prefer to deal with Christians, in a money context. Is what He's saying that we're not to consider that, that we're just to go out and deal with everybody?

HC: No. What He's saying is that, and if we put this in the context of all the other verses in the Bible that speak about the chief task of the believer, what He is saying is that the number one priority of the believer in this world is not to look for financial security for himself. It is not to make sure that he's got plenty of money for his old age. That's what the

unsaved do. They're worried about their financial future in this life. But our concern has to be with looking at eternity, and what our task is in relationship to eternity. And that task is to be a preacher of the Gospel, to be obedient to the command to go into all the world with the Gospel.

And as we lay our life on the altar of service, as we make the money that God has given us available so that the Gospel can go forth by radio or by missionaries or by the printed page, however it is, we are making friends by use of this money. In other words, God is saving people through the fact that we have made this money and our property available.

Now in verse 13 God really underscores a very important aspect of this. And this is something that all of us have to take very seriously. It's something that won't go away. He says in verse 13, "No servant can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Now one of the greatest temptations that we have as Christians is that because we live in a world that is totally money-oriented and totally earthbound, because our security comes in the things that money will buy, the houses we own, the stocks and bonds we own, the insurance policies we have, the savings account that we have, which is the strength and security of the unsaved man, the strength and security of the world, and we are surrounded by this kind of a philosophy, which is pounded at us, dinned into our ears and taught us by everything that we look at and hear about, there is a temptation to be like the world in this. But we are not to live like the world. We are to recognize that there is no security in this world. If we die owning ten houses, so what? Or even if we own ten houses and don't die, God can take all of it away from us in a minute anyway, through fire or through pestilence or through war, etc. And this happens all the time, all over the world. There is no security in the things of this world. We have to get rid of that notion, that we have a lot of security if we have so much money in the bank or if we have so many properties with our name. We really don't have any security, even though the world thinks they have security in this.

For the believer our security is only in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now on the other hand, the property that we own and the money that we have is to be made available that the Gospel can go forth. Christ is our security. We're not to look to this money and the property as our security. Christ is our security, and we are to make our money as available as possible that the Gospel can go forth. And because we've learned that our money and our houses and our property and our land and our stocks and bonds and our insurance policies are not our security, we are not hesitant to give very generously. We're not hesitant to sell of this and sell off that so that more money can be available that the Gospel can go forth.

Do you see the large scope of the message that God is teaching us here?

CALLER: You've really helped a lot with it. Money isn't that important, and it just a vehicle to get the Gospel out.

HC: That's what it is. For the world money is an end in itself. It is the security of the world. For the believer, that is not our security. Our security is the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we find in our life that we've been tempted into thinking that money and houses and land are our security, we're to ask the Lord for forgiveness. And instead, like you put it so well, we recognize that money is simply a vehicle, a marvelous means God has placed at our disposal, to get the Gospel out into the world. And if all of us who are children of God would really catch this very clearly, my, there would

be so much money available to send forth the Gospel that our cup would be running over. If all of us would catch this, Family Radio would never be in a position where we didn't have enough money to meet the bills for this month. All of us would recognize that the things of this world are not important. We've got to be more dedicated and committed than ever to use our money and whatever else we have that the Gospel might go out. That is the mandate that God has given us.

CALLER: That's why the steward's lord wasn't upset when he . . .

HC: There is an implication there. He was giving away of his master's goods, and thus he was being protected for the future. Yes, there is an implication there that this man is a picture of a believer. We give away what God has given to us, in order to prepare for the future. Yes, I think that's a good insight.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Camping.

Parables Concerning Salvation in Mt 25 & Lu 17 (384B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Would you explain Luke 17:10 and Matthew 25:29 & 30?

HC: In Matthew 25 we read, "For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Now this of course is the conclusion of the parable of the ten talents is it not? Actually, he gave one servant five talents, another two, and another one. And then the man with the five talents used his talents to gain five more, the one with two talents gained two more, and the one with one talent hid the talent and gained nothing from it. And then when the master came and they gave their account, then the lord commended the man with the five talents who had gained five more, He commended the man with the two talents who had gained two more. But He said of the one, "You should have put your money into business and gained additional. But instead you have hid it, and therefore you are to be cast into hell."

And then in that context He said, "Therefore take the talent and give it unto him which hath ten talents." Now the parable is talking about the offer of salvation that God gives to all men. He comes to some more abundantly than to others. But to the whole human race there is sufficient information, just in the fact that God has created this world so that man knows that he needs a Savior, that man knows that he's a sinner and that he ought to become right with God somehow.

The man with the one talent is like someone who is offered the way of salvation, or he knows that he ought to do something about his sins, but he does nothing about it. There is no fruit that comes from his life. He simply disregards the fact that he has to become right with God. And of course he is subject to hell. What blessings he did have on this earth because he enjoyed the blessings of creation, he enjoyed the blessings of being in a church, perhaps, or a Christian family, or whatever, all of this will be taken away from him, and he will be cast into hell. Whereas the man who responded to the Gospel, and his life became fruitful to the Gospel, God will lavish His blessings upon him, so that he becomes free from his sins, he becomes a son of God, he receives eternal life. He is an heir of all the blessings that God speaks of, all the promises that God speaks of in the Bible. The Bible just goes on and on about the

marvelous blessings that come to those who become born again believers.

Now that's really, I believe, in a nutshell, the sense of this parable

Now in Luke 17, what was the verse that you were concerned about? Verse 10?

There we again have a parable, where Christ is saying in verse 7: "But which of you having a servant plowing or feeding cattle will say unto him, by and by, when he comes from the field, Go and sit down and eat, and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve me, until I have eaten and drunken. And afterward thou shalt eat and drink. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded? I trow not. So likewise ye. When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants. We have done that which was our duty to do."

Yes, there's a very distinct relationship to Matthew 25. We do not obey Christ and become a born again believer, that is, respond to the Gospel, become exercised by the Gospel and therefore receive eternal life because we deserve it. Nor do we receive all kinds of rewards on top of eternal life. We don't receive any of these things because we deserve it. We receive these things as an act of God's grace. It's totally an act of God's grace. Our response to the Gospel is what is to be expected when God the Father is drawing us, when He has become our Savior and Lord. It is the expected response. Under no circumstance is it a response that ought to bring credit to us or make us worthy, or give us the idea that now we're entitled to something just a little bit more than somebody else.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you so much for calling and sharing that. Good night.

The Parable of the Servants in Lu 12:45-49 (432A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Brother Camping. Could you please speak on Luke 12:45-49?

HC: Luke 12:45-49. Let's see. Where it speaks about the parable of the servant that thinks that the Lord has been delayed, and he's beating the menservants and maidservants?

CALLER: Correct. I'm interested in the severity of the beatings, what the Bible is trying to get across by the different beatings.

HC: All right. Fine. In Luke 12 God has given us a very interesting parable, in which He's speaking about a master and his servants. And this master has gone away on a journey. And then the servant says in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming, and therefore he shall begin to beat the menservants and maidservants, and to eat and drink and be drunken. The lord of that servant will come in a day when he cometh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant which knew his lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. And to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Now you see, God here is giving us a parable to illustrate the fact that it is a very serious matter when we have a knowledge of the Gospel and we do not surrender our wills to that Gospel. If we are an unsaved person and we have never heard about the Lord Jesus Christ, we never became acquainted with the Bible, we did not grow up in a Christian home

or in the presence of a Christian church, and yet because we are sinners we are under the wrath of God and we will endure hell, well, that is like the servant who knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes. He shall be beaten with few stripes. In other words, hell is still there, but there will be a lesser punishment for such a one.

On the other hand, if we know the way of salvation, if we've been brought up in a Christian family, we have attended church very regularly, we know the things of the Word of God, we know about what God says about sin and about judgment and about the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet we die without becoming born again, then our judgment will be far more severe. We are like someone who is saying, "Well, I have lots of time. I don't have to become born again just yet. I'll live my own life the way I want to live," which is really what everyone is doing who has not become born again.

We may still try to live a decent moral life, but in God's sight our sins still stand out, because they have not been covered by Christ's blood. And so such a person, when Christ comes, is going to stand for judgment and will be beaten with many stripes. That is, his condemnation will be much more severe.

You see, hell is payment for sin. And the more the sin, the more grievous the punishment. We must pay the penalty that God demands for our sins. And any single sin can send us eternally to hell. But if our sins are more and more, and particularly if we deny the Lord Jesus Christ when we have been given all of this information, then our penalty will be even more severe than ever.

JOHN

Eating and Drinking of Christ in John 6:53 (009A)

CALLER: Could you explain John 6:53 please?

HC: John 6:53: "Verily verily, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in Him."

You see, in verse 35 Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life." And when we surrender our will to Him, when we have become completely identified with Him in the cross experience—that is He has become sin on our behalf—then we have eaten of the Bread of Life. Then we have drunk His blood. We are those who have become entirely identified with Him. This is language to indicate the close identity that does exist between the believer and Christ Himself, because we have eaten Him.

Now the figure, of course, is taken from the physical idea of eating food. We eat bread and we drink water, and we drink liquids, in order to sustain our life, in order to live a vital, happy life. Now spiritually, therefore, we also have to eat of something and drink of something if spiritually we're going to have life, if we're going to live vital lives as Christians.

Whom do we eat of, or what do we eat of? We eat of the Lord Jesus Christ; we drink of Him; He is the Living Water; He is the Bread of Life. If we do not eat of Him and drink of Him, if we are not feeding on Him, then we are not saved; we are spiritually starving to death. We are amongst those who are still dead. The Bible teaches that we are dead in our sins, and we only have eternal life in Him.

And this is why Jesus can say in verse 35: "He who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." Once we are identified with Christ, once we are in Him, once He has become our Lord and Savior in other words, then we have been given the Bread of eternal life. We do have eternal life. We have the fountain of water really

dwelling within us. In John 7, Jesus said in verse 38, "He who believes Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Once we are saved, once we have drunk of the Lord Jesus, then in turn we become fountains of living water as we spread the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to others.

How Does the Lord "Prune the Branches"? in John 15:2 (035A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Could you help me with John 15:2?

HC: John 15:2. There we read: "Every branch of mine that bears no fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

CALLER: What I want to know is, how does He prune it?

HC: We read in Hebrews 12 that every son that He receives, He chastises. He brings testing programs into our life. He brings reverses into our life. And in this way He calls attention to our sins. Of course, He also prunes through the Word of God directly, as we read the Word. We are exercised by the Word, as it is used of the Holy Spirit as His sword, to cut away the dross from our lives.

CALLER: Could it be through a weakness that we may have that He does this?

HC: Not through a weakness, that is, if you're talking about a sin weakness. He may bring testing programs to expose our sin weakness, so that as we fall we realize that we have something in our life that ought to be pruned, that ought to be cut away. It's dead wood that has to go. It is never God's program that we sin. But He will help us to get victory over sin.

CALLER: I'm not sure what this is from, but I got where I couldn't go out of the house. I wasn't a Christian, but I guess I was searching. I got sick, and then I lost my confidence. I couldn't go out, and for 4 years I just was not able to go down the street. I had such terror or anxiety, and I didn't know where to turn. And I kept searching the scriptures and listening to K.E.A.R. And I just wondered. I did become a Christian through this thing, whatever it is, this phobia. But I just wondered. Did the Lord let this come on me for this purpose? Or is it just a weakness of my own? Now it's not so bad. I still have it. I'm a little better, but . . .

HC: Every person has got special sin weaknesses of one kind or another. We're born with these. We inherit them from our forebears. One person's sin weakness may be that he has an extraordinary desire for sexual lust. Another one has an extraordinary desire to gossip. Another one has a tremendous sin weakness of exaggeration, so that really he's telling lies all the time, because exaggerations are lies. And this may be a function of a deeper sin weakness of pride, where he wants to be recognized and wants to be the one who has the most spectacular story to tell. Another one may have a sin weakness of outright deceit, or of vanity, of wanting to be beautiful, and so on.

Now each one of us is different, and there's always the sin that is most pronounced in our life. Another one may have a sin weakness of anxiety, deep-rooted anxiety. But this is what sin is.

Now this is why Christ came. He didn't come because we were righteous. He came because we were sinners. Now very frequently, if God is going to deal with us, He may allow sin. But remember, sin is never God's will. Sin is never God's will. But sometimes God will allow that sin to magnify in our life. God simply takes His hand of restraint off of us. The sin is our sin, not God's sin in any way. And He does this so that this sin will be very pronounced. But we can see it as sin, and begin to reckon with it.

Now the first thing we must remember is that when we have sin, and the Bible says, "Don't be anxious." So when we are anxious, that's sin. And so the first thing we have to recognize is that it is sin. The moment we know that it's sin, then victory is assured. As long as we think that it's just a phobia, or we think it's just a weakness of some kind, or a habit, then we are not facing the reality of life, and we will not get victory over it.

But when we look upon it as a sin, we are not trusting the Lord the way we ought to. We're not living the way we ought to. When we cry out to Him for mercy, when we cry out to Him for a hatred for this sin, then we can start getting on a path of victory.

Now in your own case, this is a very deep-rooted problem. It's one that makes you just think, "Oh, how can I ever get victory over this?" And in yourself you cannot. You can't do it in yourself. But beginning with the fact that you will confess to the Lord, "Oh, Lord, I've had this sin in my life of not trusting you," because ultimately this is what it is. You really are saying, "If I go out in the street, God is not sufficient to care for me. Something dreadful is going to happen to me." And that's nothing more than sin.

Now what has brought it on, I have no idea. Why God has allowed you to be designed this way, whereas someone else has a sin weakness of some other kind, I don't know. But I do know that that's why Christ came, to deal with sin. And so you start out by confessing this sin. "Oh, Lord, I have this deep and terrible sin of anxiety in my life, where I don't trust You. And oh, Lord, forgive me. Oh, Father, strengthen me that I may realize that I'm secure in You, and there is nothing for me to fear. And forgive this sin, and strengthen me." And really pray to the Lord about it, that you might get victory over this.

Now when this anxiety strikes you, and right in the middle of the night it grips your heart, begin to cry out to the Lord: "Oh, Lord, have mercy on me. This sin has got to go. Help me to realize that my strength is in You. You will never leave me nor forsake me. You are the Good Shepherd, and You've laid down Your life for me. And You have promised that You would lead me beside the still waters and help me to lie down in safety. And oh, Father, give me that security in my life."

CALLER: I have another problem. If I have a sinful thought or if I do something sinful, I'm always afraid that God will keep me this way, because of my sin. I guess all my life I've thought that that's why I have this, because I've sinned in many ways, and God is punishing me.

HC: You see, very frequently, one of the biggest reasons for a deep-rooted anxiety such as you have is a deeper-rooted sense of guilt, where you somehow feel that God is going to abandon you and strike you down. Now this gets right back to trusting. When Christ says that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, when God declares this in First John 1:9, does He mean what He says? And so you look back on your life now. And you don't have to tell me what it is, but you think back on the worst sin you've ever committed. And you just reflect on that. What is the worst sin I've ever committed? And then ask yourself: Can Christ forgive that sin? Can He forgive that sin? Do I really trust Him, that if I would go to the Lord tonight and tell Him all about it and earnestly resolve in my heart that I'll turn my back on ever doing that sin again, as Christ strengthens me, do I really believe that He can forgive me?

CALLER: I still do these sins every so often. I still get a lustful thought or I . . .

HC: Well, I'm not even thinking about that. You go way back in your life. Is there something that you even hate to face? Is there a sin that you have almost forgotten? In other words, when you look back on your life, are you completely convinced, as you look at yourself very honestly (not kidding yourself, but looking at yourself very honestly), are you completely convinced that Christ will forgive every one of those sins?

CALLER: I guess I feel He just will always remember them and not look very favorably. I guess that's my problem.

HC: Well, that's a function of guilt. See, that's really saying that God hasn't really forgiven me. Now in Jeremiah 31:34, it says: "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Now that's a verse that you ought to commit to memory. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Or Micah 7:19, where God declares: "He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot. Thou wilt cast all our sins in to the depths of the sea." This again is language to indicate that they are gone forever.

CALLER: But when He says that He prunes or chastens us, if I sin tomorrow, I hope He doesn't make me feel fearful. If He chastens me again, I wonder how I will do it. That's what I'm afraid of. You know, if I'm growing in the Lord, you said that He chastens us again, or He prunes us. I hope it's not in this way, because it takes me a long time to get over it.

HC: He will not chasten you through sin. He may chasten you in some other way. But He does not chasten you through sin. The fear itself is sin, you see. And so when you have this fear in your heart, you have to ask yourself: "Now why am I sinning this way? Why am I not trusting the Lord that all my sins are forgiven? Why am I doing this?"

And then you pray, "Oh, Father, I have this fear." And that's the wonderful thing about going to Him. You can level with Him. There's nothing you have to hold back. He knows all about what's going on in your thought life. He knows what you're thinking before you even think it. And so you can't surprise Him. It isn't as if you're going to unburden some things that are going to catch God off guard. That can't happen.

And so you can very confidently go to Him and talk to Him as candidly and as confidently as you could to the most cherished friend, whom you trusted entirely.

And you can say to Him: "Oh, Lord, not I have this fear again tonight. And I know that this fear is sinful, because it means that I'm not trusting You. If I was really trusting You, then I wouldn't have this kind of fear. And oh, Father, forgive this. Forgive this and give me the strength and the belief, the trust, the faith, that I'll take You at Your Word that all my sins are forgiven and that I am in Your hands and that You cherish me and hold me fast and will never let me go. And may this become real in my life."

CALLER: That's what I need. Could you give me a couple examples of how He might chasten a person, from your own life perhaps?

HC: Yes. Frequently, if we are struggling with a sin, the next thing we know, God may send us some bad news about a loved one, which will just bring us down. Or maybe we might lose our job. Or we might break a leg.

CALLER: It's frightening.

HC: Well, it's nothing to be frightened about. Chastening, you know, at the time it is happening is very difficult. But later on, the Bible says, it brings, well, let me read that passage, because then I'll say it exactly the way the Bible does. In Hebrews 12:11 we read: "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant. Later it yields the

peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift up your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

Now that's what you need, you see. You need to lift up your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees. And if God chastens you, praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! I can remember in my own life, there have been times when God has been really giving me assistance with sin problems in my life. And so He clobbers me in one way or another. And I remember, finally you get to the point where you say, "Say, isn't that great? God is really beginning to deal with me." And how that supports you in your desire to get victory over that sin.

"Greater Works Than These Shall He Do" in John 14:12 (136D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I found in John 14:12 that it says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also. And greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father." Would you explain that to me?

HC: Yes. Your question is concerning John 14:12, which seems to tell us (and it does indeed tell us) that we who believe in Christ will do His works, and greater works than these will he do, because He has gone to the Father.

Now let me ask you, first of all, do you know anyone today who is able to multiply the loaves and the fish as Jesus did, or who is able to raise the dead as Jesus did, or who instantaneously can heal a leper, or who can take someone who has atrophied limbs (that is, who has never walked and whose limbs are completely shriveled up), and instantaneously give that person whole limbs?

CALLER: Well, no, not necessarily. I don't know anybody. But since Jesus said this, and it's right here in the Word, I believe it is possible if it is the will of God.

HC: Except that if it is talking about doing miracles, then God would be lying to us if we couldn't see the evidence of this in the world. And we cannot see the evidence of this in the world.

Now when we study a little more carefully in the Word, we find that this was not the essential work of Christ, that He was going to do miracles. The essential work of Christ was to go to the cross and die for our sins. But we can't do that, either, because that was Christ's work, uniquely His. And so we can't enter into that.

But there's another work that Christ did. In Luke's Gospel, in Chapter 4, we find there that Jesus went about preaching the Gospel. In Luke 4:43 He declared, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose. And He was preaching in the synagogues of Judea."

Now God is declaring that Christ came to preach the Gospel. That was His work to do. Now that's exactly the same work that Christ has commanded us to do. He said, "Go ye into all the world, making disciples." "Ye are My ambassadors," and so on. Now let's look at how successful Christ was as a preacher. He preached for three and a half years, and there was only a handful of believers, perhaps as many as 120, in Jerusalem, or maybe a little over 500 in all of Judea, after three and a half years of preaching.

But now Christ goes to the Father. And here we find Peter, who so often puts his foot in his mouth, and he preaches one sermon, on Pentecost afternoon, and 3000 are saved. He's doing the work of Christ, and greater works, because Christ

has gone to the Father. In other words, Christ is not talking about miracles here. He's talking about being a preacher of the Gospel.

CALLER: There still is a doubt in my mind. Still I believe that if it is necessary, and God permits it, and if it is His will, we are able to do these things. It says, very plainly. Of course later on He talks about the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit.

HC: Now you must remember that as born again believers, we are told to "walk by faith, not by sight." We are told that "an evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a sign."

Now the casting out of demons was a miracle. It was a sign. So was the healing of the sick. These were miracles. And Jesus said that we're not to seek this kind of a thing. Now this may be very exciting. This may seem to give positive evidence that we have the true Gospel. But we can't be more holy than God. We can't write the rule book. We've got to follow the Bible. And the Bible says that we walk by faith, and we don't walk by signs. And we don't get involved in that kind of activity.

CALLER: You just said that Jesus said that we should not seek these kind of things. But where does He say that?

HC: Because He said, "An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a sign." We find this kind of a verse recorded in a number of places. In Matthew 12, He said in verse 38, "Some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, 'Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.' But He answered them, 'An evil and an adulterous generation seeks for a sign. But no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.'" Now the sign of the prophet Jonah is the cross, the fact that Christ died for our sins. That's the miracle that we have to look at.

And we're not to go around looking for miracles. We walk by faith. And if someone is unsaved, if we suspect he might be demon-possessed, it makes no difference. He's unsaved. The answer is, we witness to him of the Gospel. And it is God who will take care of the matter of Satan. We don't have to go around rebuking Satan. That's not our task at all.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

No One Has Ascended to Heaven" in John 3:13 (214C)

CALLER: In John 3:13 it says, "No one ascended to Heaven." So I wondered what happened to Enoch, or how that's being worked out there in the Bible. And also verse 14.

HC: The question that's raised is concerned with John 3:13 and 14. Jesus is talking to Nicodemus. And He's discussing with Nicodemus what it means to be born again, discussing with Nicodemus how it is possible for a person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

And then finally, in verse 12, Jesus said to him, "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you Heavenly things? No one has ascended into Heaven, but He who descended from Heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life."

Now if we isolate verse 13, "No one has ascended into Heaven, but He who descended from Heaven, the Son of Man," we might immediately point out that there is some kind of a contradiction, because in the Old Testament it says very clearly that Elijah ascended into Heaven in a whirlwind. And we read of Enoch that he was not, because God took him, implying that he went into Heaven. But at any rate, the Bible is very plain that Elijah ascended into Heaven in a whirlwind. And so, since that would be a contradiction, we

know immediately that we've got to find some other kind of an answer. That is not what God is saying, that nobody physically has entered into Heaven.

But let's look at the context. Jesus is talking to Nicodemus, and He says in verse 12, "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe," in other words, "You don't trust Me enough even when I talk about earthly things. How can you believe if I tell you Heavenly things?" And now He's saying, "I'm the only one qualified to talk to you about Heavenly things. No one has ascended into Heaven. That is, no one has ever been in Heaven and is here on earth to tell you about Heavenly things. Only I, because I have descended from Heaven, the Son of Man. I am qualified to tell you Heavenly things. I come from Heaven. I am the Lord God who has become the Son of Man."

And of course verse 14 is teaching another beautiful truth. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Now He's expanded and really gotten into another subject very quickly, that's relating back to what He had been talking about earlier, "Ye must be born again." You see, in the children of Israel murmured against God, and God sent snakes among them, so they bit these rebellious Israelites. And the Israelites began to die. And finally the people cried out. And God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole, so that anyone at all who would look at that bronze serpent could be healed of his snake bite, and would live.

Now God is relating, in this verse, the Lord Jesus Christ to this bronze serpent. Now how can this be? How can there be a relationship here? What does the serpent represent in the Old Testament? Well, the serpent represents Satan, the dragon. "He is that old serpent, the devil," we read in another place. And sin and Satan are intimately inter-linked. Satan is the king of that which is sinful. And these serpents that were biting the Israelites were a figure of their sin. Their sin was causing them to perish. Their sin was causing them to be under God's judgment. They experienced physical death because of the bite of these serpents, but it was really a picture of the spiritual death that we are subject to because of our sins.

Well, now we have a real problem. The bronze serpent was put on a pole, and they looked at that, and then they became healed. Now how can that relate to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the very antithesis, on the very opposite side of Satan? Christ is not a serpent. Christ is the Lamb that was slain. Haven't we walked ourselves into a problem here?

Not really, if we consider this. The Bible says that Christ became sin for us. In another place it says that He nailed our sins to the cross. And we look to the cross in order to find salvation. It is there that we have to place our hope. And so the bronze serpent was a figure of Christ, who had become sin for us. He became as one who was condemned, who had become desperately wicked, because, of course, He became saddled with our sins. And yet it is at the cross that we have to look, in order that we might be saved from our sins.

And that's why verse 15 goes along and says that whoever believes in Him, that whosoever looks to the cross and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ may have eternal life.

Well, thank you for that question.

The Wedding at Cana in John 2:1-11 (219D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Mr. Camping. I wanted you to talk a little bit on the Wedding at Cana. Did I understand it right when I heard you say one time that

these people at the wedding were unsaved? Could you tell me what you think that the changing of water into wine symbolizes? I know it was a miracle, but was there anything else there? And then I wanted you to talk on the Communion wine whether it has to be wine, or whether it can be grape juice, or whatever.

Thank you

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

The question is raised concerning the Wedding at Cana of Galilee. Here Jesus performed His first miracle, in that He changed water into wine. And the evidence of the passage is that this was regular wine, an alcoholic beverage. Now why would He do this? Let's answer that question, first of all.

What was He proving by this? Well, there were six stone jars there. And He said, "Fill them with water," or they were filled with water, I guess. And these He changed into wine. Now the first thing we see here is that in changing water into wine an act of creation was required. Water has two elements, hydrogen and oxygen. Wine has an additional element, carbon. And so to change that water to wine means that instantaneously Christ had to create carbon.

So the six stone jars immediately remind us of the six days of creation, don't they? Christ was the Creator, of course. And He is showing that He is the Creator of the universe. He is the Lord God. It is a mighty demonstration of the fact that God, the Creator of the universe, has become flesh and dwelt among us.

Secondly, these stone jars contained water of purification, we read. Now in the Old Testament there were a number of signs, or official representations of what salvation, or what the Messiah's work of saving us, was all about. One was the sign of circumcision, another was the burnt offerings, a third was the blood sacrifices, and a fourth was the purifying rites, the washing with water. For example, the priest, before he went about his ceremonial duties in the temple, would wash his feet and his hands in a laver of water. It was actually baptism. It was cleansing by water.

And this water in these stone jars was reserved for this purpose. And this purifying rite was pointing to the coming Messiah. Now when Christ turned this into wine, what was He pointing to? He was pointing to Himself as the Messiah, because the wine represented the shed blood of Christ. The fruit of the vine is the representation of the poured out blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so therefore, in this wedding feast, as He does this miracle, He is not only pointing to Himself as the Creator, but as the Messiah. He has come to redeem us from our sins.

Now the question is raised, He gave this wine to these people who were seated around this wedding. Would God do this if they were born again believers? I really doubt that He would have. In Proverbs 31:4 it says, "It is not for kings to drink wine or desire strong drink." Yet in verse 6 it says, "Give wine to those that are perishing, and strong drink to those who are about to die."

In other words, God has given wine to the world. And remember, wine is able to be made by man only because God has created grapes the way He did. It isn't produced by man's ingenuity. It is produced by the fact that God has created the vineyards in just the way He did. But wine has been provided for man so that he might be able to face life in an unreal way. The sharp edges are taken away. He's tired, and he's frightened, and a glass of wine acts as somewhat of a tranquilizer. And unfortunately, of course, man will drink more than he should. And he can be troubled by drunkenness.

But a born again believer doesn't need wine for that purpose. A born again

believer can go to the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't have to resort to tranquilizers to face life. We can rest our life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I say that most of the people at the Wedding at Cana of Galilee were unsaved, not only by virtue of the fact that Christ gave them wine to drink, but because there was only a very tiny percentage of believers in the world in that day. Even after Jesus had preached for three and a half years, the largest number of believers that we can find is a little more than 500. You'll find that number in I Corinthians 15. Or in the upper room in Jerusalem, there were about 120, a very small percentage, if we figure that they would come out of a nation that perhaps numbered about two million people.

And so the likelihood at this wedding feast is that there were very very few that were saved. Of course we can't deny the possibility that He gave wine even to the saved there, as a figure of the Communion that He would offer in His own shed blood.

Now this brings us to the last question. What about the Communion service that we celebrate these days? Should we use wine or grape juice? Interestingly enough, the Bible is silent. It speaks about the fruit of the vine in connection with the beginning of the Communion service, and it speaks about the cup, but it does not use the word grape juice, it does not use the word wine. And so I believe we're on safe ground whether we use grape juice or whether we use wine. I believe that either would be in accordance with the scriptures.

The Meaning of "World" in John 3:16 (226B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Mr. Camping. I want to ask you a question about John 3:16. What does it mean when it says "world"?

HC: The question is raised about John 3:16, where it says, "For God so loved the world." What does God mean by "the world"?

The word that is used there is the word cosmos. Now the word cosmos is found a great many times in the Bible, and ordinarily, when the Bible uses the word cosmos, it's speaking about unsaved, the world of unsaved men. But not always. There are places in the Bible where God uses the word cosmos in the sense of the hole universe, the whole creation.

In fact, we use it in our normal English translation in that sense. Cosmic means that it's universal in character. The word cosmic is derived from the Greek word cosmos.

Now Christ, you see, came not only to redeem those who are being saved, but He came to redeem the world. We read in Romans 8:20 or 21 (someplace in there) that the creation was subjected to futility, or to vanity, not of its own will, but by the will of Him who subjected it in hope. You see, the world was created good. It was perfect. But when man, Adam and Eve, who were the kings of this creation, who had dominion over it, rebelled against God, they became cursed. Now you could not have the curious situation of a cursed king and a perfect world. And so God cursed the world, not of its own will. That is, the world itself had not become guilty. But it was subjected to vanity by God, who subjected it in hope. And God indicates, in Romans 8 again, that the creation "awaiteth with eager longing the revealing of the sons of glory."

Why is this? On the Last Day, when the believers are revealed (they are the sons of glory), then the day will come that the creation itself will experience the redemption. God will destroy this present universe, and recreate it New Heavens and a New Earth, where righteousness dwells.

CALLER: Does that mean people or the earth?

HC: In John 3:16 the word cosmos means the whole creation, including people.

CALLER: God does not love all people, though, does He?

HC: Individually, unsaved people are hated by God because they have rebelled against God and are under the wrath of God, as we read in Psalm 5, for example. But we can know the love of God by coming to the Lord Jesus Christ, by believing on Him.

Now God's hatred does not extend to the creation, because the creation, first of all, was not designed to be accountable to God for its conduct. It's not created in the image of God. And secondly, it did not rebel against God. Only mankind rebelled against God. And mankind was created in the image of God. They were created accountable to God for their actions.

And so mankind justly deserves God's hatred. But in the general sense, God so loved the world. He loved the whole world, the whole creation. But particularizing, it goes on to say that "Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish." That is isolating mankind now, that if we believe on Him we will experience His love.

CALLER: Do you have a verse that describes what you said about God cursing the world?

HC: Yes. Genesis 3. First of all, in Genesis 1 we read that God made everything and, in verse 31, "God saw everything that He had made and behold, it as very good." There was no curse, there was no sin.

But now we get to Genesis 3. And Lucifer has rebelled against God, and he is cursed, in verse 14. "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle and above all wild animals. Upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." That's the curse on Satan.

And then the curse comes on man: "I will greatly multiply your pain in child-bearing. In pain you shall bring forth children. Yet your desire shall be for your husband. He shall rule over you." And it continues upon Adam: "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it, cursed is the ground because of you." And here is the ground that is getting cursed here: "Cursed is the ground because of you. In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you. And you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground. For out of it you are taken. You are dust and to dust you shall return." The twin curse, you see, on man and on the ground.

And this is what Romans 8:21 refers to, when it says that the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will.

Doing Greater Works than Jesus in John 14:12 (244A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have five scripture references I wish you'd comment on. They're Mark 16:17 & 18, John 14:12, II Corinthians 3:5,6, Hebrews 13:8 and Jude 20. And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. I'll try to speak briefly about each one of these

The question is raised concerning Mark 16:17 & 18. There we read, "And these signs will accompany those who believe. In My Name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they will

pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them. They will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover."

Now as we do with the rest of the Bible, any time we read a verse, we want to begin to read it in the light of everything else the Bible teaches. If we read this verse all alone, it would seem to indicate that God is teaching here that when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then we should begin to be able to do certain miraculous things. If we would pick up a rattlesnake, it would not hurt us. If we would happen to drink strychnine, either accidentally or because someone gave it to us, to kill us, it would not hurt us. And certainly when it says that we can lay hands on the sick and they will recover, we should have the power to be able to go into any hospital and go from bed to bed and lay our hands on the sick, and there should be recovery. That is apparently what this is teaching.

But when we begin to look at these verses in the light of everything else in the Bible, we find that it isn't quite like that. We do find that there were a few signs that did accompany the early church as it first began to spread out with the Gospel, just a few. The ability to do miracles was confined, insofar as we can discover in the Bible, to just a few of the apostles. They indeed were able to heal the sick as God gave them power. They were able to speak in foreign languages, as we read in Acts 2. And we do read of the apostle Paul, when he was shipwrecked, that a poisonous viper clung to his skin, and yet he was not hurt by it.

But we also read that we're not to walk by signs and wonders. We're to walk by faith. We're not to walk by sight. The fact is, Jesus said to the Pharisees, "An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a sign." This means, therefore, that it was not God's intention that we live by miracles. We are to live by faith in the Lord, humbly trusting Him.

And these signs that are related in the Bible were related and recorded in order that we might have insights into the nature of salvation which God has provided. In other words, when He healed the blind man, He was showing that even as He was able to physically heal that blind man, so He is able to spiritually heal those who are spiritually blind.

So I do not believe that this passage is suggesting in any sense that today we could find those who could lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover. The fact is, I don't know anyone who could go into the hospital and empty it, because he could go from bed to bed. Actually, we don't try to understand doctrine by experience anyway. And just strictly from a Biblical vantage point, we know that this would not be possible.

Now the second question was raised concerning John 14:12: "Truly, truly I say to you, He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do because I go to the Father."

Now this verse is widely quoted by many who are convinced that Mark 16:17 & 18 is normative for the believer today, that Jesus did miracles and therefore we can expect to do miracles, and even greater miracles than He did.

Well, let's examine that for a moment. Jesus not only healed the sick. He raised the dead. He healed the lepers. He multiplied the loaves and the fish, a tremendous act of creation. He turned the water into wine. He stilled the storm. He walked on the water. He raised Lazarus from the dead, after he had been dead for four days.

Now when we search the Bible, not only do we find that there is no one who did miracles as great as these consistently, but we also, when we look around, find that no one anywhere does miracles of this nature. And so immediately we

know that God is not talking about the doing of miracles when He is speaking about the work that we would do.

When we search the Bible further, we find that Christ had two major tasks to do. There were two major areas of work He had to accomplish. And this is where we're going to find our answer as to the meaning of this verse 12 of John 14. And both of these areas of work are quite related.

One aspect is something that we have no part in. And that is His work of going to the cross and dying for our sins. We have no part in that. That is, we do not add in any sense to the salvation that Christ has provided for us. That work was unique. He went to the cross alone.

But Jesus also came as the one who preached the Gospel. We read in Luke 4, where He said in verse 43, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose. And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee." Now that was the work that God gave Him, to be a preacher of the Gospel.

Now what is the work that God gives us to do? He says, "Ye are My witnesses." We are His ambassadors, Christ as it were making His appeal through us. He says, "Go ye into all the world and bring the Gospel, making disciples." So you see, that identifies with the work that Jesus did.

Now when we examine the success of Jesus, we find that it was very marginal. He preached for over three years, and there were only a handful of believers in all of Judea. But then Jesus went to the Father, and the Holy Spirit was poured out. God began His program to evangelize the world. And Peter preaches one sermon on Pentecost afternoon, and 3000 are saved. You see, literally this promise came true. "He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do [I work to bring the Gospel, and you will bring the Gospel]. And greater works than these will he do." We will be more successful than Jesus, because "I go to the Father." That is, "inasmuch as I go to the Father, God's program to evangelize the world will begin." And therefore you can expect to see far greater success of your efforts to share the Gospel than were realized when Jesus was still on this earth.

Now the third question that was raised is relative to II Corinthians 3:5 & 6. There we read, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us. Our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit. For the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Now I'm grateful for this verse, because this points up a very insidious lie, a very insidious doctrine that is being taught by many without realizing that it is something that is very terrible in nature.

There are those who read II Corinthians 3:5 & 6, and they're saying, "The written code, which is the Bible, that kills. That's the letter of the law. But we have to trust the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit, He will give us light." Effectively they're suggesting that we are freed from the shackles of the Bible. We don't really have to pay too much attention to the Bible. We can trust that that Holy Spirit, working in a very unstructured and free way, uninhibited by the rules of the Bible, can do a much more mighty and wonderful work than that which is suggested by the Word of God. This is frequently the implication that comes out of this.

Now this is a very unfortunate and deceitful kind of an idea. This is exactly the kind of thing that would appeal to Satan very greatly. If he can only draw us away from the Word of God, if he can only make us look with some disdain upon the Word of God, if he can only get us into an arena, into a state of mind, into a practice where we are not listening

to the Word of God, but we are susceptible to thoughts that might come into our minds, or susceptible to outside influences of one kind or another. And bear in mind that Satan is not limited by the rules of God, that He will not break the silence between the supernatural and the natural. God permits Satan to come with his occult practices of bringing the supernatural into the real life.

And so this just leaves the door wide open for his kind of activity. Now the fact is, the Bible is the living Word of God. It is the articulated, verbalized voice of God, whereby God has declared what we want to know. It is the holy Word of God.

And when it's talking here about the written Word or the written code, or the letter, it is true that it kills. The Bible does kill. The Bible shows us that we're sinners and that we're under the wrath of God and that we're subject to hell. It should drive the sword home, right into the very vitals of our hearts, that we're in deep and terrible trouble.

But it is God the Holy Spirit who gives life. Now how does He give life? Well, He gives life through the Word of God. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit. It not only convicts us of sin, which is the beginning point in our path to salvation. But it also convicts us of the fact that through Christ we can be saved of our sins. It convicts us of the fact that we desperately need this salvation, ere we spend eternity in hell. The Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, convicts us that God is holy and perfectly just, and sin is a terrible thing in the eyes of God.

The Word of God is the means by which God effects our salvation. Remember what Ephesians 5 declares? That we are washed with the washing of the Word. It is the Word of God that is identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, who went to the cross for our sins. And it is God the Holy Spirit who takes that Word and applies it to our hearts. He cleanses us of our sins. But He does this through the written Word.

So check your life. If in any way you find a disdain for the written Word, if in any way you hold it on a little lesser level than anything else in the Bible, or let me put it in another way. If in any way you hold it equal to anything else in the world, then you know that the Bible is no longer the infallible Word of God to you. It is something else. And that means that in all probability you have another Gospel than the true Gospel.

Now another verse that was offered for an understanding is Hebrews 13:8. We read there, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Now this verse, again, is frequently quoted by those who would want to say, "After all, Jesus healed all kinds of people during His day. And since He is the same today, we would expect that He would heal people from their illnesses today." Or, "He will do other works of miracles today, even as He did then."

Now the Bible isn't saying here in this passage that Jesus' program is the same today as it was yesterday and forever. The details of His program will change from time to time. Jesus Christ is the same. He is Eternal God. He never changes. He's immutable. He is Eternal God. But His program changes.

Now in the days of Noah, did he do miracles? We don't read of any. Jesus Christ is the same. He existed then, too. Did He heal any lepers in the Old Testament? He healed 10 of them, just like that. Well, He did heal Naaman the Syrian. That was all. And there were many many lepers in the Old Testament. Jesus is the same. His program is different.

For 400 years, from the days of Malachi and Zechariah, until John the Baptist was born, there was absolute silence. And yet the Bible was not complete at that time. Was Jesus the same? Yes, He

was the same but His program was different. You see, the fact that Jesus did something back when doesn't mean He's going to do the same thing today. His program will change from time to time.

If you are going to say that Jesus healed 2000 years ago, and therefore He heals today, then you're saying that His program is the same today as it was then. And then I should be able to go to Jerusalem and find the God-man Jesus still teaching over there. But He isn't there, because His program is different. He had completed that aspect of His program and had left this earth and had gone to be with the Father. And so His program is changing, depending on what God has in view.

And it will continue to change. Today the Gospel is still going to every nation. The Bible teaches that God's program will change again. There will be a brief period before Christ returns when the Gospel is silenced all over the world. Well, Jesus is the same. He's absolutely the same. He doesn't change. But His program will change, as God gets His preordained work done.

And then we have a last question concerning Jude 20. "But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith. Pray in the Holy Spirit." "Pray in the Holy Spirit." Now who is the Holy Spirit. He is Eternal God. He is Eternal God Himself.

Now when we become saved, we enter into God. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We are washed in the Holy Spirit. We enter into God Himself, whatever God means by that kind of language. And I'm not able to explain all of this, because I can't understand God that well. But I know that God uses this intimate and wonderful language to indicate the precious relationship we realize with God when we are born again. When we pray in the Holy Spirit, it means that as children of God who are in Christ, we are communing with God our Father, in whom we dwell. It's this marvelous oneness that exists in the life of the believer in relationship to God Himself.

The fact is, in Romans 8 we read that the Holy Spirit takes our incomplete prayers, our prayers that we hardly know how to pray, and brings them perfectly before the throne of grace, because we belong to Him. As a born again believer, if we are communing with God, we are praying in the Holy Spirit.

This is the only way that we can pray to God, if we're really going to commune with Him.

Well, thank you for those good verses. They're all excellent verses that teach wonderful truths from the Word of God. We must be carefully, however, that we read them in the light of the whole Bible.

"It is Finished" in John 19:30 (259B)

CALLER: Would you please explain, just what was finished when Jesus said, "it is finished"? Was all of Satan's kingdom finished at that time, or not?

HC: The question is raised, What did Christ mean when He said on the cross, "It is finished"? Wasn't all of Satan's power destroyed at that time?

Yes. When Christ said, "It is finished," He had just spent the time from Thursday night until late Friday afternoon enduring the wrath of God for our sins. God had poured out His wrath on Him, as payment for our sins, if we have placed our trust in Him. Christ was enduring the equivalent of an eternity in hell.

Now in the providence of enduring the wrath of God, He was also guaranteeing that Satan would be destroyed, that Satan would be eventually cast into hell. He was insuring that God meant exactly what He said, that the wages of sin is death. He was insuring that there was

a Judgment Day for all of the unsaved who would not put their trust in Christ. By Christ enduring Judgment Day on our behalf, He was guaranteeing that God meant what He said, and that Judgment Day would also be a certain and sure thing for the whole human race, and for all of the fallen angels.

Now in Hebrews 2:14 we read that by Christ's death He destroyed, or He neutralized (the word destroyed there means to neutralize or to nullify) Satan, who has the power over death. Satan lost his ability to keep men in the bondage of sin. And from that point on they could be much more easily freed from Satan's kingdom. And we see this very dramatically on Pentecost afternoon when 3000 were saved after one sermon was preached.

Now in another sense Christ's work was not entirely finished on the cross. In one sense it was, but in another sense it was not. His suffering did include also the fact that He had to be buried, in His body, and it would not be complete in every sense of the word until Resurrection morning. And so from another standpoint the suffering of Christ embraced the whole period from Thursday night until Sunday morning, when He rose from the grave.

Thank you for that question.

The Forgiving and Retaining of Sins in John 20:23 (319A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I'd like to take my answer over the air, please. In the Bible, when Jesus was talking to the apostles, and made the statement, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Could you elaborate on that a little bit?

HC: Yes I'll be glad to speak to that.

In the Bible God indicates that the official representation of Christ on the earth is the body of believers, which is also called the church. God of course is the one who does the saving. He is the one who forgives sins. Only God can forgive sins.

The custodian of the Gospel, however, is the body of believers, or the church. And they are to share that Gospel with others. And as they do this, God works through this Gospel to forgive the sins of those who are becoming saved. Therefore, in a real sense, it is the church, or the body of believers, that is forgiving the sins. No, it isn't the church that's forgiving the sins. It is God who is, but the vehicle through which God is accomplishing this is through the Gospel which the believers are presenting to the person who is being saved. And so in that sense the church is forgiving the sins. Ultimately it's only God who forgives sins.

Now by the same token, when that person is saved, it is God who has forgiven the sins of that person. He works through the Gospel which the body of believers has presented to this person. And it is the body of believers or the church that officially recognizes that that person's sins are forgiven. It is the church that welcomes this person into the fellowship of the body of Christ. That has been through joining the church and becoming a member of the congregation. And so in that sense we see this intimate relationship between the forgiveness of sins and the church.

If the member of the church, who claims now to be a member, whom the church has officially recognized as one in whom the Gospel has done its work, so that that person has become a born again believer, proves later on by his actions that he is not a believer at all, then the church excommunicates that person. He doesn't belong in the body of Christ.

And of course that person never was saved. But actually, the church officially is being used of God to declare that this

person is not saved. This is as far as I think we can go in thinking through this idea that it is the church that retains the sins of those with whom it comes in contact.

It is simply the official representation of God on earth. It is God who actually does the forgiving.

"Touch Me Not" in John 20:17 (340D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like to have your views on John 20:17, and just what is meant there.

HC: John 20:17. Okay. Let's look at that a moment. In John 20:17, "Jesus said unto Mary, Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father. But go to My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."

CALLER: What I really wanted to get down to is, where was Jesus? I thought after He had died that He went to His Father right away. Does this verse mean that He did go to hell?

HC: No. In this verse Jesus is simply saying that when He had finished His work He would ascend to the Father. Now it is true that when He hung on the cross He said to the thief next to him, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Now Paradise is Heaven, where the Father is, where the Tree of Life is. And He also said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." So Christ in His Spirit went to be with the Father temporarily, while His body went into the grave. His body was put in the grave. It did not see corruption, we read in Acts 2:30. But it was the body of Jesus. Then He rose again on Sunday morning. That meant that in His spirit He no longer was in Heaven. So it was just momentarily that He was in Heaven.

However, when He went to be with the Father in His spirit, that was not the ascension. His work of the atonement was not completed in the total sense of the word. Actually, He did not ascend to the Father until forty days later.

Now when He did ascend to the Father, then a few days later He sent for the Holy Spirit. That is, the Holy Spirit was poured out. And that is language simply to indicate that God began His program to evangelize the world.

Now the role of the believer in the world is to be an ambassador of Christ, to represent Christ. We're strangers and pilgrims here, living in a very alien world, and our role is to preach the Gospel, to tell others about the Gospel. Until we have completed our task we cannot go to be with Christ eternally. We cannot stay with Him. This is what Mary wanted. Mary wanted to continue to be with Jesus. But Jesus said, "No, you can't. You can't hold on to Me now because I have to ascend to the Father." Earlier in John He had said, "If I don't go to the Father, then the Holy Spirit will not come." And it was God's program that Jesus would go to the Father. The Holy Spirit would then be poured out. That is, God would begin His program to evangelize the world. And Mary Magdalene and all the other believers would have a part in this, because they were ambassadors of His.

Anticipating this, He said to her, "Go to My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father." He dispatched her right then and there, to get on with the task of being a witness.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you. I talked to you once about three months ago about this thing of Jesus going to hell. And I didn't quite understand it then when you explained it. And I'm kind of being tossed around about what to think about this. Did Jesus actually go to hell and suffer for us? I know that it sounds like He did.

HC: The Apostles Creed says He descended into hell. Actually, to be in hell, for the unsaved of the world, means that they're going to be in a place outside of this world, and they're going to spend eternity there, under the wrath of God. Now they have to be removed from this earth because God has other plans for this universe. He plans to burn it with fire on the last day, at the end of time, and to recreate it New Heavens and New Earth, where righteousness dwells. So for the unsaved, hell is some other place. And it's a place where they will spend eternity.

Now Christ is the God-man. He became sin for us, and God poured out His wrath upon Him during the atonement, to such a degree that it became the equivalent of an eternity in hell. Now it wasn't necessary for Jesus to actually go to a place called hell. It was necessary that He suffer hell. The only reason the unsaved man has to go to a place called hell is because he can't remain on this earth. God has other plans for this earth. Otherwise he could be under the wrath of God on this earth.

So already beginning in the Garden of Gethsemane when He said "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," and with loud cries He throws Himself to the ground, and the sweat is pouring off His body like great drops of blood into the ground, He's already enduring hell. The wrath of God is being poured out upon Him. When He hangs on the cross, and the cry comes from His lips, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" that's hell, to be forsaken by God.

Now we can't really understand the suffering of Jesus because we don't understand the perfection of the holiness of God, the perfection of the righteousness of God. But just imagine, if we could get just a little bit of a mental picture. Here is Christ, who is God, who is eternal God, and who has never committed any sin, who has never been at odds with God, because He is God and He's perfect in His righteousness and would never never, for any reason whatsoever, be under the curse of God. But now, under the atonement plan, He has become sin for us. That alone must have been intense suffering, that He became a cursed thing because of our sins.

And now, because of the fact that He's under the curse of God (and that's a mystery how God could be under the curse of God, but nevertheless this is what happened at the cross). He is abandoned by God, rejected by God, cast away from God like a dirty garment. For the perfect sinless Jesus, who is God Himself, to endure this kind of awful reproach and treatment must have been suffering that was absolutely intense.

In any case, whatever the suffering was, it became the equivalent of an eternity in hell for us who are saved. Otherwise the justice of God would not have been completely satisfied.

CALLER: So He didn't necessarily have to go to hell then.

HC: He didn't have to go down to a place called hell, but the Bible does use language that seems to suggest that He went down to a place. But it uses this language in describing the suffering of the cross. In Matthew 12:40 it says that He must be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The heart of the earth there is a figure of the punishment He must endure for our sins. The three days and three nights encompass the period from Thursday night, when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane until Sunday morning when He was resurrected — three nights and three days.

In Ephesians 4, when it describes our Savior saving us, it says He led captivity captive. And He descended into the lower parts of the earth, which is similar language to being in the heart of the earth. Now the lower parts of the earth are a synonym for hell. In other places in

the Bible you find the term "the pit" as a synonym for hell. Satan comes out of the pit.

Now Jesus had to, in a sense, go into hell because that is where we are when He saves us. We are under the wrath of God. We are subject to God's righteous judgment because of our sins. This is where He finds us to save us.

Secondly, He had to go into hell, that is, He had to endure the wrath of God. He had to endure hell for our sins in order to save us.

And so for both of these reasons we see why He descended into the lower parts of the earth. And He led captivity captive. Now when He found us, we were captives of Satan. We were slaves of Satan. And He set us free from that bondage and made us bond servants of His.

CALLER: I see. Finally I see that.

The Invisible Workings of the Holy Spirit in Jn 3:7-8 (379B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Just what is meant by Jesus in John 3:7 & 8 when He's talking to Nicodemus about being born again, when He says you can hear the wind but you can't tell where it comes from, or whether it will go next, and so it is with the Spirit, that we will not know on whom next He will bestow His life from Heaven?

HC: Yes. That's a very good question. That's not a question that's asked very frequently. Generally people are concerned about John 3:5, where Christ said you have to be born of water and the Spirit. Your question has to do with verses 7 and 8, where He is saying, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit."

Now you see, when Christ gives us salvation, when God gives us salvation, the Holy Spirit does not work so that we can see or feel His presence. There is no manifestation. There is no burning sensation. There is no falling over backwards. There is no sensation of any kind. But we know that we're born again because the results of being born again are there.

The same as with the wind. We can't see the wind, but the results are there. We see the leaves blowing, and so on. And so it is in our life. The Holy Spirit does this work of grace in our life. It's very quiet; it's very mysterious. We actually become a new creature.

Now just think of it. In our soul we are a real personality. The apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said in II Corinthians 5, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." And when you're absent from the body you're in your soul existence. And so he's speaking of his soul as if his soul is his whole personality. And so our soul has real substance.

Now think of it. Before we're saved, in our souls, as well as in our bodies, we're dead, spiritually dead. We're sold under sin, but we still exist as a personality, both in our soul and in our body. And of course in our soul and in our body we're completely interrelated. But at the moment of salvation, when we're born again, that soul of ours is effectively put to death and it's resurrected a brand new soul. Now that's a fantastic transformation. Our body has not been changed yet, but our soul has been altogether made into a brand new soul.

Now you would think that when this happens there would be all kinds of sparks and sensations and activity going on in our personality, as God is doing this dramatic miracle in our life. But the fact is, we don't even know the moment when this happens, ordinarily. All we

know is that we begin to sense an earnest desire to live for Christ. We find that we are tremendously interested in the Word of God and all that it teaches. And we discover that there's a real urge in our life to be obedient to it.

The effects of what God has done are seen. The fruit of the Spirit is seen in our life. But we certainly were not there to witness the work of the Holy Spirit.

CALLER: And I was wondering if this means that salvation comes when God wills it to come rather than we may will it to come. As we would say, "Tonight I'm going to go to church and take an altar call and be saved tonight."

HC: Yes. You're right, of course. God is the one who is sovereign in this matter. He is the one who saves us in His timetable. Now He of course works through our will. He works through our prayers. He works through our listening to the Gospel.

Frequently, when He expects to save someone, as He draws us to Christ, as the Father draws us, God may be getting our attention by sending chastisement into our life. But it is the Father who is doing the drawing, and it is the Holy Spirit who is actually effecting that salvation in our life. And this is done in God's timetable.

CALLER: Yes. I see.

Doing Works in Christ's Name in Jn 14:12-14 (383A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Brother Camping. In our Bible study where I work, we're going over the Book of John, and we're currently in Chapter 14, especially verses 12, 13 and 14. I can take this over the air, but would you speak about what it means to us to pray in Jesus' Name, or to ask the Father in Jesus' Name? I'm going over just verse 12, 13 and 14. Thank you.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

The question is raised concerning John 14:12, 13 and 14. John 14:12: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto My Father."

Now this has to do with the work of the Lord Jesus in bringing the Gospel. In the closing two verses of Luke 4 you'll find that Jesus declared that He was sent to preach the Gospel. And this is the work that we do. We have been called of God to go out into the world bringing the Gospel. Jesus, as a result of His work in bringing the Gospel, saw only a handful of believers in all of Galilee. But once Jesus went to the Father and He sent the Holy Spirit, we see that Peter, for example, preaches one sermon and 3,000 are saved. Greater works than Jesus did are done because Christ has completed His work of going to the cross, and because God has begun His program to evangelize the world. That's the meaning of John 14:12.

John 14:13: "And whatsoever you shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." In this context it really means that we're asking on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of what He has done for us. You see, we are not entitled to ask for anything in ourselves because in ourselves we are estranged from God. We are in rebellion against God. We are outcasts. We are enemies of God. We are under judgment. We are slaves of Satan. We have no right whatsoever to come to God, none whatsoever.

But by virtue of what Christ has done for us, in that He has paid for our sins, so that we again can call God our Father, by virtue of the fact that He has become our righteousness, we've been clothed by His righteousness, we've been covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness, His righteousness has been imputed to us,

therefore we dare to come to the Father and converse with Him, and ask for this or that, in the Name of Christ.

Now of course we also, elsewhere, when you get to John 15, find that what we ask we must ask with God's Word abiding in us, and with us abiding in Him. And then it will be granted. And when God's Word abides in us, and we are abiding in Him, it means that we understand that we want God's will to be paramount. We want God's will to be number one. And therefore we'll always ask with that in view, "Oh Lord, your will be done. Your will be done. In Christ's Name, that is, on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, we dare to come to you and have conversation with you, dare to express the desires of our heart, dare to thank Thee. And certainly we have lots to thank Thee for. But whatever we have asked that is not in accordance with Thy will, by all means we want Thy will to be done."

In other words, we've got to read John 14:13 and 14 in the light of John 15, where it also gives some other facts about our prayer life, namely, that we must abide in Him and He must abide in us.

"Ye are gods" in Ps 82:6 & Jn 10:34 (394D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. I'd like to ask you about two pieces of scripture. Psalm 82:6, and also, I think Jesus is referring to this Psalm in John 10:34. Would you give me an interpretation of what you feel those verses mean?

HC: Yes. Jesus in John 10:34 is talking to the Pharisees, and they are very incensed against Christ.

CALLER: They're ready to stone Him.

HC: They're ready to stone Him because He is indicating that He is God. And therefore in verse 33 the Jews answered Him, "For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy, because that Thou being a man maketh Thyself God." Then Jesus answered from the scriptures. And He's really putting them down. He's really indicating that they are hypocritical, that they are not reading their scriptures, that they're saying far more than what the Bible says. He's not defending in this context the fact that He is God. He is simply saying that in a real sense every human being is God, in a certain sense. And we know what that sense is. The sense is that we are created in the image of God. We are created like God. We have eternity within our souls. We can think God's thoughts after Him. We worship God. We are related to God in a very intimate fashion, through creation.

And so He's reminding them of this, "Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If He called them gods [that is, if God Himself calls human beings gods] unto whom the Word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken, say ye of Him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest because I said I am the Son of God?"

In other words, He's putting them down on their own level. He's not at this point emphasizing that He is Eternal God. He is simply indicating that to call Himself a Son of God is not contrary to the scriptures. Now Psalm 82 is the verse that He referred to, where it says, "I have said, ye are gods. Then all of you are children of the Most High."

Now you see, when we become saved, what are we called in Romans 8? We're called sons of God, aren't we?

CALLER: Right. So then in Psalm 82 the Psalmist is, or God is speaking through the Psalmist, actually, in that verse. Is that correct?

HC: Yes. God is speaking through the Psalmist, and is speaking to mankind:

"Ye are gods and all of you are children of the Most High. But ye shall die like men and fall like one of the princes." The reason you shall die like men is that you're under the judgment of God, and you're going to hell. But by creation, by virtue of creation, you are created in the image of God and you are in that sense related to God and are like God.

CALLER: Okay.

HC: And we want to really understand that God is not saying that we stand like God stands. We are not God, singular. God is God. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He is infinite in all of his attributes, and marvelous, and holy and all of this. And we never can hold a candle to that.

But nevertheless, in a real sense the Bible speaks of us as being gods. And that is particularly dramatized after we're saved, when the Bible says that we are sons of God.

CALLER: I see. Now somewhere else (I don't remember where) Paul says that one day we will be rulers with God. Do you think this has any connection in that area?

HC: I think it really does. In I Corinthians 6 it says that we will judge men. In Revelation 2 it says that those who conquer will rule the nations with a rod of iron; very similar language to that which is spoken of by Christ. And in Ephesians 2:6 it is stated that we've been raised with Christ, and we are seated with Him in heavenly places. The Bible really becomes almost impossible to believe, as we see the intimate relationship God allows to be spoken of in the relationship that exists between mankind who are saved and God Himself.

CALLER: Okay. That answers a lot for me. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Elijah and John the Baptist in Jn 1:21 (453C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I appreciated your discussion about Elijah, that he was coming before the great and terrible day of the Lord. I had trouble with this, because I was looking in John 1:21, and John the Baptist was asked if he was Elijah, and he said, "I am not." Was this just a symbolical representation in Malachi?

HC: Yes. The question is, in the light of John the Baptist's statement in John 1:21 where he declared, "I am not Elijah," and yet in Malachi 4:5 it says that before the great and terrible day of the Lord Elijah must come, how can we tie the two together?

Well, God gives us the answer in Luke 1:17, where He says he will come "in the spirit and power of Elijah," talking about John the Baptist. And so Elijah was a type of John the Baptist. He prefigured John the Baptist. He was not John the Baptist. They were two entirely different and separate personalities. Elijah was in Heaven when John the Baptist was born. But John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Just like in the Old Testament. For example, in Ezekiel 34 it talks about David coming to sit on the throne. Well, from the context we know that the reference is to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was typified by King David, in that He is seated on the throne of David.

CALLER: Okay. When Jesus said something to the effect that if you can understand it, John the Baptist was Elijah who was to come, doesn't it kind of hint that he actually was Elijah? But it seems that he couldn't really be. I hadn't heard of a case before in which a person who had already passed on would come back.

HC: No. It's in Matthew 11:14: "And if you will receive it this is Elijah which

was fore to come." And He's talking about John the Baptist. And that is the conversation.

Now incidentally, in Matthew 17 we have another interesting sidelight on this. There the disciples asked Him in verse 10, "Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elijah truly shall first come and restore all things." Well now, who is that? That isn't John the Baptist, because He didn't restore all things. But then He goes on, "But I say unto you that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not but have done unto him whatsoever they listed [that is, whatever they desired]. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."

And so in verse 12 Christ is saying that Elijah typified John the Baptist, and John the Baptist fulfilled the promise that Elijah was to come, because he came in the spirit and power of Elijah. But in verse 11 He's not talking about John the Baptist. He's talking about Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will come to restore all things, and who was also typified by Elijah, only in a different sense. Elijah was a prophet announcing the coming of the Messiah, and in that sense he was a type of John the Baptist. But Elijah was also a prophet bringing judgment upon the wicked of his day.

We read in II Kings 1 where the wicked king Ahaziah of Israel sent a captain with fifty men to take Elijah, and Elijah called down fire from heaven and they were destroyed. And that's a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ calling down fire from heaven on the last day when He restores all things, when He brings judgment on the unsaved.

And so verse 11 is talking about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was typified by Elijah, and verse 12 is talking about John the Baptist, who was typified by Elijah.

CALLER: Is there mentioned in Revelation some prophets who will have a specific duty of witnessing (I don't know if it's in Jerusalem, or where this location is) for a certain period of time, and who will have some great power that they won't be able to be harmed by the forces of antichrist?

HC: Your question is, is there something in the Book of Revelation that discusses prophets who will be witnesses and who will not be harmed? You're thinking of Revelation 11. In Revelation 11 God is speaking of two witnesses, who will prophesy for 1260 days. And we don't have time to go into this at all, but that picture there is that the two witnesses are a figure of the church as it brings the Gospel throughout the New Testament period. They come with the law and the prophets. And of course the Word of God is powerful. It is the Sword of the Spirit, and it brings judgment as well as it brings salvation. And that language really emphasizes the nature of the Word of God that is brought.

And then finally those witnesses are killed. Their bodies like in "that great city which is symbolically called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified." And the picture there is that the church itself has become so apostate that it silences the Gospel, and we have a short period of time just before Judgment Day when the Gospel is silenced all over the world.

CALLER: So you feel that it's purely symbolic, and that those aren't actually people, but they just represent the church.

HC: The Bible is very clear about this. In Revelation 11:3 or 4 it says, "These are the two candlesticks which stand before the Lord of Heaven." Now when we search the Bible for candlesticks, we find that every congregation is represented by a candlestick in Heaven. We read this in Revelation 1. And so it's

talking there about congregations then.

And it says they're also the two olive trees. Well, in Romans 11 God speaks of His body as an olive tree, into which we're engrafted. So the Bible itself is teaching us that this is speaking about the congregations or the church as it exists throughout the New Testament period. The 1,260 days is another question, and that derives from the last half of Daniel 9, verse 27, the 70th seven.

CALLER: What would you feel it represents in verse 11 of Revelation 11, when it says that after 3-1/2 days the breath of life from God came into them and they stood on their feet?

HC: That would refer to the rapture at the end of time, when Christ comes. The believers will be resurrected, and they will be caught up in the air to be with Christ. And those who are still standing here will instantaneously be changed into their resurrected bodies and caught up in the air to be with Christ. And this will happen in the presence of all of the unsaved of the world, who are their foes. And this of course will be time for judgment, as we go on in Revelation 11 and see.

CALLER: Oh, I see. I thought that this would be such an instantaneous thing that it wouldn't be actually visible to those who are alive on the earth which were not taken up.

HC: Well, when we read it carefully I think, I haven't read that for awhile, but let's look at that language. It says in verse 11, "And after three days and a half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet and great fear fell upon them which saw them." So it wasn't instantaneous. It was immediate, but it was in the presence of all their foes.

CALLER: Okay. Well, I appreciate your time.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Worshipping God in the Spirit in Jn 4:24 (590B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: In John 4:24 Jesus was talking to the woman at the well, and He says, "God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth." How do you worship Him in spirit?

HC: The question is concerning John 4:24: "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth."

When we look at the religions of the world, normally they go through some kind of an outward action of worship. In other words, they have an idol that they look at, an image that they look at and say, "That is God," whether it's the Buddha or whether it's a crocodile, or the sun, or whatever it might be. They have a certain amount of ritual that they go through. And what God is emphasizing here is that the essence of worship is what is in, our own personality, our own spirit, which is identified with the Spirit of God and with Christ Himself, because Christ is in the truth. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

Really God is saying, first of all, that we worship Him in the Holy Spirit and in Christ Himself. We can't worship Him unless we are born again, unless we are children of God. It just has nothing to do with some kind of an outward observance or some kind of a ritual that we go through. It requires, if we're really going to worship Him, that we are born again, that we are born of the Spirit, that we are born of the Word of God, that we are in Christ. This is really the first great meaning of this verse, I believe.

CALLER: The reference that God is Spirit, is that one hundred percent accurate then?

HC: Yes, that's altogether accurate. God is Spirit. Now it's true that Jesus took on a human nature. He became of the earth, earthly, so that He was flesh and bone like we are. But when He went back into Heaven, He can't be in Heaven in flesh and bone. He would be there in His glorified spiritual body. And a spiritual body is spirit. Now we don't know what a spirit is. You can't make a drawing of a spirit. You can't give a word picture of a spirit. Nobody can, because that's outside of our frame of reference. That is of the heavens, and we are of the earth. So we just use that word, or the Bible uses that word spirit and we don't really know what it is.

CALLER: What about I Corinthians 12:3, where it says, "Therefore I want you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed and that no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit."

HC: The question now is I Corinthians 12:3. What does God mean when He says, "No man speaketh by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed, and no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit."

First of all, God is not interested in what we say with our lips. In Matthew 7 Jesus talks about a false prophet and He says, they will say in that day, at Judgment, they will be convinced they have been serving Christ, and they'll argue with Christ, because they're subject to judgment, and they'll argue, "Lord, Lord, did we not do many mighty works in Thy Name? Did we not prophesy in Thy Name?" And the Lord will say, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

In other words, the fact that somebody uses the words Lord Jesus, the fact that they speak of Him as the Lord Jesus with their mouth, that doesn't mean that they are saved or that they're saying that by the Holy Spirit. But what God means here, that no one can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit, has to be, what are we saying in our heart? If we say that Jesus is Lord, do we really mean that? Does it mean that we have been born again so that Christ indeed has become Lord of our life? And that can only happen by the Holy Spirit.

And if we have the Holy Spirit within us, then we cannot say that Jesus is accursed. That would be an impossibility, because we have surrendered our will to Him. He has become the Lord of our life, and we know with our very being that He is the Lord God and therefore would be altogether the opposite of being accursed He is most blessed.

CALLER: The way I read it there, it says, "No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit."

HC: If you just read the verse as it stands, then we have to conclude that everybody in the world who says Jesus is Lord, who talk about the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit is motivating them to do that. But when we read this in the light of everything else the Bible says concerning this, and remember the Biblical rule, when we study the Bible, is to compare spiritual things with spiritual. We take any verse and see if there is any other verse that impinges upon it. Now Satan says Jesus is Lord. The demons said, "We know who You are. You are the Holy One of God. Have You come to torment us before our time?" That was an acknowledgement that they were subservient to Him. Effectively they were saying He was Lord. But they're not saved. They weren't saved, and they weren't filled with the Holy Spirit in any sense, either. But nevertheless they still acknowledged that Jesus was Lord.

But in order to really say that He is Lord so that we are moved by the Holy Spirit, it means that we have become a child of God.

CALLER: When I go through a chapter, I'll use highlighters, and I'll take all of

the words, like down in verse 14, where it talks about the body and members. I'll outline those with highlighters as I go through it. And then I'll go back through and try to pick off the key words to the particular chapter that I'm studying. And sometimes I get confused.

HC: Well, in the study of the Bible there will be confusion. But the wonderful thing is, if we patiently keep going and reading scripture and comparing scripture with scripture, praying God for wisdom (this is very important), because we don't have the wisdom in ourselves, then the light will dawn, a little here and a little there. And when you come to a truth that really also identifies with a lot of other concepts of salvation that you may have had and that you have been rather certain of, then you'll know that that little nugget of truth is solid, because it fits so many places.

ACTS

Was Cornelius Saved to Begin With in Acts 10:2? (265C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Brother Camping. I'd like for you to explain Acts 10:2. Could you please explain to me if Cornelius was a sinner? And I'd like to take the answer over the radio.

HC: Now let me see if I have your question. You're talking about Acts 10. And you're speaking of Cornelius. And you're wondering, was he a Christian, or was he a sinner? All right. I'll be glad to speak to that.

Yes. In Acts 10 we have a very interesting man in view. And the question is raised: What was his relationship to Christ, as we begin to look at him? Now let me read a couple of verses, Acts 10:1: "At Caesarea [that was up in Judea, a little northwest of Jerusalem] there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian cohort [in other words he was a Roman centurion, a Roman soldier, under the command of Caesar], a devout man, who feared God with all his household, gave alms liberally to the people, and prayed constantly to God."

My, my, that's a pretty high commendation, isn't it? It certainly sounds like this man is a believer, that he has placed his trust in God. But when we continue through Acts 10, we find that he was not saved. We find that he had not become born again. And it was only when Peter came, to bring the Gospel to him, that he actually became a child of God, because you see, in Romans 8:9 it says that we are none of His unless we have the Holy Spirit.

Now Cornelius did not receive the Holy Spirit, we read in verse 44, until Peter began to preach the Gospel to him. Now you see, in the world there are many people that God is determined to save. They are called the elect. They have been predestinated before the foundations of the earth to be saved.

But the exact moment of their salvation is God's business. And God frequently may begin to deal with that person either shortly before or long before salvation actually is accomplished.

We have another example in the case of Paul. He, on the road to Damascus, was struck down. And he cried out, when he was struck down, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And the answer came back, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutes." And so effectively he had begun to call Christ Lord.

Then for three days and three nights, in his blinded condition, he was in Damascus praying. And we would have to say, "My, he must be saved." He's already called Christ Lord. He is praying for three days and three nights. But when Ananias, the preacher from Damascus,

came to see him, Ananias spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and said to Paul, "Arise, be baptized and wash away your sins," thereby indicating that Paul had not yet become saved, even though he was praying for three days and three nights.

But you see, God was dealing with him. And God was preparing him for that moment when he would become born from above, when he would become a child of God.

Now here, for a long time, is Cornelius and his family. And God is preparing him for salvation. Cornelius begins to find that he has a real interest in the God of Israel. And he is becoming a more and more devout man. And he's beginning to give of his substance, to the cause of the God of Israel. And he's beginning to pray to God constantly. Now does God hear these prayers? Absolutely God hears these prayers. Those who seek will surely find. Those who call upon Him will not be cast out. For those who knock the door will be opened. And for Cornelius, too, God did not disappoint him. In due time there appears Peter to him, with the true Gospel. And then Cornelius also becomes a child of God.

You may have seen this in your own life. Maybe weeks or months or even years before you actually became saved, so that you really could say, with all of your heart, "I know that Christ is my Savior and Lord. I know all of my sins have been forgiven, and I want to serve Him with my whole life," before you came to this total assurance, which is the assurance based upon the fact that you indeed have become born again, you have been interested in the Word. You have asked a thousand questions of your Bible teacher. You have begun to search the Word. You have been intrigued by so many things you heard of the Gospel, but you weren't sure. You didn't really know. You hadn't really come to that final place.

And so this is the way God draws us. As Jesus put it in John 6:44, "No man cometh unto Me except the Father draw him." The Father was drawing Cornelius. The Father was drawing the apostle Paul, before he was saved. And He draws each one of us in one way or another, until finally comes that glorious moment of being born again.

ROMANS

"Life and Peace" in Romans 8:5 (143B)

CALLER: A question that I've been wrestling with is in Romans 8, where it speaks of the Holy Spirit leading to life and peace. Life and peace are the words I'm interested in. And this is my problem. I don't feel like I'm complete. I have a good job, a good-paying job, but I don't feel like a whole person. I just feel like I'm in a rut, and I need some rounding out. Now can you expound on these words, what they mean in Greek, what this refers to, this complete feeling that these words are talking about?

HC: The question is, What is verse 5 of Romans 8 relating to? "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. But those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death. But to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

Now you see, the Spirit is Eternal God. He is Holy God Himself. And if we focus our mind on God and want to become right with God, if we want to really be honest with ourselves and really desire to be reconciled to God, then we have taken the first step toward life and peace.

Now what is the life? Before we are saved, we are dead. The Bible says that we who have been dead have been made alive in Christ, in God, through the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, as He washes our sins away. We are

taken out of death into life. And so to focus our mind on the Spirit, on the things of God, is the path to eternal life.

Now the word peace is used. Before we are saved, we are a slave of Satan. We are under his dominion. We are in his nation or his kingdom. And his kingdom, led by him, is antagonistic. It's in rebellion against, it's at war with the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan is the enemy of Christ. And so before we are saved, therefore, we are at war with God.

But when we become born again, when we focus our eyes on Christ, and our sins are washed away, now we're no longer at war, because we have been taken out of the dominion of darkness, and we have been transferred into the Kingdom of His dear Son. We're at peace. Remember the Bible says that Jesus came as the Prince of Peace, as the one who would bring an end to that warfare.

CALLER: Okay, thank you. And I'll keep listening.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good-by.

The "Gifts" in Romans 12:8 (247B)

HC: Good evening Welcome to Open forum.

CALLER: Yes. I was wondering about the gifts in Romans 12:8.

HC: The question is about the gifts spoken of in Romans 12:8: "He who exhorts, in his exhortation, he who contributes, in liberality," and so on. Actually, God is teaching here that people are different from each other. The salvation is one. We're all saved through the Lord Jesus Christ, and as Christians we all stand on the same ground before God. There's neither Jew nor Greek, nor slave nor free, nor male or female. We all are sons of God.

But God endows each of us with different abilities and different opportunities. One, for example, might be given a gift of music. And he is to use that to the praise of God. Another one may be given a rich inheritance, of property, or whatever. He's to use that in the service of God. Another one is given a very compassionate soul, extra compassionate. And he's to use that in the service of God. And so on. Another one is given the gift of teaching, or the gift of exhortation. And he is to use these in the service of God.

I'm not exactly sure of the definition of exhortation, but when we exhort someone we are counseling with them, we are pleading with them, we are guiding them by what we are saying. I can exhort you to read the Bible more carefully. I can exhort you to . . . it's really to encourage and to counsel. It's another way of saying that we're declaring God's Word, but we're doing it in an encouraging way.

CALLER: Okay then.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Romans 8:21 Explained (414C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. Would you explain to me Romans 8:21?

HC: Romans 8:21: "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Now the word creature here may also be translated creation. And it really serves the verse better if it were translated creation. Let's go back to verse 19: "For the earnest expectation of the creature [or the creation] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation [or the creature] was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope, because the creature [or the creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the

glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

Now you see, when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, this introduced a very strange situation, because Adam and Eve were the crown of God's creation. They were the highest of the creatures that had been created. They were created in the image of God. And they had been given dominion over the creation.

Now when God created the creation, including mankind, He created it perfect. The Bible says that God saw everything that He had made and it was good. It was perfect. It was loyal to God. There was no rebellion of any kind in the creation.

But now Adam and Eve, the rulers of the creation, had rebelled against God. And they were under the curse of God. So we have that strange situation, where we have the animals and the plants and the birds and the fish and the rocks and the trees, and so on, perfect. But we have the rulers over this perfect creation under the curse of God.

To correct this, God subjected the creation also to the curse of sin. It was not done because of the sin of the creation. It was done because of the sin of mankind who ruled over it. And therefore it says that the creation was made subject to vanity, or to futility, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. That is, it was to remain subject to vanity or futility, or to the curse of sin forever. But it was to be subjected until God's salvation plan was completed.

Now you'll notice in verse 19 it says that "the earnest expectation of the creature [or the creation] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." Why? What will happen at the manifestation of the sons of God? Well, the manifestation of the sons of God will occur at the end of the world, when the believers will be raptured, and our salvation will have been completed.

But you see, it's at the end of the world that the world itself will be made free from the curse that it had become subjected to. Verse 21: "because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Now let's look at our body. Our body is under the curse of sin. Our body is going to go back into the dust and return to the dust. But out of this dust God is going to recreate us. He's going to resurrect us a glorious spiritual body that will live eternally with the Lord Jesus Christ.

By the same token, this earth, which is cursed by sin, subject to viruses and mosquitoes and tornadoes and floods and earthquakes, and what have you, God is going to destroy. God is going to destroy this universe by fire, and He's going to recreate it New Heavens and a New Earth, where righteousness dwells.

And that is what is anticipated here in Romans 8:21. "The creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption." That is, it will be recreated a new universe, where there is no corruption, "and it will be brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God," or the children of God. That is, we who are believers will live eternally in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

CALLER: And the devil will be put in our hands, for us to bind him and rebuke him?

HC: No. No, Satan has already been rebuked at the cross. Christ is the one who defeated Satan. Satan will be cast into hell, and we no longer will have anything at all to do with Satan.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Standing Before the Judgment Seat in Rom 14:10 (421F)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: You were talking about the people that are going to be judged, and you said that the righteous will be going straight to Heaven. And here in Romans 14:10 it says, "But why dost thou judge thy brother, or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ." So I can't understand that now.

HC: The question is raised. How are we to understand Romans 14:10, where it says, "For we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ," if indeed somehow we as believers do not come into judgment?

You see, in this verse, and you'll find a similar verse in I Corinthians 5:10, God is laying down a fundamental rule for mankind, that he has to answer to God for his sins. He must answer to God for his sins, whether he's done good or evil. And he will be judged by God's Word, which declares that the wages of sin is death. And every idle word, every evil deed, every evil thought, will all come into judgment.

Now you see, for some, that is, for those who have placed their trust in Christ, Jesus as our substitute took upon Himself all of my sins, all of my evil thoughts that I would ever think, all my evil deeds I would ever do, all my idle words I would ever speak. Christ took upon Himself all those sins, and has already stood before the Judgment Throne. And of course He was found guilty.

CALLER: Yes. I understand that. But you have said that the righteous just go straight to Heaven.

HC: The righteous go to Heaven, because we have already done what is called for in Romans 14:10. We have already stood before the Judgment Throne. That is why John 5:24 says that those who believe in Him, the Father, do not come into judgment. They have passed from death into life. They have eternal life.

That's why Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." You see, our sins have already been judged. There would be no point for us to stand before the Judgment Throne. Our sins have all been judged already.

The Christian and the Law: Romans 7 (549A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Mr. Camping. I have a question about Romans 7. When Paul says that he can't do what he wants to do, was that in his early Christian life, or was he talking about his later Christian life?

HC: The question is, is Romans 7 talking about the apostle Paul before he was saved or after he was saved?

Now when we read, for example, some of the verses here, we certainly would think that he is talking about the time before he was saved. He talks about being sold under sin, he talks about being carnal. But when we read some other passages and verses here, we know that this cannot be. We read, for example, in verse 22, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Now no unsaved person, no unsaved person could make that statement. The Bible declares in Romans 3 that "none seeketh after God. There is none righteous, no, not one." Only someone who is a child of God can say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man."

And of course he could say this because when he became saved, as is true with all of us who become saved, he received his resurrected soul. In his soul existence, in

his spirit existence, that part of his personality that leaves the body at death, he had become a new creature in Christ. He was born from above. And therefore he could declare, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man."

However, he's recognizing that he still has body that lusts after sin. And that body has not been saved yet. It will be saved on the last day. It's guaranteed that this will happen, he'll receive his resurrected body. But at this point in time he hasn't received it as yet. And therefore he finds that this is trouble in his life.

And so he says, for example, in verse 23, "But I see another law in my members (that's in his body) warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. Oh, wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?"

CALLER: How are you supposed to let the law of the inward man win out over the law of the flesh?

HC: Good question. How will you let the law of the inward man win out over the law of the flesh? Well, the Bible instructs us, "Crucify the flesh and its desires." The apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says in I Corinthians 9, in the closing verses, "I buffet my body, lest after saving others I become a castaway." In other words, he beats it down. He gives it no quarter. The minute he becomes to see the lust of the flesh begin to gain the ascendancy a little bit, he prays for victory and he repents and he draws closer to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the path that all of us walk as children of God.

CALLER: Okay. What relationship does the law have to believers?

HC: What relationship does the law have to a believer?

CALLER: Is God requiring us to keep it now, or are we set free from it, or what?

HC: Are we required to keep the law? Are we set free from it? Doesn't the Bible say that we're not under the law, but we're under grace? Let's see if we can understand this.

Before we are saved, the only path open to us outside of Christ, to get to Heaven, is by keeping the law perfectly. But if we don't keep the law perfectly, the law itself is an accuser against us, declaring, "The wages of sin is death." And so the law has us in bondage. The law is sentencing us to hell. We are under the law, and there's no way in ourselves that we can escape from it.

When we talk about the law, we talk about the whole Bible. Any statement that God has made in the scriptures that we violate, any one at all, is going to send us to hell, unless we keep it perfectly. Now when we are saved, we are free from the law in this sense, that the demands of the law (the wages of sin is death) have been completely paid for by the Lord Jesus Christ. He has taken all of our guilt, so that the law no longer can accuse us when we break it. The law no longer has anything against us, because whatever sin we have committed in the past or in the present or in the future has been paid for by the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we are not under the law in that sense, that it is going to send us to hell. We are under the grace of God.

Now that doesn't mean that the law now no longer exists, that it has gone out of existence. If it did, then we would be free to do anything we wanted to do after we're saved. We could murder, we could steal, we could blaspheme God. We could do anything at all if the law didn't exist. No, the law still exists. But we, number one, do not in any sense have to try to keep the law in order to become worthy before God. Nor can it send us to hell if we do sin. But the law rather still exists as the rulebook of the Kingdom of God. It consists of the ordinances God

has laid down so that we might enjoy life to the fullest. Now it doesn't threaten us. If we break the law, we're not tampering with our salvation. We're not being again under the shadow of hell.

But when we break the law, because we've become a new creature in Christ, we feel very disturbed by it, because in our resurrected soul we never want to sin again. We'll only be happiest in our new souls when we are keeping the law of God. So the law still exists, we earnestly study it, and we have a tremendous desire to obey it because we love God who has given it to us.

CALLER: I was just reading a book, and in the book it stated that God was requiring nothing from us and that Christians just don't realize that, and they keep trying to live the Christian life under their own power, or something.

HC: Well, I don't know what this author was speaking about, but certainly God does not require anything of us in order to make us worthy. But God gives us the law as an act of benevolence to us, so that we might enjoy life. Anyone who violates God's law thinks that he is pleasing himself, thinks that he is doing something that is noteworthy for himself possibly. But in the long run he is making life difficult for himself. Those who live against the law of God find that life is exceedingly difficult, whereas those who live according to the law of God and follow the law of God find God's blessings are everywhere, and their conscience is clear, they just find that everything works out in their lives to a far better degree than if they break the law.

God has given us the law not as a stricture, not to put us in a straitjacket, but in order that we might enjoy life to the fullest. When God says, for example, to love our neighbor as ourselves, we might say, "Well, my, I want me to be number one. Why should I love my neighbor?" But the fact is that if I extend myself to love my neighbor and do it God's way, I'll find that my own life has a fulfillment, has a goal, has self-realization, has a purpose, that cannot be attained when I am trying to live only for myself. I'm going to find far more joy and happiness and contentment when I obey that law to love my neighbor.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

1 CORINTHIANS

How is Christ the "Second Adam" in 1 Corinthians 15:47? (034A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: For the past couple of weeks I've heard a term used relating to Christ, and I was wondering if you could explain to me where it comes from. And the term is referring to Christ as the second Adam. Where does that come from?

HC: In Romans 5, we find in verse 14: "Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who is to come." That isn't the verse. It's either in Romans 5 or 6, or perhaps in I Corinthians 15.

Yes, I think this is the reference. In I Corinthians 15:45 we read: "The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life giving spirit. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust. The second man is from Heaven." I think that is the reference.

CALLER: I was just wondering because I hadn't heard it too often.

HC: Yes. You see, the reason it's used this way is that Adam came as the head of the human race, to begin the human race. And in order to establish and prove his right to rule, he had to be completely obedient to God and be sure that he

would not disobey if he were threatened in any way. And of course Satan came to threaten him, as the angel Lucifer back there in the Garden of Eden, and Adam fell. And the whole human race and the world was plunged under the curse of sin.

Now Christ came as the last Adam, to establish a race, to wrench the kingdom of this world from Satan. And He also had to walk the same path. He had to be completely obedient. He also was to be tempted, just like the first Adam was. And the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness to be tempted.

Of course His task was infinitely greater than that of the first Adam, because He also had to redeem this world from the curse of sin. The world of Adam's day was not under the curse of sin. But He had to make atonement for all of the sins that had taken place during the intervening 11,000 years and going all the way to the present time.

And so Christ as the last Adam had a far more formidable task. But in a real sense His mission was very much akin to that of Adam in the Garden of Eden — to prove His right to rule by His perfect obedience — and to do this in the face of the most difficult kind of temptation.

"To the Weak I Became Weak" in 1 Corinthians 9:22 (141B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Good evening. 1 Corinthians 9:22: "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save one." When he says that he became weak (I think we're talking about Paul), what does he mean?

HC: The question is raised concerning 1 Corinthians 9:22, when Paul said, "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak," what does he mean by this?

Now let's look at the context. Beginning with verse 19, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the Law I became as one under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those under the Law. To those outside the Law, I became as one outside the Law, not being without law toward God but under the Law of Christ, that I might win those outside the Law."

You see, Paul is saying that he capitalized on whatever identification he could make with those to whom he was bringing the Gospel. Paul was a Jew, first of all. And so when he talked to Jews, he emphasized the fact, "I am a Jew. I was a Pharisee. I was trained at the feet of Gamaliel." He identified with the Jews.

Now I don't know who he had in mind when he said "with the weak." Perhaps the Judaizers were the weak, or it could have been the Gentiles. But at any rate, he identified as far as he could with the Jews, without actually taking part in their sins. He said, "those under the Law, though I myself not being under the Law." He identified with them as Jews, but he did not, if they were engaging in acts that were contrary to God's Word, contrary to the Messiah, go that far.

Now by the same token, if he was preaching to the Romans, then he emphasized his Roman citizenship, because he also was a Roman citizen, in order that he might be as closely identified with them as possible. It's the same as if a pastor was brought up on a farm, and now he is preaching to a farming community. He could weave into his sermons the fact that he also was a farmer at one time, and thus develop an identification with his flock, that they might know that he could understand them in their farming problems.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

The Issue of Hair Length in 1 Corinthians 11 (203C)

CALLER: In 1 Corinthians 11:16 it talks about hair. Let's see. In verse 14 it says, "But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her. For her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." It says "It is a shame unto a man to have long hair." So if you could give me a little bit of information on that, I'll take it over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Good night.

The question is raised concerning this passage in 1 Corinthians 11, where it talks about a woman's long hair, and the fact that it's degrading, or it's a shame for a man to have long hair.

Now the focal point of this passage, I believe, is not hair. The focal point is authority. It starts right out in verse 3, "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ. The head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God."

God has established authority. There's authority in the Godhead, with Christ being submissive to God. There's authority below, with man being submissive to Christ and the woman submissive to man. Now the evidence of that authority is the fact that a woman is given long hair by nature. This is an evidence that she is under the authority of man, God says.

And we read in verse 15, "Her hair is given to her for a covering." Now one way to read this passage, to really be helped in it, I think, is to substitute the word authority wherever you find the word veil. "She wears a veil [or she wears her long hair] to indicate she is under the authority of man." As a matter of fact, in verse 10 it says, "That is why a woman ought to have authority . . ." [some versions read "veil"] . . . "That is why a woman ought to have authority on her head, because of the angels." The angels are under authority, and if we're born again we're on display to the angelic world, as we read in Ephesians 1 or 3, some place in there. And if they're under authority, then we as born again believers also ought to be under authority.

And so now a man is not under the authority of a woman. God, using the symbol of hair as authority, therefore gives man shorter hair. He's the first one to go bald. His hair by nature does not grow as long as a woman's. And so the big issue here is authority, not hair. It's authority. We want to make sure that man is subordinate to Christ, but that the woman is subordinate to man, particularly in the two areas that God speaks of it, in the home and in the church.

"I say, not the Lord" in 1 Corinthians 7:12] and Is it Okay to Serve in the Armed Forces? (242B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I have a question on 1 Corinthians 7:10 & 12, which says, "Not I, but the Lord," and in verse 12 it says, "I say, not the Lord." This seems to indicate that the second is more his opinion and that the first is in the way of a commandment.

HC: The question really is, what are we to do with 1 Corinthians 7:10, where we read, "To the married I charge, not I but the Lord," and then in verse 12, "To the rest I say, not the Lord, that if brother has a wife," and so on? Is this suggesting that there are two levels of authority in the Bible? If it's backed up by the Lord, is it more authoritative than if Paul has just said it?

First of all, we must remember that all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for reproof, for doctrine, for training in righteousness, and so on. Secondly, the Bible says that holy men spoke as the Holy Spirit moved them. And so every part of the Bible has equal authority.

Of course it must be read in the context of the rest of the Bible, in order to discover what is really being said. But the whole Bible is the divine Word of God. Now in this particular passage Paul is making reference to the fact, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (remember, it is God speaking) that the Lord Jesus Christ had quite a bit to say about marriage. The fact is, you can read about this in Matthew 5, in Matthew 19, and so on. And so he is saying in verse 10: "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord." That is, the Lord Jesus has already spoken about this. And that's a clue to us to search the Gospels to see what He talked to the disciples about.

And then in verse 12 he says, "To the rest I say, not the Lord," and now he's going to discuss an aspect of the marriage relationship that had not been expressed by the Lord Jesus when He was talking to His disciples. But what Paul is going to say is equally authoritative, because it is also under the inspiration of God Himself.

CALLER: Thank you. One more question, and I'll take my answer on the air. It's pertaining to war, and obeying the government. I know that above all we should obey God. But I'm not too sure exactly what God's law would be if a situation of war came up and I was called by the government to go into the infantry and fight.

HC: The question relates to the problem of what do you do if you are called upon to serve your country in the Armed Services, to fight? Now the Bible does teach in Romans 13 that we must be obedient to government in all things lawful. Secondly, when we search the Bible we don't find any place where the Bible says that we are not to serve as a soldier. There is no place where God teaches that it is wrong for a believer to be a soldier. You'll remember when the soldiers came to John the Baptist in Luke 3:14, it says, "Soldiers also asked him, And we, what shall we do?" he didn't say, "Now you'd better get out of the army as fast as you can." He said to them, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation. And be content with your wages." When the Roman Centurion was saved, there's no suggestion that he was no longer to be a centurion. Now bear in mind, he was a captain in the army of Rome, which frequently would have to kill in order to put down insurrection, or whatever. And so there is nothing wrong in itself in being a soldier. If the war is an unholy war, an unrighteous war, the government has to answer for that. We are simply to be obedient.

Now of course if your Sergeant told you to go out and shoot some prisoners, that would be murder. That would have to be disobeyed. That's a different kind of a situation. But insofar as serving as a soldier and being a buck Private in the front ranks, that in itself is not contrary to the Word of God.

Now wonderfully, in some lands there are alternatives in the event of war. In the United States we have the alternative of serving in the Medical Corps or the Chaplain's Corps, perhaps. And thus a more efficient use of our time can be gained, and we won't have to face the matter of killing another person. But those who do not serve in these alternative corps, who must bear a gun, or as a policeman does today (he bears a gun, and sometimes he might have to kill), that is not contrary to the Word of God.

Baptism for the Dead in 1 Corinthians 15:29 (314C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I have a question about 1 Corinthians 15:29. A friend of mine belongs to another denomination, and they practice baptizing for the dead. And I don't understand that. And I don't understand the verse that this person says they base their doctrine on, which is 1 Corinthians 15:29.

HC: In 1 Corinthians 15:29 we have this very provocative and intriguing verse: "What shall they do which are baptized for the dead if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?"

What does God mean by this? Is this indicating that we are to be baptized for the dead? Well, the Bible is its own interpreter. And the first thing we have to do is search the Bible and see if there's anything that we can do on behalf of those who have died, loved ones. Is there anything that we can do for them now that they have died? Can we pray for them and make a change in their situation, or ask God to change their situation? Can we be baptized on their behalf? Can we do anything on their behalf?

Ant we find nothing in the Bible at all that suggests that there's anything that we can do on their behalf. The Bible teaches very emphatically that if a person is a Christian, when he dies he leaves his body and goes to be with Christ in Heaven. If he is unsaved, he goes down to a place of silence, to await the resurrection of the last day, when he is going to be judged and cast into hell. The Bible says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment." There's nothing in the Bible that suggests that we can be baptized on behalf of someone else.

But then we have this verse, "What shall they do which are baptized for the dead if the dead rise not at all?" God here is speaking about the resurrection of our bodies. In fact, that's the whole message of 1 Corinthians 15. Repeatedly He's talking about the resurrection of our bodies, the character of our bodies, what they'll be (they'll be spiritual bodies), the fact that if there was no resurrection then we would be of all men most miserable, our faith would be vain, and so on.

But our dead bodies, which are in the grave, were dead while we were still living. Spiritually they were dead, as Ephesians 2:1 teaches us, for example, that we who were dead have been raised with Him, have been brought to life. Just because we have been saved, it does not mean that spiritually we are alive in every sense of the word. It is true that we have been made spiritually alive in our soul, in our inner essence, in that part of us that leaves the body at death and goes to live and reign with Christ in Heaven. In that department we have experienced the resurrection. This is the first resurrection. And we are alive with Christ. We are alive forevermore. Therefore the Bible can say we have eternal life.

But we still have a dead body. We still have a body that's sentenced to the grave, and our salvation will not be complete until we receive our resurrected body.

When we are saved we are baptized in water, to officially recognize the fact that we have become saved. But God is saying here that when we are saved and are baptized in water, we are also officially recognizing the fact the day is coming when our dead bodies will also experience the resurrection. The dead that we are baptized on behalf of is our own dead body.

Now if there is no resurrection of the dead, if the dead rise not at all, then the baptism that we experienced means nothing. It means that there's something phony about this whole salvation. Why

should we bother with baptism? The fact is, why should we even bother with salvation at all, if there is no resurrection of the dead on the last day?

CALLER: That is beautiful. I thank you so much for clarifying that for me.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

When a Spouse is Unsaved in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 (321D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I'd like for you to give me a little help with 1 Corinthians 7:10-16, and relate it to salvation, and John 3:16. And I'll take the answer over the air.

HC: That's 1 Corinthians 7:10-16. All right. I'll try to speak to that.

1 Corinthians 7 is dealing mainly with the marriage relationship. Our caller is wondering whether verses 10 to 16 have anything to do with salvation. Well, yes, they do. This is introducing, first of all, the awful situation where a husband departs from a wife. He apparently is unsaved, and she is saved. And he departs.

And the Bible first of all says, "Let her remain unmarried," in verse 11, "or be reconciled to her husband." And then in verse 12 He goes on to say, "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she is pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away." Every once in a while someone will ask me, "My wife or my husband is unsaved, and he's living a very sinful life. Do I have to continue living with him, since he is unsaved?" Or, "At present we're separated, and he is unsaved. Am I to continue to live with him?" And the Bible here is saying, "By all means! You're married to each other. This is just one of the practical aspects of what happens when we are saved."

And then it goes on in verse 14 and gives a very interesting application of God's covenant promise that "I will be a God to you and your children." God gave this promise to Abraham back in the Old Testament. He reiterated it at various times in the Bible. We read it in Acts 16, for example, at the time that the jailer at Philippi was saved. He was told, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, with your household." God is saying to parents, "Look, if you're believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you have become citizens of the Kingdom of God, and your children, too, are identified with the Kingdom of God. If you bring them up in the fear and the nurture of the Lord, I give you a promise that if you train a child in the way that he should go, in his old age he'll not depart from it." This is the way God works out His program of salvation throughout the world.

Of course He also looks outside of the family, and can save the individual who has no saved parent. But that is not nearly as usual as is the situation where children of believing parents are saved.

Now this concept is introduced here in verse 14: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband. Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." You see, the question arises here, in the light of God's covenant promise, "I will be a God to you and your children," what happens to that promise in the event that only one of the parents is a believer? Does this mean that the promise no longer holds, by virtue of the fact that one person, one of the parents, is unsaved? And God says, No, no, that isn't so. The very fact that one of the parents is a believer, that makes the family a holy family. It sanctifies the husband, if he is the unbeliever. It doesn't save him, but it does make him also corporately a member of the Kingdom of God, because the wife is a believer who actually has become an eternal citizen of the Kingdom of God. And vice versa. The

same would be the case in the event the husband was the believer, and the wife was the unbeliever.

And so the children, too, are holy, that is, set apart. The word holy means to be set apart for the service of God. They, too, are identified in a corporate fashion with the Kingdom of God. And all the promises that come to believing parents who will train their children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord apply, even though only one of the parents is a believing parent.

And then it goes on, "But if the unbelieving departs, let him depart." Going back again to the relationship between the saved and the unsaved partner, if the unsaved wants to leave, if he wants a divorce, let it be so. "A brother or sister is not under bondage in such a case, but God hath called us to peace."

That is, you're not bound to try to maintain that marriage union, that marriage relationship. While in God's sight that marriage is to continue until death parts you, because of the sin of your unbelieving partner, let him go. You're not free to remarry, because you've already been told in verse 11 to remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to your partner. But you're not bound to try to keep that marriage in existence.

And then the question is raised, "For what knowest thou, oh wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, oh man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" Now here God is saying that the work of saving is God's elective program. It's God's grace. It's God's sovereign good pleasure. And we can't really know who He is going to save.

However, God does give some real encouragement along this line in 1 Peter 3:1, where God is discussing this same question of a believing wife with an unsaved husband. And here we have this wonderful encouragement. "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 (or the conduct) of the wives, while they behold your chaste conduct coupled with fear." In other words, God is holding out the promise, salvation is very close to your husband. And if you really live by God's rules, if you will patiently obey God in the trials and troubles and turmoils and difficulties that arise because your husband is an unsaved husband, there's a strong likelihood that he will see Christ in you, and salvation may come to him also.

What Does "Baptized for the Dead" in 1 Corinthians 15:29 Mean? (585A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: Hi. My question is concerning 1 Corinthians 15:29. It says, "Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" What exactly does that mean, baptizing for the dead? And is it mentioned anywhere else in the Bible?

HC: The question is, what does 1 Corinthians 15:29 relate to, where it talks about being baptized on behalf of the dead? The word for here really means on behalf of the dead.

Now nowhere in the Bible does it teach that we are ever baptized on behalf of someone else. Therefore we know that in trying to understand what God is saying here we cannot go in that direction. However, when we understand the nature of salvation, then we can see what God means.

You see, before we are saved, both in body and soul we are spiritually dead. We are estranged from God and we're heading for hell. When we are saved, in our spirit existence, or in our soul, we are born again. We experience the

resurrection. And of course our baptism, which is an outward action of water, is pointing to the cleansing that has taken place within our soul, the fact that we are a new creature, that we have become saved.

But we're more than just a soul. We're also a body. And that body is as real a part of us as our soul. Our body, however, was not saved at the moment we became born again. Our body still lusts after sin, our body is still going into the grave to return to the dust, at the time we separate our soul from our body, that is, at the time of physical death. Our soul doesn't go down into a place of silence. It goes into Heaven, to be with Christ, because it already experienced the resurrection when we were saved. But in our body we still must be saved. We still must experience the resurrection. So our body is still dead, spiritually, in that sense.

So therefore our baptism not only is recognizing that in our soul or in our spirit essence we have become saved, but it also recognizes that our dead bodies will also become saved, that is, will experience the resurrection from the dead. And so we are being baptized on behalf of our own dead body. And if there were no resurrection from the dead, then that all also would be vain. That would be futile. That is of course the context of 1 Corinthians 15 right here, where God is giving various reasons why it is important that Christ rose. Otherwise there could be no resurrection of the dead.

CALLER: OK then. Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Tongues and Other Gifts of the Spirit in 1 Cor 13 (374C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'm calling concerning what I heard on Conference Echoes, the gentleman from Silver Spring, Maryland. And I felt that he was kind of doing some semantical contortions with scripture. I agreed with some of what he had to say, but I think to say that 1 Corinthians 13:8 says that tongues, or prophesy, or knowledge are no longer applicable gifts to this present age is simply teaching something that is not there, because reading on down, verse 9 says, "For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come then that which is in part shall be done away." And it's obvious from verses 9 & 10 that what he's talking about is when we get to Heaven, because in verse 12 he says, "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known."

And it just seems to me so perfectly clear that what Paul is talking about is that these gifts will pass away when we get to Heaven, and there won't be any need of them there. But there's nothing whatsoever that says that the church is not going to have them here throughout the entire church age. And further, in Mark 16, at the very close of that particular Gospel, we find Jesus making a remark about the signs that follow them which believe. He says, "In My Name shall they cast out devils. They shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents. If they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them. They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

And so it just seems to me that to say that these gifts are no longer with the church is to ignore the total thrust of scripture.

HC: Well, let me comment about this. I did not hear the speaker, but I can look at 1 Corinthians 13.

Now in 1 Corinthians 13 God is simply indicating that tongues shall cease. He doesn't say when they will cease. He

gives no intimation as to when they will cease. He simply says that tongues will cease.

Now He also says that prophecy and knowledge will pass away. And then He goes on to discuss, in verse 9 through verse 12, about when knowledge and prophecy will pass away. And He does indicate that they will pass away when we see Him face to face, that is, when we get to Heaven. They will continue on this earth, but they will pass away when we come into Heaven.

But there is no suggestion in 1 Corinthians 13 as to when tongues would cease. It is simply a declaration that they would cease at some point in time. Now when we evaluate, however, what tongues were, and of course 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14 are the two chapters that especially speak about tongues, there we find that it was a phenomenon that did exist in the church at Corinth. There were those who did receive from God Himself information in a heavenly language. And this served to edify them personally. But they were admonished to seek to interpret it so that the information would also be available to the congregation so that the congregation would be edified.

Now this was altogether possible in that day, because God had not completed His Word as yet. It was still the day when God would speak with revelations coming from other sources than the Bible. They really only had the Old Testament at that time, and so we find the apostle Peter receiving information by vision, the apostle John, the apostle Paul, and individuals in the church at Corinth receiving information in this unknown language called tongues.

But then God completed His divine Word. And in Revelation 22:18 He declared, "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein." Now with that statement God effectively is saying, "Now look. I've completed My revelation. And if you think you've received some divine truth by means of a dream or a vision or an angel confrontation, or by a tongue, or whatever, it's not from Me. I have given you the Word of God. And if you are going to look for divine truth from other sources than the Bible, then this is indicative of the fact that you are still subject to the plagues written herein. That is, you're unsaved and you're still subject to hell."

This I believe is what the Bible teaches about this particular gift, that is, any gift relating to additional revelation after the Bible was completed. Now it is true that the Bible speaks about signs and wonders that will still come to pass. The Bible speaks about signs and wonders in a number of places, and tongues was a sign. We read this in 1 Corinthians 14. The word sign there is the word miracle. And the Bible does speak about signs and wonders, particularly in relationship to then end-time church. But ominously; and unfortunately, all of the references to signs and wonders near the end of time are Satanically related.

In Matthew 24:24 God indicates, "False prophets and false christians will arise with signs and wonders to lead astray if possible even the elect." In II Thessalonians 2 we read of the man of sin taking his seat in the temple. And this I believe is Satan ruling in the church. And he will come with signs and wonders of falsehood. And God in fact will make those who follow this believe a lie, that they will be prepared for judgment. God is not neutral in these times.

In Revelation 13 it speaks about the beast that comes out of the earth, the false prophet. And he makes an image, and he gives life to that image, and brings signs to come to pass, even making fire come down from heaven. This is gospels that Satan himself will

design, so that he will enslave the nations of the world to a higher degree than ever before. And he will attest to their genuineness, as he comes as an angel of light, by coming with signs and wonders. That is, he will make them apparently like they are genuinely of Christ. But Satan is the big deceiver. And actually they will not be of Christ. And then in Revelation 16 again it speaks about the beast and the false prophets coming with signs to deceive, coming with miracles to deceive. Every reference in relationship to signs and wonders near the end of time relates to Satanic activity. Now that's very serious. That's very heavy. That's very ominous. And it indicates how careful we have to be today, because I do believe, as do many others, that we are near the end of time.

It is a day when we want to make absolutely certain that we get divine truth only from the Bible. It alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. Satan didn't speak through the Bible. Satan can speak in a lot of other ways. He comes with all kinds of occult activities. He comes outside the church, in witchcraft and ouija boards and tarot cards, and so on, and in the church he comes with occult activity. The Bible says so. The Bible says, in II Corinthians 11, that he comes as an angel of light.

Therefore we really want to be on guard, and make sure that the only place where we're going to look for divine truth is the Bible itself. Then we cannot be deceived.

CALLER: I think certainly Satan does go around as an angel of light, granted. But I do not accept the premise, and I cannot accept it, that all of the signs or wonders in the latter times of the church are from Satan. I cannot accept that. For one reason, Joel 2:28 & following says, "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions, and also upon the servant and upon the handmaiden, in those days I will pour out My Spirit. And I [and this is God talking to Joel here] will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be delivered."

HC: Yes, but you see, God is not talking there about Judgment Day at the end of time, the great and terrible day of the Lord, because right after that He says, "And whosoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved," or "will be delivered." And salvation does not come after Judgment Day. Salvation comes all through the New Testament period.

But you see, when Christ went to the cross, that was the "great and terrible day of the Lord." That is when Christ paid for my sins. He was subject to Judgment Day at that time. That is when the sun was darkened, and the moon did not give its light. And that literally did happen, you know. The sun was darkened. There was darkness over the face of the whole earth for a period of three hours, we read. And the language of the signs that were shown is the language of Psalm 18, where God is speaking in dramatic terms about the deliverance that would be provided by the cross.

The fact is, there was a great earthquake. The earth itself reacted to the fact that Christ was on the cross. Now more than that, in Acts 2:16, back there in AD 33, on Pentecost Day, Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, quotes from this very passage, and declares that this, in relationship to the phenomena you are seeing today, as there was the sound of the rushing wind and what appeared to be tongues of fire on the heads of the disciples, and the fact that

they were speaking in foreign languages, was evidence that this is the time that Joel prophesied about. In other words, now God is going to begin His program to evangelize the world. The great and terrible day of the Lord has come, and now whosoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved.

Now, if we did not have Revelation 22:18, from the language of Joel 2, as it is explained in Acts 2:17 & 18, where he says, "Your young men will dream dreams and your old men will see visions," we would conclude that throughout the New Testament period (because it's throughout the New Testament period that we have the last days, it is throughout the New Testament period that whosoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved) we could still dream dreams and see visions. But that aspect of the prophecy was limited by the language of Revelation 22:18. Several decades later God declared that we're not to add to the words of this book.

Now the other implications of that prophecy remain. "Whosoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved." Every believer is going to be a prophet. Now in the Old Testament the prophets were only few and far between. They received their information from God from two sources: from the written Word that was complete to their day, and also by means of dreams or visions, in a more exciting way.

In the New Testament, before the Bible was completed, the prophets had the same experience. They had the Old Testament, which was the written word complete to their day, and occasionally they could receive additional information through a dream or a vision. But once the Bible was completed, now as New Testament prophets throughout the New Testament period, we continue to prophesy, that is, to declare God's Word, which is really what prophesying is all about, but our source of divine truth is only the Bible, because it is now the complete Word of God. It is every part of God's revelation that He wants us to know. And so we don't have to be looking for divine truth from any other source.

Now this of course is a fantastic guarantee for the New Testament believer, that he won't be tripped up by Satan. He won't be snared by Satan, because he's looking around for an additional revelation of some kind. He knows that when he goes to the Bible he's got all the revelation, all that God would speak to mankind about. And he can spend his time very patiently studying the Word, searching the scriptures, and knowing all the time that this is the voice of God, this is the revelation of God. What a wonderful guarantee God has given us.

CALLER: A couple more problems. Number one, I see nothing in the context of Revelation 22:18 which says that that verse is applicable to anything other than prophecy of the Book of Revelation itself.

HC: Now let me answer that very quickly, because we've run out of time. He won't be able to cover any other questions on this program. But you see, the Book of Revelation is an integral part of the whole Bible. If you add a chapter to the Book of Revelation, you've added it to the Bible. If you take away a chapter, you've taken it away from the Bible. So whether you want to understand this book to be the Book of Revelation or the whole Bible is really immaterial, ultimately, because the Bible is one cohesive whole. It has one author. It is one book. Therefore this book does ultimately refer to the Bible.

Understanding 1 Corinthians 12:3 (384A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, I want to talk about I Corinthians 12:3, where it says, "No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost."

HC: "No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost," or "by the Holy Spirit."

CALLER: It starts off, "Wherefore I give you understanding that no man speaketh by the Spirit of God calling Jesus accursed, and that no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit." I don't care about the first part, but I'm interested in the second part.

HC: You see, some folk have the idea that as long as someone is speaking about the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord of their life, as long as they are speaking of the fact that they know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that He was raised from the dead, and so on, therefore they must have the true Gospel, they must be involved in the true Gospel.

The problem, however, is that Satan also says this. Remember the demons that were being cast out by Jesus. They said, "We know who You are. You are the Holy One of God. Have you come to torment us before our time?" They acknowledged that they were under the lordship of Christ. They acknowledged that they were going to be judged by Him. And these demons weren't even close to salvation, obviously.

The real problem is that God is not interested in what we are saying with our lips. God is interested in what we are saying with our heart. Many people pay lip service to the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord. They use all the terminology. And intellectually they believe that He is Lord. But as a matter of fact, in their heart, in their will, in their total being, they have not surrendered to Him as Lord. They are not saying that He is Lord with their conduct, with the fact that they have hung their whole life on Him. And therefore they are not saying that He is Lord, even though with their lips they are saying this.

Do you see the distinction?

CALLER: Where does it talk about confessing Christ? Is that I John?

HC: I John 4, I believe, or I John 3.

CALLER: There it says that we're supposed to test the spirits, and you said yourself on your program many times that we cannot tell who is a Christian, who is a born again believer. So what reason does it tell us to test the spirits to see if they be of God, or telling us here to look for believers by this test, if we can't tell? You can't tell a man by his actions. Many of the people who are not born again believers appear sometimes the most dedicated. So then, if we can't tell, what is the purpose of trying to tell?

It's kind of a commandment to test the spirits. How can we test them if it's so complicated? How do we tell, if we can't tell at all?

HC: First of all, there are two areas where this is particularly applicable, and there is one area where it is not applicable. We cannot go around looking at other people, trying to decide whether they're born again or not. That is not our task. "Judge not lest ye yourself be judged." That is not our task.

But the first area where this is very applicable is in looking at our own life. If we are saying, "Jesus Christ is Lord," and yet our will has not been surrendered to Christ, if we don't read the Bible earnestly, with a view to being obedient to whatever we find there, then we do not have the Holy Spirit. And we can test ourselves, what spirit we have.

Many people have lulled themselves into an idea that they're saved when they're not saved at all. And so that's the first area where we have to make judgment, how do I stand before God? Am I really saying with my heart that Jesus Christ is Lord? Or am I only paying lip service to it?

The other area that we have to make an evaluation is when we are fellowshiping with a congregation. Now there are congregations that say that Jesus Christ is Lord. And yet we look at the doctrines that they teach. We look at what they do with the Bible. If they go beyond the Bible looking for divine truth, then they are not being obedient to the scriptures. If they do not accept the whole Bible as the divine Word of God, then they are not being obedient to the Word of God. And then the likelihood is that we would not want to fellowship there.

CALLER: Doesn't the requirement of not falling into a false gospel include intellectualism? Now I know that you're doing everything that you can to teach the truth on the air. That's what you've done. But for the people that are out of your reach, or the people who don't have the mental capacity to understand the Bible, or the people who don't have the reading capacity, they're forced to look to someone for leadership because they themselves are not capable of studying or determining the meaning of the Bible. They don't intellectualism become part of that condition of finding the truth, Mr. Camping?

HC: First of all, we have to decide what our relationship to God is. It is not based on understanding. It is based on faith. We don't come to God because we understand the Bible. We come to God because we trust the Bible.

Now a person with an IQ of fifty, with a very low-grade mentality, can be a born again believer just as quickly as a college professor can. It has nothing to do with understanding. It has to do with trust.

Now a person who does not have a teacher that can guide him into some of the verses that otherwise are really troublesome, and can open up the plan of salvation to a higher degree, can still be born again. And if he is born again, he will become very uncomfortable when people come at him with a gospel that goes beyond the Bible. God will protect His own.

In John 10, in I think verse 8, Jesus is talking about thieves and robbers that come into the sheepfold. And the context of thieves and robbers in the Bible is those who come with other gospels. And He says, they have come in, "But My sheep will not hear them." Or later on in John 10, in verse 27 He says, "My sheep hear My voice." That is, they know that the Bible is the voice of God. "And they shall never perish. And I have given them eternal life, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand." God Himself is the one who cares for His own.

We're not kept in the truth because a teacher guides us. We're kept in the truth because God Himself protects us. And if we are a child of God, and a teacher comes along with truth, then immediately you'll sense, "Say, this man is true to the Word of God. And I can begin to trust him a little bit."

On the other hand, if we are a child of God and we begin to hear someone teaching that is outside of the Word of God, that is, suggesting divine truth from sources outside of the Word of God, or suggesting that the whole Bible is not the Word of God, there's going to be an uneasiness. You may not be able to put your finger on it, but you're going to be very uneasy. "I wonder if I can trust this man altogether."

CALLER: Let me ask you one other short question, Mr. Camping. Was the wine that Jesus' disciples drank real wine? Is there any way to know if it was real wine?

HC: I believe that the wine the disciples drank was real wine. I do not believe that Jesus drank wine.

CALLER: Was the wine that Jesus made out of water real wine? Was that an alcoholic beverage?

HC: I believe that was real wine. But I do not believe that Jesus drank it.

CALLER: I see. He made it for the other people?

HC: Yes.

CALLER: I was looking in the Strong's Concordance tonight. In the hundreds of references to wine in the Bible, are most of them alcoholic beverages?

HC: I find no evidence at all where we find the word wine to believe that it was anything but alcoholic beverage.

CALLER: I see. Is there any reference to something like beer in the Bible?

HC: No. There is a reference to grape juice and to grape skins, grape seeds, but not to beer, that I'm aware of.

CALLER: So you think that was real wine in the Bible.

HC: I think without a question it was real wine, whether it's called new wine or whether it's called, there are a number of words used for wine in the Bible, and as near as I can tell in every case it's talking about an alcoholic beverage.

CALLER: Okay. Thanks a lot, Mr. Camping. You are very helpful, and good night.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Understanding 1 Corinthians 7:36-37 (525A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: In I Corinthians 7:36 it says: "If any man think he behaveth uncomely toward his virgin." I believe it's talking about engaged people. This goes along with the American Revised Version and the English Standard Version, and several versions. I know that a lot of people would inject the idea that the father is involved here, but they get that from the Apocrypha, and I don't see how in any way you can get the father into this. I think this is two sanctified believers who are engaged to be married. And so I want you to comment on this, if you will.

"If she passes the flower of her age and needs so require, let him do what he will. He sinneth not. Let them marry. Nevertheless he that standeth fast [it's talking about the man now; this is talking about virgins who in this case are both male and female]... he that standeth steadfast, having no necessity, has power over his own will, has so decreed in his heart to keep his virgin, doeth well."

Now it says here that the man in an engaged situation has some say about whether or not the marriage is consummated finally. And I'd like for you to comment on that.

HC: The question is raised concerning I Corinthians 7:36-37. Just what is in view? I think our caller is correct. It is talking about a man and a woman. A father-daughter relationship certainly is not in view. It's talking about a man and a woman who are going together. They may be betrothed to each other, or we would use the word engaged today. They are not married. They are not permitted to touch or to have any sexual desires toward each other. And God says that if they're able to live this way, just as companions, fine. There's real blessing in this. That's verse 37: "He hath power over his own will and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well." He is able to keep his eyes focused on the Lord Jesus Christ in this relationship, and sexual ideas do not enter into his mind. That kind of relationship can exist between a man and a woman. I suppose in modern language we would call that a platonic engagement.

Now on the other hand, if they are going together and they find that sexual desire begins to develop between them, and of course the premise has to be that they are both born again believers. They shouldn't be going together unless they're both born again believers. They would be

violating God's command of not being unequally yoked to an unbeliever. And they find that there is this desire developing, then let them marry. Let them marry. They don't have to feel that it's noble to remain restrained and not marry.

And so God concludes in verse 38: "So then he that giveth in marriage doeth well, but he that giveth not in marriage doeth better." God is indicating that there are some signal blessings in remaining single, but it's not at all contrary to the will of God to be married.

CALLER: Right. Even though this doesn't go along with the laws of the country, it nevertheless jibes with the Old Testament, in the aspect of marriage there, doesn't it?

HC: Yes, I think so.

CALLER: Thank you.

HC: Thank you for calling and sharing. Good night.

What Does "Baptized for the Dead" Mean in 1 Corinthians 15:29? (585A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi. My question is concerning I Corinthians 15:29. It says, "Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" What exactly does that mean, baptizing for the dead? And is it mentioned anywhere else in the Bible?

HC: The question is, what does I Corinthians 15:29 relate to, where it talks about being baptized on behalf of the dead? The word for here really means on behalf of the dead.

Now nowhere in the Bible does it teach that we are ever baptized on behalf of someone else. Therefore we know that in trying to understand what God is saying here we cannot go in that direction. However, when we understand the nature of salvation, then we can see what God means.

You see, before we are saved, both in body and soul we are spiritually dead. We are estranged from God and we're heading for hell. When we are saved, in our spirit existence, or in our soul, we are born again. We experience the resurrection. And of course our baptism, which is an outward action of water, is pointing to the cleansing that has taken place within our soul, the fact that we are a new creature, that we have become saved.

But we're more than just a soul. We're also a body. And that body is as real a part of us as our soul. Our body, however, was not saved at the moment we became born again. Our body still lusts after sin, our body is still going into the grave to return to the dust, at the time we separate our soul from our body, that is, at the time of physical death. Our soul doesn't go down into a place of silence. It goes into Heaven, to be with Christ, because it already experienced the resurrection when we were saved. But in our body we still must be saved. We still must experience the resurrection. So our body is still dead, spiritually, in that sense.

So therefore our baptism not only is recognizing that in our soul or in our spirit essence we have become saved, but it also recognizes that our dead bodies will also become saved, that is, will experience the resurrection from the dead. And so we are being baptized on behalf of our own dead body. And if there were no resurrection from the dead, then that all also would be vain. That would be futile. That is of course the context of I Corinthians 15 right here, where God is giving various reasons why it is important that Christ rose. Otherwise there could be no resurrection of the dead.

CALLER: OK then. Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

2 CORINTHIANS

The Written Code Kills in 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 (244A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have five scripture references I wish you'd comment on. They're Mark 16:17 & 18, John 14:12, II Corinthians 3:5,6, Hebrews 13:8 and Jude 20. And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. I'll try to speak briefly about each one of these.

The question is raised concerning Mark 16:17 & 18. There we read, "And these signs will accompany those who believe. In My Name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them. They will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover."

Now as we do with the rest of the Bible, any time we read a verse, we want to begin to read it in the light of everything else the Bible teaches. If we read this verse all alone, it would seem to indicate that God is teaching here that when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then we should begin to be able to do certain miraculous things. If we would pick up a rattlesnake, it would not hurt us. If we would happen to drink strychnine, either accidentally or because someone gave it to us, to kill us, it would not hurt us. And certainly when it says that we can lay hands on the sick and they will recover, we should have the power to be able to go into any hospital and go from bed to bed and lay our hands on the sick, and there should be recovery. That is apparently what this is teaching.

But when we begin to look at these verses in the light of everything else in the Bible, we find that it isn't quite like that. We do find that there were a few signs that did accompany the early church as it first began to spread out with the Gospel, just a few. The ability to do miracles was confined, insofar as we can discover in the Bible, to just a few of the apostles. They indeed were able to heal the sick as God gave them power. They were able to speak in foreign languages, as we read in Acts 2. And we do read of the apostle Paul, when he was shipwrecked, that a poisonous viper clung to his skin, and yet he was not hurt by it.

But we also read that we're not to walk by signs and wonders. We're to walk by faith. We're not to walk by sight. The fact is, Jesus said to the Pharisees, "An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a sign." This means, therefore, that it was not God's intention that we live by miracles. We are to live by faith in the Lord, humbly trusting Him.

And these signs that are related in the Bible were related and recorded in order that we might have insights into the nature of salvation which God has provided. In other words, when He healed the blind man, He was showing that even as He was able to physically heal that blind man, so He is able to spiritually heal those who are spiritually blind.

So I do not believe that this passage is suggesting in any sense that today we could find those who could lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover. The fact is, I don't know anyone who could go into the hospital and empty it, because he could go from bed to bed. Actually, we don't try to understand doctrine by experience anyway. And just strictly from a Biblical vantage point, we know that this would not be possible.

Now the second question was raised concerning John 14:12: "Truly, truly I

say to you, He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do because I go to the Father."

Now this verse is widely quoted by many who are convinced that Mark 16:17 & 18 is normative for the believer today, that Jesus did miracles and therefore we can expect to do miracles, and even greater miracles than He did.

Well, let's examine that for a moment. Jesus not only healed the sick. He raised the dead. He healed the lepers. He multiplied the loaves and the fish, a tremendous act of creation. He turned the water into wine. He stilled the storm. He walked on the water. He raised Lazarus from the dead, after he had been dead for four days.

Now when we search the Bible, not only do we find that there is no one who did miracles as great as these consistently, but we also, when we look around, find that no one anywhere does miracles of this nature. And so immediately we know that God is not talking about the doing of miracles when He is speaking about the work that we would do.

When we search the Bible further, we find that Christ had two major tasks to do. There were two major areas of work He had to accomplish. And this is where we're going to find our answer as to the meaning of this verse 12 of John 14. And both of these areas of work are quite related.

One aspect is something that we have no part in. And that is His work of going to the cross and dying for our sins. We have no part in that. That is, we do not add in any sense to the salvation that Christ has provided for us. That work was unique. He went to the cross alone.

But Jesus also came as the one who preached the Gospel. We read in Luke 4, where He said in verse 43, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose. And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee." Now that was the work that God gave Him, to be a preacher of the Gospel.

Now what is the work that God gives us to do? He says, "Ye are My witnesses." We are His ambassadors, Christ as it were making His appeal through us. He says, "Go ye into all the world and bring the Gospel, making disciples." So you see, that identifies with the work that Jesus did.

Now when we examine the success of Jesus, we find that it was very marginal. He preached for over three years, and there were only a handful of believers in all of Judea. But then Jesus went to the Father, and the Holy Spirit was poured out. God began His program to evangelize the world. And Peter preaches one sermon on Pentecost afternoon, and 3000 are saved. You see, literally this promise came true. "He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do [I work to bring the Gospel, and you will bring the Gospel]. And greater works than these will he do." We will be more successful than Jesus, because "I go to the Father." That is, "inasmuch as I go to the Father, God's program to evangelize the world will begin." And therefore you can expect to see far greater success of your efforts to share the Gospel than were realized when Jesus was still on this earth.

Now the third question that was raised is relative to II Corinthians 3:5 & 6. There we read, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us. Our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit. For the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Now I'm grateful for this verse, because this points up a very insidious lie, a very insidious doctrine that is being taught by many without realizing that it is something that is very terrible in nature.

There are those who read II Corinthians 3:5 & 6, and they're saying, "The written code, which is the Bible, that kills. That's the letter of the law. But we have to trust the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit, He will give us light." Effectively they're suggesting that we are freed from the shackles of the Bible. We don't really have to pay too much attention to the Bible. We can trust that that Holy Spirit, working in a very unstructured and free way, uninhibited by the rules of the Bible, can do a much more mighty and wonderful work than that which is suggested by the Word of God. This is frequently the implication that comes out of this.

Now this is a very unfortunate and deceitful kind of an idea. This is exactly the kind of thing that would appeal to Satan very greatly. If he can only draw us away from the Word of God, if he can only make us look with some disdain upon the Word of God, if he can only get us into an arena, into a state of mind, into a practice where we are not listening to the Word of God, but we are susceptible to thoughts that might come into our minds, or susceptible to outside influences of one kind or another. And bear in mind that Satan is not limited by the rules of God, that He will not break the silence between the supernatural and the natural. God permits Satan to come with his occult practices of bringing the supernatural into the real life.

And so this just leaves the door wide open for his kind of activity. Now the fact is, the Bible is the living Word of God. It is the articulated, verbalized voice of God, whereby God has declared what we want to know. It is the holy Word of God.

And when it's talking here about the written Word or the written code, or the letter, it is true that it kills. The Bible does kill. The Bible shows us that we're sinners and that we're under the wrath of God and that we're subject to hell. It should drive the sword home, right into the very vitals of our hearts, that we're in deep and terrible trouble.

But it is God the Holy Spirit who gives life. Now how does He give life? Well, He gives life through the Word of God. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit. It not only convicts us of sin, which is the beginning point in our path to salvation. But it also convicts us of the fact that through Christ we can be saved of our sins. It convicts us of the fact that we desperately need this salvation, ere we spend eternity in hell. The Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, convicts us that God is holy and perfectly just, and sin is a terrible thing in the eyes of God.

The Word of God is the means by which God effects our salvation. Remember what Ephesians 5 declares? That we are washed with the washing of the Word. It is the Word of God that is identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, who went to the cross for our sins. And it is God the Holy Spirit who takes that Word and applies it to our hearts. He cleanses us of our sins. But He does this through the written Word.

So check your life. If in any way you find a disdain for the written Word, if in any way you hold it on a little lesser level than anything else in the Bible, or let me put it in another way. If in any way you hold it equal to anything else in the world, then you know that the Bible is no longer the infallible Word of God to you. It is something else. And that means that in all probability you have another Gospel than the true Gospel.

Now another verse that was offered for an understanding is Hebrews 13:8. We read there, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Now this verse, again, is frequently quoted by those who would want to say, "After all, Jesus healed all kinds of people during His day. And since He is the same today, we would expect that He would heal

people from their illnesses today." Or, "He will do other works of miracles today, even as He did then."

Now the Bible isn't saying here in this passage that Jesus' program is the same today as it was yesterday and forever. The details of His program will change from time to time. Jesus Christ is the same. He is Eternal God. He never changes. He's immutable. He is Eternal God. But His program changes.

Now in the days of Noah, did he do miracles? We don't read of any. Jesus Christ is the same. He existed then, too. Did He heal any lepers in the Old Testament? He healed 10 of them, just like that. Well, He did heal Naaman the Syrian. That was all. And there were many many lepers in the Old Testament. Jesus is the same. His program is different.

For 400 years, from the days of Malachi and Zechariah, until John the Baptist was born, there was absolute silence. And yet the Bible was not complete at that time. Was Jesus the same? Yes, He was the same but His program was different. You see, the fact that Jesus did something back when doesn't mean He's going to do the same thing today. His program will change from time to time.

If you are going to say that Jesus healed 2000 years ago, and therefore He heals today, then you're saying that His program is the same today as it was then. And then I should be able to go to Jerusalem and find the God-man Jesus still teaching over there. But He isn't there, because His program is different. He had completed that aspect of His program and had left this earth and had gone to be with the Father. And so His program is changing, depending on what God has in view.

And it will continue to change. Today the Gospel is still going to every nation. The Bible teaches that God's program will change again. There will be a brief period before Christ returns when the Gospel is silenced all over the world. Well, Jesus is the same. He's absolutely the same. He doesn't change. But His program will change, as God gets His preordained work done.

And then we have a last question concerning Jude 20. "But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith. Pray in the Holy Spirit." "Pray in the Holy Spirit." Now who is the Holy Spirit, He is Eternal God. He is Eternal God Himself.

Now when we become saved, we enter into God. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We are washed in the Holy Spirit. We enter into God Himself, whatever God means by that kind of language. And I'm not able to explain all of this, because I can't understand God that well. But I know that God uses this intimate and wonderful language to indicate the precious relationship we realize with God when we are born again. When we pray in the Holy Spirit, it means that as children of God who are in Christ, we are communing with God our Father, in whom we dwell. It's this marvelous oneness that exists in the life of the believer in relationship to God Himself.

The fact is, in Romans 8 we read that the Holy Spirit takes our incomplete prayers, our prayers that we hardly know how to pray, and brings them perfectly before the throne of grace, because we belong to Him. As a born again believer, if we are communing with God, we are praying in the Holy Spirit.

This is the only way that we can pray to God, if we're really going to commune with Him.

Well, thank you for those good verses. They're all excellent verses that teach wonderful truths from the Word of God. We must be carefully, however, that we read them in the light of the whole Bible.

"My grace is sufficient for thee" in 2 Corinthians 12:9 (323C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: This is concerning a passage I read in the Bible, and it's concerning Paul the apostle, and it says, "My grace is sufficient for thee." This is what God had said to Paul. And what I wanted to know was, could you expound on that? I've read it before, but . . .

HC: Yes. That's found in II Corinthians 12, isn't it? I'll be glad to look at that.

What does God mean in II Corinthians 12:9, when God tells Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Now the context is this: Paul is troubled by a thorn in the flesh, "a messenger of Satan, to buffet him." And in all probability, this thorn in the flesh was the fact that the Judaizers, the teachers who belonged to the church that Paul used to belong to before he was saved, followed him everywhere, and harassed him, got the crowds against him, and were always giving him very serious problems. I mean really serious. They caused him to be beaten. They caused him to be stoned. And he speaks of this as a thorn in the flesh.

Now I'm speculating that this is what it was, but I have Biblical evidence that makes me feel that this is what it must have been. Now he besought the Lord three different times, if this could be removed. Obviously, it would be much easier to bring the Gospel if there wasn't this constant harassment, this constant needling of him, and the threat of being stoned, and the problem of having the crowds turned against him. And so it was a legitimate request.

Incidentally, in the Bible, when you see this three times that really is effectively saying that God has spoken, "No, Paul. You besought Me again and again and again, but this is the context, this is the matrix, this is the environment in which you are to bring the Gospel." Then He said, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

In other words, "You don't need this extra care that you think you would like to have. You don't need to have a bed of roses without any thorns to lie on as you bring the Gospel. You don't have to do it the easy way, because I saved you by My grace, and you are a child of God. By my grace you have been taken out of Satan's kingdom, and you are of royal blood. You are My ambassador. And My grace is sufficient for you. It is sufficient to sustain you and strengthen you, as you bring the Gospel in the face of this kind of adversity. You don't have to have an easy go of it."

The fact is, if we study the rest of the Bible, we find that the role of the believer always is to be in tribulation: "In the world you will have tribulation." Throughout the Old Testament, the prophets were stoned, and maligned, and slandered, and put to death. This is par for the course.

CALLER: Say, for instance, that some is going through a trial, and he's facing hardship. Then that word comes to them in the Bible. This means to sustain and to strengthen, right? That's what grace means?

HC: Yes. In other words, whatever place we find ourselves in the world. Now there are those who become saved, and they're in prison. There are those who are saved who are crippled for life, and they're in a bed that they'll never get out of again. There are people who are saved who are dying of multiple sclerosis. There are people who are saved, and they're in a concentration camp. God's grace is sufficient for any situation that might prevail in the world. His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

You see, it would be one kind of a gospel if the only way the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would be victorious is if all was well, if everything was perfectly set

up so that those involved had perfect health, they had a perfect environment in which to live. Why yes, that certainly would be a very nice gospel. But what does it really prove?

The fact is, you will find the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, as it is shown in the lives of born again believers, in every kind of a situation you want to name. The victory of the cross is sufficient for someone who is wasting away in a concentration camp, or who is wasting away of illness, or who is in a prison for life, or who is a king on a throne, or who is a business man, or a housewife, or a mother, or someone who has just experienced real tragedy in losing loved ones. The victory of the cross is sufficient in every kind of an environment and situation. And in fact, it shows its strength in the weakness in which we find ourselves, in the difficult situation in which we find ourselves.

That's really the sense of this passage. Now incidentally, this passage in II Corinthians 12 cannot be talking about physical illness. It speaks of a "messenger of Satan, to buffet him." Now in Exodus 4 God told Moses in verse 11, "Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Have not I, the Lord?" I do believe that Paul had bad eyesight. There are several indicators of this in the New Testament. But God would have given him that bad eyesight. It would not have been a messenger of Satan.

On the other hand, these Judaizers were emissaries of Satan. They were trying to silence the Gospel, as Satan tries to do throughout time.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Camping.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

EPHESIANS

Did Jesus Actually Descend into Hell in Ephesians 4:9-10? (323A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Ephesians 4:9 & 10 say, "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first, into the lower parts of the earth." And I Peter 3:19 says, "By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." Jesus said, when He was on the cross, when He died, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Now there is some teaching that says that Jesus did suffer for men the penalty of sin, and that He also went to hell for us. And then there are some who say that because Jesus said, "It is finished," and "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," that He did that, and that He did not go to hell for us. And I'd just like to know which is correct. And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine.

The question is raised: How are we to understand passages like Ephesians 4, which indicates that Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth, and from there led captivity captive? Or I Peter 3:19 or 20, where it says that in the spirit He preached to the souls in Hades, who formerly did not obey in the days of Noah? How do we put all this together?

I think most of the misunderstanding on this particular question is a result of a lack of understanding of what Christ did for us on the cross. A lot of people talk about the fact that He shed His blood for our sins. That's a very Biblical statement. A lot of people talk about the fact that He died for our sins. That's very Biblical. A lot of people talk about the fact that He hung on the cross. That's very Biblical.

But when it comes to the fact that He descended into the lower parts of the earth, or as Jesus put it in Matthew 12, "I must be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," they have no

understanding really of what this is. You see, the problem that Christ faced was the judicial statement of God that "the wages of sin is death." And the death that God had in view not only was physical death, but eternal damnation in hell. This is the penalty that had to be paid if He were to be our Savior.

Mankind is destined for hell, he is committed to hell, because we're all sinners. And in order to save us, it was necessary for God not only to find us in our depraved and desperate condition, sentenced to hell. But He also must pay the equivalent of an eternity in hell on our behalf.

Actually, therefore, from the time that He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," and He threw Himself to the ground, and the sweat was pouring off His body like great drops of blood, into the ground, until Resurrection morning, Christ was enduring hell for our sins. He was enduring the wrath of God for our sins.

Now it is true that at the end of the world there will be a place called hell, where all of the unsaved will be cast, along with Satan and all the fallen angels. Presently there is no hell, at least insofar as we can determine, as an actual place. The Bible teaches that the unsaved, when they die, go down into a place of silence. This is also called Hades in the Bible.

It is not the place "hell," however, where the unsaved go eternally. At least they are not suffering there. At least they're not experiencing the wrath of God there. They are simply waiting for the judgment of the last day. However, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus found in Luke 16 eternal damnation is spoken of as Hades.

The angels who have fallen, along with Satan, also are spoken of in the Bible as being in pits of hell, or consigned to hell. But in physical location they are active in the world, deceiving the hearts of men. So neither are they in a physical, literal place called hell. They're identified with hell because there is no hope for them. They are consigned to hell, and therefore the Bible speaks of them as if they are in hell. But in actuality, in physical location they are not in a place called hell.

Insofar as I can tell from the Bible, a literal place called hell will only be in existence at Judgment Day, and it must be there because the unsaved must be removed from this earth so that God can redeem it, so that He can destroy it by fire and recreate it New Heavens and a New Earth. And so there has to be a place where the unsaved can exist eternally, under the wrath of God. And that is a physical place called hell.

Hell, however, in its actual essence is not a place. Hell is a relationship with God. Hell is to be under the wrath of God and to experience the wrath of God. Hell is described in the Bible in all kinds of ugly language. But ultimately it is all focusing on this point, that those who are subject to hell are in terrible trouble with God, and His wrath is being poured out upon them.

This is what Jesus experienced, from Gethsemane until the resurrection morning. He experienced the wrath of God, so that He was enduring hell. It was as if He had gone down to hell while He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and while He stood before Pontius Pilate, and while He hung on the cross. And we of course see this in its climax as the cry is wrenched from His lips, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" That's hell.

Specifically, therefore, when we look at Ephesians 4, and it declares that He descended into the lower parts of the earth, it is simply indicating that He had to come where those who are destined for hell dwell. That's in our presence. He rescued us from the path that was leading directly into hell. And in order to

rescue us He had to Himself endure hell for our sins.

"He led captivity captive." Before we are saved we're slaves of Satan. We are entirely under his jurisdiction and his domain. He is our master. But when we are saved, we are freed from bondage to Satan, and we become bondservants of the Lord Jesus Christ. We become His captives, and He takes us out of hell. And He did this by going to the cross, so that we have eternal life and are forever His people.

Jesus, therefore, never did go to a place called hell. The fact is, when we look at Him on the cross, when would He have done this? He was a complete personality until He finally said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." And He said, "It is finished." But at that time, in His spirit He went to be with the Father. His body, however, was put in the grave, where it did not see corruption. And this was part of the suffering that was involved in paying for our sins. For this reason Acts 2:31 indicates that Jesus' soul was not left in Hades. Hades in this context has the meaning of eternal damnation. The fact that His body did not see corruption seems to emphasize that the victory of the cross was accomplished. The fact of the resurrection emphasized that the penalty of eternal damnation had been paid in every sense.

But at no time is there a time when He could have gone down to some place. Now I Peter 3:18 or 19 is not saying that He in His spirit descended into hell. It is simply saying that in His spirit, at one time, He spoke to the spirits in prison. Actually, the word hell is not found in I Peter 3. It's actually the word prison.

Now in I Peter 1 we read in verse 10: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching for what manner of time the spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."

In other words, the spirit of Christ spoke through the Old Testament prophets, including Noah, to the prisoners (the spirits in prison) in their day. Now the spirits in prison were the unsaved of their day. Jesus in His spirit did preach to the spirits in prison, but not when He was on the cross, not when He was paying for our sins. He did this all through the Old Testament period, as He spoke through Noah, and as He spoke through Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Abraham, and so on, even as today the spirit of Christ is speaking to the spirits in prison, as we bring the Gospel. This does not require a physical descent of Christ into hell.

I hope this will clear up that question just a little bit.

PHILIPPIANS

Philippians 1:15-18 (727A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, in Philippians 1:15-18, where Paul is in prison, I know that through Christ he's very happy and he feels that God is using him to carry forth the Gospel. But he says that "some are preaching Christ from envy and rivalry," and then he goes on down in verse 18 and says, "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in that I rejoice." Now does that mean that today, well, say a church has signs and wonders, but still they do preach the Gospel. Well?

HC: Now there are two issues here. In Galatians 1, God, through the apostle Paul, is speaking about the matter of another gospel. He says in verse 8, "But though we or an angel from Heaven preach any other gospel unto you than

that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And then, to drive home the point so that we won't miss it, in verse 9 he repeats, "As we said before, so say I now again, if any preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Another gospel is a dreadful thing.

But that is not what's in view in Philippians. It doesn't talk here about another gospel. It simply talks about the attitude of the pastor who is bringing the Gospel. Some preach the true Gospel sincerely, but others preach the Gospel (still the true Gospel) out of envy and strife. In other words, God can even use an unsaved man, who is still preaching the true Gospel. In other words, his training has been correct. But the moment that he starts changing the authority so that he believes there is more to divine truth than the Bible, then it isn't a matter of envy and strife. Then it's another gospel. Then it comes into another category altogether.

CALLER: In other words, he's just rejoicing that Christ is being proclaimed even though the man is not saved.

HC: Yes, even though the man's motivation may not be as ideal as it ought to be. Think of Jonah, for example, in the Book of Jonah. Now did he preach the Gospel to the Ninevites out of love, out of compassion – the attributes that ought to be found in a preacher of the Gospel? Absolutely not, he hated the Ninevites. And he was there under protest. But yet what he preached was exactly what God wanted him to preach, and it brought great blessing to the city of Nineveh. And that's the point, you see. Whether we are doing it sincerely or whether we're doing it out of love and compassion, or on the other hand, whether we're doing it for wrong motivation, if it is the truth it still can be used of God to bring salvation. But that's an entirely different matter than when somebody is bringing another kind of a gospel.

1 THESSALONIANS

Comments on 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 (513E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I wanted to comment on 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. It seems like today a lot of people are really hung up about the Second Coming of Christ to such an extent that they I think sometimes forget the Good News of the first coming of Christ. And I was wondering if in your opinion Paul was in these first 11 verses of Chapter 5 telling those who are saved, don't get too obsessed about that. When the Lord decides to come, He'll come, and that's it. But perhaps the important thing is to be thankful that you're a child of the day, that you're saved. And as far as looking for events in the Middle East, or anywhere in the world, that's just superfluous, or completely unnecessary, that if we're really saved, we'll want to, through our faith in Christ, through the Spirit, live the right type of life. I was wondering if you could address that question.

HC: In 1 Thessalonians 5, God through the apostle Paul is speaking about the day of the Lord. And in doing this He is giving us some very important insights. In fact, one or two of them are not found anywhere else quite as clearly in the Bible. For example, He is indicating in this passage that Christ does not come as a thief in the night for the born again believers. We read in Matthew 24, in connection with the coming of Christ, that He comes as a thief in the night. We read in II Peter 3, where it says that the elements will melt with fervent heat, that He will be coming as a thief in the night, or as a thief. We read in Revelation 16, where it talks about satanic activity right

up until the end and the Battle of Armageddon, that it talks about Christ coming as a thief. And if we look at only those references, we might obtain the conclusion that Christ is going to come silently, or He's going to slip up on us before we know it, and we will have no warning, that He'll come as a thief in the night for everyone.

But in I Thessalonians 5 God is giving us the very important truth, and it's been missed by a great many theologians, that insofar as this language of the Bible concerning Christ coming as a thief in the night is concerned, it does not apply to born again believers. Verse 4: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. For ye are children of the light [that is, children of Christ – this is a double meaning here], you are children of the day [again it's got a double meaning, because the day again refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Day]." And therefore we are not surprised. We are ready for His coming.

And of course in that sense it is a warning to all who read the Bible, be sure that you are ready when He comes. Matthew 24 outlines the warning, where God again and again says, "Watch, watch, you don't know the time." And the only way you can be ready, that you really are watching, is to make sure that you are born again.

And so our caller is correct of course that God is saying the important thing is, be sure that you are ready. And then this day will not slip up on you. But on the other hand, He is also giving a very important truth, that Christ is coming as a thief in the night for the unsaved, and that when He does come it will be sudden destruction for them.

There are lots of people who I think, in their subconscious or even in their conscious brains, are hoping that when Christ comes, then they'll decide on the course of action that they will follow. They'll argue with God that their good deeds are greater than their bad deeds, and therefore God ought to have mercy on them. Or they'll plead for mercy. Or they'll see what most people are doing and follow their lead, or whatever.

But God is insisting here that when Christ comes, He will come as a thief in the night. That is, He will come altogether unexpectedly for the unsaved. They are not ready for His coming in any way. They are laden with their sins. They are not born again. And it will be a terrible day. Sudden destruction will come upon them. And there is no escape. Notice the language of verse 3: "And they shall not escape."

And so while on the one hand God is comforting the believers and telling them not to be too concerned about this, on the other hand He is warning the unbelievers in the congregation, or anyone else who is unsaved, who comes in the hearing of the Gospel, "Be careful now. When Christ comes, if you're not ready, it's too late. There's going to be sudden destruction upon you."

And then of course we also have the marvelous promise of verse 9: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath," that is, to stand for judgment and give an account of our sins and be removed into hell, because of course our sins have all been paid for by the Lord Jesus Christ, and we do not come into judgment, as John 5:24 teaches.

But then it goes on, "but to obtain salvation by Our Lord Jesus Christ." And it goes on with these comforting words, "who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we shall live together with Him. But wherefore comfort yourselves together, edify one another, even as also ye do."

And so if we are saved, we don't focus on the end of time with any fear or apprehension. We know from the rest of the Bible that they will be difficult days for various reasons. We know that they

will be days of great tribulation. The Bible indicates this very clearly. But we are ready. And the only apprehension we have is that we know of all the unsaved, friends and loved ones, who will not be ready and who will be caught in this snare of sudden destruction. That is, they will be cast into hell because of their sins.

1 TIMOTHY

"Endless Genealogies" in 1 Timothy 1:4 Explained (11B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: In 1 Timothy 1:4 it talks about "endless genealogies." What does that mean?

HC: In 1 Timothy 1 we have this statement where Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is charging certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, "nor to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the divine training that is in faith."

I'm not really certain what these genealogies have to do with, except that I know this: genealogy has to do with the line that I come from. Now in the Old Testament, you will find that God names various families that come out of each son of Jacob. There are, for example, the sons of Levi, Kohath and Amram, and so on. And then there are the families that come under this, so that in the Old Testament for quite a while a Jewish person could know his genealogical line. He could trace back his blood line all the way to Abraham and know just exactly whether he was of the tribe of Levi or the tribe of Ruben, or whatever it is.

But now 1500 years have passed, and we find that the genealogical descent is no longer important. The fact is, God has emphasized in Romans 4 that Abraham is the father of all believers, not only of the circumcised but of the uncircumcised. But God also has indicated that not all Israel is Israel. In other words, blood descent from Abraham is no longer important. The important question is, "Am I born again? Am I a child of Christ?" As we read in Galatians 3, those who believe in Christ are the true seed of Abraham, are the heirs of the promise that was given to Abraham.

And so in Jesus' day, and afterwards, there were many Jews who were still arguing about their blood descent from Abraham, and would try to work through their genealogical descent, of how they came from Abraham. And God is saying, "Nonsense. Forget it. It's not important." These things profit nothing at all. Who your forebears were doesn't mean a thing.

Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that really wonderful? You don't have to worry ultimately who your father or mother was, or who your great grandfather or great grandmother were. You don't have to worry about whether there were some important people in your blood line, or whether you come from a pure seed, or whatever people want to call their line. None of these things are important. When we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, we stand as an individual before God just as we are. God has created us, and now He has saved us. Praise Him for what He has done.

Thank you for that question.

Will Christ Save the Whole Human Race in 1 Timothy 4:10? (11C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Would you explain First Timothy 4:10?

HC: We read in the Revised Standard Version, First Timothy 4:10: "To this end

we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the Living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe." That's an interesting verse, isn't it? Does this mean that Christ ultimately is going to save the whole human race? Because it says here that He is the Savior of all men.

Now the clue word here is this word all. In our language today, when we run across the word all, we mean by that an all-inclusive all: "All of the people in the room were brown-eyed." Well, we expect to see then a room full of people, and without exception they all have brown eyes. But in the Bible the word all is not used that way.

If it were, then we would have to conclude from this first phrase that there is universal salvation. We would have to conclude that Christ ultimately is going to save everyone. And there are people who read this verse, and verses similar to this, and they come to that very conclusion. For example, we find a verse in 1 Corinthians 15 that says, "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." And so they look at these verses and isolate them from the rest of the Bible and conclude that somehow there's going to be universal salvation. But when we read the rest of the Bible, we read, for example, that Jesus teaches that "Broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are thereon, and narrow is the way and few there are thereon, that leads to everlasting life," and we know that there is no such thing as universal salvation. We know that most of the people of the world will end up in hell rather than in heaven.

And so we wonder, how can we understand this word all? Well, we find in the Bible that the word all has to be limited to what is possible with the word all. We read, for example, in Acts 2:17: "In the last days I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh." Now we know that God's Holy Spirit is poured out only upon those that are saved, and therefore we know that the word all means God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh who are born again, who actually have been chosen by God to receive God's Spirit. It's a conditional law.

We read in Luke 2:1 where God said, "A decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world shall be taxed." But from the context we know that it referred only to the Roman Empire. It was the area of the world that was subject to taxation.

And so when God says here that He is the Savior of all men, from the rest of the context of the Bible we know that He is the Savior of all men who are to be saved. We are chosen in Him before the foundations of the world, as we read in Ephesians 1:4. And these are the ones for whom He is the Savior. And this is indicated in the second phrase, "especially of those who believe." In other words, the focal point is put on those who place their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. They ultimately are the ones for whom Christ is the Savior.

Clean and Unclean Food in 1 Timothy 4:4 (14C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Tonight I'm calling about the different foods you're supposed to eat. And this comes out in the 14th Chapter of Deuteronomy. And in 1 Timothy 4:4 it says, "For every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." So this means all creatures. Isn't that right?

HC: Yes. In other words, if you were an Eskimo, and all you could eat was whale blubber, that's food.

CALLER: That's not a fair statement, is it, coming out of 1 Timothy, because in the Old Testament, in the 14th Chapter of Deuteronomy, it indicates the clean

and unclean meats that you eat.

HC: You see, the problem we have before us is that we have to see how God changes His commandments. Now in the Old Testament God gave certain rules concerning the offering of sacrifices, for example. Those have been completed in Christ. We're not to offer sacrifices. He became the Sacrifice.

There were a lot of other laws, also, that were given to Israel in order to show them their need to be a separate people. And they could only ultimately be a separate people by placing their trust in God. And God included in this the matter of the eating of clean and unclean animals. Incidentally, that law was already in motion from almost the very beginning, because on the ark Noah put clean and unclean animals.

But when we come to the New Testament, we find in Acts 9 that Peter in a vision, was commanded to eat of these animals which were on this sheet which was let down from Heaven. And there were unclean animals on this sheet, and he was told to eat of these. God commanded him to do this, because that which has been unclean are now to be considered clean.

Actually, the timing of this vision was the time when Peter was instructed to bring the Gospel to a Roman centurion, Cornelius, who was looked upon as an unclean, uncircumcised heathen by the Jews. But he was commanded that the Gospel is for them, too. In other words, the unclean animals in the Old Testament were a figure of the unclean, uncircumcised heathen all around the nation of Israel. But now that Christ has come, the Gospel is to go everywhere. There no longer is a distinction between the nation of Israel and the rest of the world. There is a distinction, of course, between born again believers. But it's not to be reflected in the eating of meats.

You might also look at Colossians 2:16, where God underscores this same truth. "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a feast day or a festival, or a new moon or a sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." Now here God is lumping together the sabbath (and the Old Testament seventh day sabbath is the sabbath day that would have to be in view), the new moon, and the festivals or feast days, which had to do with the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement, and so on. And right in the same category He puts food and drink. That is, the food laws of the Old Testament are lumped together with the sacrificial laws and the feast day laws, to indicate that all of these were a shadow pointing to the coming of the Messiah.

CALLER: Okay, you made that clear. Now this 1 Timothy 4:4 isn't talking about the foods, but the creatures, right?

HC: 1 Timothy 4:4 is dealing with food, really, because the context is food. In verse 3 we read, "who forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good." It could be translated "meats," I suppose. "Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with thanksgiving." The focal point is on that which we eat.

CALLER: Okay, thank you.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

TITUS

Titus 2:11 Explained (416A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I have one question on Titus 2:11. Can this be isolated to mean that at one time in life

God does appear to all men? I'll take the answer on the air.

HC: The question is raised, and it's the kind of a question that you face as you're studying the Word. I'm very grateful for questions because it indicates those who are raising the questions are puzzling about this verse or that verse.

Now in Titus 2:11 we read, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and Godly in this present world." What is God saying here? Is God saying that the Gospel of salvation has at one time or another appeared to every human being on the face of the earth? Or does it mean something else?

Actually, the Gospel is proclaimed of course as the written Word of God. In other words, we have the Bible as the written Word of God, and we know that that is the Gospel. But the Gospel is also spoken of in another sense in the Bible. We read in Romans 10, where it says in verse 13, "Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved." And then it goes on, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things. But they have not all obeyed the Gospel, for Isaiah sayeth, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." Now notice, "But I say, have they not heard? Yes, verily. Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."

Now in some sense God is saying that the Gospel has been sent to the whole world. Now this quotation of Romans 10, which I have just read, "Verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world," is a quotation from Psalm 19. And so let's go back to Psalm 19 and see how that relates to the question at hand.

And you'll see how similar that is to the question of Titus 2:11, where it says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." Now in Psalm 19 we read in verse 1: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day after day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out to all the earth and their words to the end of the world."

You see, God is indicating, just by virtue of the fact that He is the Creator God and has created such a beautiful universe in which man can live, in this creation God has presented information concerning Himself. Now it's not the written Word. It's not the articulated, verbalized Word that we call the Bible. It is not the Bible. But nevertheless it is a manifestation of the love of God. It is a manifestation of the nature of God. It is a manifestation of the care of God for His creation. It is the manifestation that there is a God.

Now, within the heart of man, God has put a sense of right and wrong. Man knows intuitively, without ever reading the Bible or hearing of the Bible that it's wrong to kill. He knows intuitively that it's wrong to commit adultery. He knows intuitively that it's wrong to steal. Because he does these things, and because through creation he recognizes that there is a God, He ought to repent. That's why Romans 1:18 indicates that the wrath of God comes upon all men because that which could have been known about God has not been recognized by them. That is, they did not repent of their sins.

So in that sense the Gospel has gone to all men - in the sense that all men should

recognize there is a God through creation, should recognize that they have to do something to correct their sinful relationship with God. Of course actually, the Bible gives us a whole lot more information. Once we start reading the Bible, we can get a much better description of the essential sinfulness of man. We can begin to get a real look, in very precise language, of how God looks upon our sins. He spells out that His wrath is upon us and that we are subject to hell because of our sins.

And of course it is through the Bible that we can get a detailed knowledge of how God can save us, how He can satisfy His justice, because the Bible discloses to us the information concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. However, in the broad sense the Gospel has gone out to all the world. It has appeared to all men in every generation, throughout time, from Adam on, in the sense that man lives in this world that has been created by God. And I think that is the sense that we have in view here (at least one of them) in Titus 2:11.

Now notice it says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared to all men." I started quoting from Romans 1. And let's just look at that a tiny bit more. Verse 18: "for the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because that when they knew God they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful."

God's grace is first of all manifested in His loving care for us in creation. This grace ought to bring salvation. That is, it ought to cause men to cry out to God, "Oh God, have mercy on me." And if anyone ever did, you can depend upon it, before he died God would also bring the rest of the Gospel to him, the written Word of God. Many missionaries will testify of the fact that they have come to a village where the written Gospel had never been preached before, and there they found those who had been uneasy, who were seeking for a better answer. And it wasn't long at all before they were responding to the Gospel. God had been preparing their hearts through the fact that in creation they saw that there was a God and that they must answer to this God.

HEBREWS

The Division of Soul and Spirit in Hebrews 4:12-13 (143A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. You were talking about Hebrews 4:12 and 13. And it brought up a question that I wanted to ask earlier, but I had forgotten about it. The King James Version says that the Sword (God's Word) separates the soul and the spirit. What is the difference between a man's soul and a man's spirit?

HC: The question is raised, What does Hebrews 4:12 mean when it speaks about the Word of God, which is sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit? And we could go on with the question, "and of joints and marrow."

Actually, sometimes these words soul and spirit are synonymous. The inner essence of man, the part of man that leaves the body at death, sometimes is called the soul and sometimes is called the spirit. But here it talks about the division of soul and spirit. And so it's not using soul and spirit in the same sense.

Now the word spirit is also the same word as breath. And when our breath is

separated from our soul, that's at the point when we are dying, or when we have died. The breath of life has returned to God. And the breath of life of every individual returns to God at death. And in our soul, we either go into Hades, if we're unsaved, or we go into the presence of Christ if we are saved. Only at death is there a separation between soul and spirit.

Now by the same token, it goes on and speaks about the division of joints and marrow. Now the marrow is inside the bone, and the separation of joints and marrow only comes at death. As long as a man is alive, there is no separation of joints and marrow. So it indicates that the Word of God is piercing to the death of a man. It is the Word of God that is our judge, that actually will condemn us at the Judgment Throne, because if we are unsaved, the wages of sin is death. And sin is known to be sin by comparing our actions and thoughts, and so on, against the Bible, which is the Word of God.

CALLER: Okay, then it's talking about death. It's talking about what goes on into the after-life and what stays here after death.

HC: I would say that it is a synonymous thought to John 12:48, where it speaks in this way: "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings has a judge. The Word that I have spoken will be his judge on the Last Day." The Word of God is a two-edged sword. It cuts away, but it also condemns. It is the "savor of life unto life," we read in Corinthians, or it is the "odor of death unto death." And if a man is unsaved, it is going to come against that man at the Judgment Throne. At death it's going to condemn him.

Deliberate Sin and Our Salvation in Hebrews 10:26-31 (187C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I wonder if you would explain Hebrews 10:26-31.

HC: Okay. The question is raised concerning Hebrews 10:26-31, where it says, "If we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries." And then it goes on, "A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the spirit of grace?"

If we would isolate these verses from the rest of the Bible (and many people do this very thing), we could readily conclude that after we have been saved, and if we then deliberately sin, we are going to lose our salvation, we are going to be under the wrath of God. And this is strongly suggested here because it talks about receiving the knowledge of the truth, and it's speaking of the fact that we were sanctified. And so it strongly suggests that we could lose our salvation.

But before we can ever arrive at a conclusion concerning the meaning of a verse or verses, we must read them in the light of everything else in the Bible. First of all, when we study the Bible, we find all kinds of references to the fact that once we have been born again, we cannot lose our salvation. The Bible teaches emphatically, in such a passage as John 5:24, that if we believe in Him who was sent, Christ, we have eternal life. And that is a present situation with us. And if we have eternal life, it means that it's life that cannot end. It's eternal in nature. We could never lose that life.

More than that, it says we have passed from death into life, and we do not come

into judgment. In John 10:27 Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice and follow Me, and I give them eternal life. And they shall never perish. And no one shall snatch them out of My hand. And My Father is greater than I, and no one shall snatch them out of His hand."

And we read in the closing verses of Romans 8 that nothing can separate us from the love of God, neither life nor death, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, and so on. And we read in Ephesians 1:12 and 13 that He gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe on Him, as the guarantee, or as the down-payment of their inheritance. And we read in Philippians 1:6, I believe, that He who has begun this good work in us will bring it to completion at the Day of the Lord, or words to that effect.

In other words, the Bible is loaded with verses which say that once we are born again, we cannot lose our salvation. So we have to keep all of this in mind when we read these verses. Now the first thing that we read here is that it speaks about a knowledge of. The Bible sometimes uses the phrase to "know God" to mean that we are born again. We are a child of God. This is particularly true in a passage such as I John 2:3, where it says that "Hereby we can know Him, if we keep His commandments."

But on the other hand, the word "know" is also sometimes used in the sense that we know intellectually. We have been brought up in the way of God, but we have never been born again. And this is the way knowledge would have to be understood here. For example, Israel of old had a tremendous knowledge of God through Moses, as they witnessed the signs and the wonders in the wilderness. And yet they perished because of unbelief.

Notice that it does not speak here of having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Abraham, who is named as the father of believers, is spoken of as one whose faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. And so it's talking here about someone who intellectually knows God. Satan would be one of these. We read in Mark 3 where the demons said to Jesus, "We know who you are. You are the Holy One of God."

Now it speaks here of someone who has been sanctified. The word sanctified and the word holy are the same words. Most of the time, or very frequently in the Bible, when we read the word holy, it's speaking about born again believers, as for example, in I Peter 2:9, where it says, "Ye are a holy priesthood." But sometimes the word holy is not used in that sense. It's used in the sense of being set apart to serve God, because of being corporately a member of the kingdom.

An illustration of this is in I Corinthians 7:14, where it speaks of the children of a believing parent. It says that the children are holy. Now it's not saying that they are saved. But because one of the parents is in the Kingdom of God, by virtue of being born again, then the children corporately become members of the Kingdom of God, and are very close to salvation. They have been set apart for the service of God, and if they will trust in Him they too can be saved. And this is the way "holy" or "sanctified" has to be understood in this context, because it's speaking of someone who has known the way of salvation and yet deliberately has turned away from it.

Now another truth that shines through in this awesome passage here. And it is awesome, because you notice how God is emphasizing His wrath. In verse 31 it says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." You see, the Bible teaches that there are degrees of punishment.

In Luke 12, in verse 47 we read, "And that person who knew his master's will (notice the word know here) but did not make ready (or act according to his will)

shall receive a severe beating." That is Hebrews 10:26-31. But then it goes on in Luke 12, "But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much is given, of him much will be required. And of him to whom men commit much, they will demand the more."

In other words, those who have never heard the Gospel from the Bible still stand guilty before God because they're sinners. But their punishment will be somewhat less severe. But if we know the way of salvation, and have been brought up in the context of salvation, and then turn away from it, we are walking toward hell. And you can depend upon it, if we continue that way, we are going to be in terrible trouble with God.

In other words, if we have been taught the way of salvation, because we have parents, or Sunday School teachers, or whatever, because we've been going to church, and yet when the chips are down, when we are finally faced with the decision, maybe the decision making process arrives at the moment when we're getting married, or when we're going to go to school, or when certain tragedies happen in our house. What is it going to do? What is our decision? Are we going to say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," because we believe with all our heart that Christ is our Savior and Lord, and we don't want to live in sin? Or are we going to take our stand with the world? Are we going to repudiate the Gospel that we have known so much about?

CALLER: They can be saved if they would turn back to God?

HC: Oh, yes. If we would read only Hebrews 10:26-31, we might conclude that if someone deliberately sins after receiving the knowledge of the truth, he has committed the unpardonable sin, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, for which there is no forgiveness. But that cannot be.

First of all, God Himself tells us what blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is, in Mark 3, where it is singled out as believing that Christ was under the power of Satan. For that there is no pardon for sin. But when we look elsewhere in the Bible concerning those who knew the way, and turned against the way, now can there be pardon for them? The Bible absolutely says, "Yes, yes."

A beautiful passage that speaks to this, amongst many many others, is Isaiah 55, where God is coming to Israel, who has repeatedly turned away from Him, even they knew the way. He says in verse 6 of Isaiah 55: "Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord, that He may have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

CALLER: This person is a new Christian, and they feel the Holy Spirit and feel that they're saved, and then in a couple of days it's gone. And they feel like they're not saved. And then it comes back. What can you say?

HC: What happens when there are those who have spiritual highs and spiritual lows? On one day they feel like they're walking on Cloud 9, and Christ feels so close to them, the Holy Spirit seems to be so prominent in their lives, and two days later they are not sure at all that they are saved.

You see, what do we trust in? Do we trust in our feelings? Do we trust in our emotions? Have you ever awakened in the morning, and it's a gray and dismal day, and you didn't sleep very well? Everything looks kind of negative, doesn't it?

On the other hand, have you awakened in the morning after a restful night's

sleep, and the sun is shining as you leap out of bed, and everything looks good? These are emotions, and they're not trustworthy at all. We don't walk by feelings or emotions. We have feelings and emotions, but our trust is in the Word of God. That is the authority. That is the standard. That is the rock. That is the foundation. We read the Bible and feast upon it.

Now one of the problems of our life is that we very frequently suffer from spiritual malnutrition. Now if you go two days without eating, or maybe even skip a meal, you begin to feel that it isn't quite so good. Right? You begin to feel headachy. You feel restless perhaps. And if you would continue to go without food, pretty soon you would become physically weak. You're suffering from malnutrition. Now what's the remedy for malnutrition? Food, good food, that is properly taken.

And so it is with spiritual malnutrition. A lot of people who are born again believers wonder why they feel so cold, spiritually. They don't have the joy of salvation. They may even be wondering, "Am I really saved?" They find that even to read the Bible is hard, to get back into it. They're suffering from spiritual malnutrition. They are very weak spiritually.

Now the answer is exactly like that for physical malnutrition. Start eating. But what is the Bread and Water of Life? It is the Word of God. Start eating. There's a feast there. And spend a few hours a few nights a week, reading, and getting more and more acquainted with the Word of God. And you'll find that your life spiritually becomes more constant, more secure and stronger, because as you're reading the Word God is giving you assurances of His faithfulness. He's giving you word pictures of the nature of your salvation. You're beginning to discover more and more cause for joy. Just think, this is me that God is talking about; I'm the one who is saved.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Do Biblical Warnings in Hebrews 3:12-19 Apply to Believers? (201A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have some verses here that I would like to know if I am understanding correctly. First I would like to let you know that I think they mean. And then you can tell me what you think they mean.

In Hebrews 3:12-19 – now this says that Christians are to be watchful that they not allow unbelief to occupy their hearts, in falling away from the living God. If, as some infer, it is impossible for children of God to quit believing, to fall away from God, then the inspired writer is giving here needless warning. Now in verse 13, continuing the thought expressed in the previous verse, he counsels us that if we are to partake of the blessings of Christ, we must hold firm our confidence unto the end. If, however, there is no way for a child of God ever to lose his faith, then this verse would also be needless.

The writer continues by showing that the ancient Hebrews, who typified God's children under the New Covenant, were not allowed to enter Canaan's rest, because of unbelief and disobedience. These Jews had left Egypt believing in God and obeying His will. But in the wilderness they quit believing and obeying. Therefore they were kept out of the land of Canaan. What is the reason for the inspired writer's use of this illustration?

Hebrews 4:11 says, "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." And I'll take my answer over the air.

HC: Let me ask you a question, if I may. What you have just said makes abundant sense, and it sounds very logical when you read this passage. But let me ask you a question. What were you saved from?

CALLER: From sins, past sins.

HC: What do you mean, you were saved from sin?

CALLER: From past sins.

HC: I know, but if you were drowning, and somebody jumped in and rescued you, and then afterwards they asked you, "What were you saved from?" you would say, "Well, I was saved from drowning."

Now what does it mean to be saved from your past sins?

CALLER: Well, sin is a transgression of the Law.

HC: It's a transgression of the Law. But what do you mean that you are saved from your past sins?

CALLER: I was saved from the past sins of my life before becoming converted to the Lord Jesus Christ.

HC: I know. But what do you mean, you were saved from your sins?

CALLER: Condemnation of sin.

HC: Oh, okay. In other words, from the condemnation that comes from your sin. All right. In other words, when Christ went to the cross, what did He do for you in relationship to your sin?

CALLER: When He died on the cross, and when I accepted Him, then my past sins have been washed away.

HC: I see. In other words, He just died for your past sins.

CALLER: Past sins.

HC: All right. In other words, He didn't save you from all of your sins.

CALLER: Well, as soon as I was baptized, all my past sins were washed away.

HC: I know, but according to what you're saying, when we understand that He saved us from condemnation, we know that the wages of sin is death. The penalty for our sins is eternal hell, isn't it? Now you're saying that Christ only paid for your past sins. He didn't pay for all of your sins.

CALLER: He paid for those, too, under certain conditions.

HC: Oh, I see. Well, I'm asking you these questions in order to guide you, in order to help you think this out. You see, the reason that we're in trouble with God, the reason that our sins are even mentioned, is that our sins are what make it certain that we're going to go to hell. We're under the wrath of God because of our sins. The Bible declares, "The wages of sin is death." And the death that God has in view is eternal damnation.

Now when Christ came, to go to the cross, the Bible says He became sin for me. That is, He took all of my sins. He stood guilty before God, as if He was the sinner. And He was found guilty, because He had taken my sins. And He was condemned. And He paid the penalty for all of my sins. He endured the equivalent of an eternity in hell.

And therefore the Bible can say that I have been saved, or that there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. My sins have all been paid for.

Now the question rises then, if all of my sins have been paid for (because this is what salvation is), what kind of a sin do I have to commit to again come under God's condemnation, so that I'm going to hell? What sin could it be, if all of my sins have been paid for? There's no sin that I could commit that would make me go to hell. This is an impossibility, that I could lose my salvation.

Now one mistake that a lot of people make in reading the Bible is that they see this word brethren, as we find it here in verse 12, "Take care, brethren," and they immediately think that it means that

everyone in the congregation is born again. Now they're all brethren. But the Bible teaches very clearly that there's no congregation where everybody is born again.

You read about the 7 churches in Revelation 2 and Revelation 3. And the first mistake that is made by many is that they read this word brethren, or holy brethren, and they immediately assign that phrase to only born again people. They fail to realize that God has His church in visible form as well as invisible form.

Now the organized church, which is composed of believers and unbelievers, all who are members (and only God knows who are the believers in any congregation), is a holy church. It is God's church. And corporately every member of that church is a citizen of the kingdom of God. And in that sense they are holy brethren. The word holy means set apart. It doesn't necessarily mean that one is born again. Now sometimes in the context we know that the word holy is referring to someone who is born again. But it also can refer to those who are in the congregation, who are set apart for the service of God, because they have officially joined the church congregation. But it doesn't necessarily mean that they are born again.

CALLER: Don't you remember, back in Acts, where the 3,000 were born again? These people didn't join. They were added to the church by the Lord.

HC: Now that's a different matter. Those 3,000, the Bible says, were saved. They were saved, and they were added to the congregation. But everybody who is added to the congregation is not born again. These 3,000 were, because the Bible says so.

CALLER: Then how do you know which ones?

HC: We don't. We don't, but God knows. We know in our own heart whether we're born again, if we examine ourselves in the light of the Bible. But we can't look at the other fellow and say, "Now I know that you're not born again." That's God's business. But we read Revelation 2 and Revelation 3, and you'll find that every one of those churches was beset by sin.

CALLER: So you're trying to say that when he's talking about these holy brethren here, that they're not born again.

HC: I'm saying that he's talking about the congregation, about the church. And within that church there are those who are born again, and there are those who are not. But God is coming constantly in the Bible with warnings to the congregation. And He's warning them, now make sure that you are saved. And so He gives an illustration, of Israel of old.

Now you'll notice the reason why Israel perished in the wilderness. They perished because of unbelief. They did not have faith. Now faith is the vehicle that God employs whereby we are saved. It also is a gift of God, too. But the nation of Israel did not have faith.

CALLER: Couldn't you have faith and then lose that faith?

HC: No, not true saving faith. Faith is a gift of God, and it goes all the way to salvation. And then our sins have been covered, and we have eternal life. We can never lose that salvation. That's an impossibility.

This is talking about those in the congregation who have heard the way of salvation. They know the way of salvation. They have been blessed of God, because they are present in the congregation. But they have never surrendered their life to Christ. They have never hung their life on Christ. This is really what faith is, that they have implicitly trusted in Him as their personal Lord and Savior.

And as a consequence, the day comes, just like the day came with Israel, when they go after other gods or they fall away.

They fall away from the congregation, as a matter of fact. And we see this happening in every congregation. There are those who are members for a while, and then finally they go back into sin. They were never born again.

Now this has got to be the way to understand this, because under no circumstance does God teach that we can lose our salvation. That would nullify, would negate, everything that the cross is, that Christ became sin for me, and paid for all my sins. We have to begin with, what is salvation? What did Christ save me from?

And once we understand that, and the awful price that He paid to save me from the wrath of God, the fact that He became our substitute in enduring the wrath of God, once we have all of that into our minds, then we read these other passages, and we can begin to understand how to read them.

Now also in this passage, if you read verse 14, for example, just as it stands, it very clearly is teaching that our salvation is dependent upon our works. It says, "For we are partakers in Christ if we only hold our first confidence firm to the end." In other words, Christ has done all that He could. He provided for our salvation. Now it's up to us to work and be pleasing to God. Otherwise we're going to lose our salvation. Now that's what this seems to teach.

CALLER: Yes, if we hold our confidence unto the end.

HC: Yes. But that's contrary to what the Bible teaches.

CALLER: Why does it say that then?

HC: Because God has written the Bible to foster unbelief.

CALLER: Why did He do that?

HC: Why did He do that?

CALLER: Why would He do that?

HC: Because of what we read in Mark 4, where Christ speaks of parables. The apostles asked Him, "Why do you always speak in parables?" And He said, in verse 11, "To you has been given the secrets of the kingdom of God. But for those outside everything is in parables." Why? So they would understand more clearly? No, just the opposite, "so that they may indeed see but not perceive. They may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn again and be forgiven."

CALLER: Is God a respecter of persons?

HC: Not in the sense that there is one chosen nation, or that only certain kinds of people can be saved. But He is a respecter of persons in the sense that only those who come with a childlike trust in God, who just in utter naive faith abandon themselves to the idea that the Bible is the Word of God, and it is to be interpreted by the Bible, we are to let the Bible interpret itself, will begin to understand the Bible. And so only those who endure to the end are the saved ones. And the only reason they're enduring to the end is that they have eternal life.

In other words, our works are a result, a fruit, a proof, the evidence of the fact that we have become born again. Under no circumstance are they the cause, are they the reason for. They are always the evidence or the proof. If we don't have works in our life, it indicates that we don't have faith. Whatever we think is faith is a dead faith. It means that we have not really become born again. We haven't entrusted our life to Christ, if the works are not there.

And only those who are born again will hold fast their confidence to the end, only they. And the reason they will is that no one can snatch them out of Christ's hand. The reason for this is that they have been given eternal life.

And so Hebrews 3 can be read by someone who is isolating it from the rest of the Bible, and it can be used as a proof text for falling from grace, or for

being saved by our works. But when we arrive at that conclusion, then we are contrary to everything else the Bible teaches about the nature of our salvation.

And so immediately we have to say, "Well, wait a minute. We've somehow gotten on a wrong track. That's the wrong conclusion, because it won't agree with everything else the Bible says about salvation." We have to read this passage over again, and look at it more carefully. Maybe we understood wrong. We have to examine to see just how God wants us to understand these phrases, you see.

CALLER: Isn't it true that the two most important commandments are to love God with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself? And Christ says, "If you love Me, you will obey My commandments."

HC: Yes, but we don't do that because we're meriting something. We don't do that because we're trying to become worthy. We don't do that because we're trying to insure our salvation. The moment we do any of this, then we're under the Law, and we must keep the whole Law perfectly. And no man can do that. It means that we're under the curse of the Law, and we're headed for hell.

CALLER: Christ is a mediator between us and God, to appeal our case constantly, because we're constantly sinning all the time. So we go to Christ in prayer to ask for forgiveness of our present sins, that we are committing daily.

HC: No. Christ paid for our sins at the cross. He became sin for us.

Now here is a child and his father. And the father dearly loves the child, and the child the father. And now the child disobeys Father. He has done something that is wrong. Now there is an estrangement that has developed between the father and the child. Now the child is not going to be disowned by the father. The father loves the child, and he would never disown the child. But the child finds that he can't talk to the father, because his sin stands between him, his disobedience stands between him and his father. And so he can't stand it after a while, and he says, "Father, forgive me. How could I have done this?" He's not going to be disowned. He's not going to be disowned. He just walks in this estranged way.

And so it is with a born again believer. Our sins were paid for at the cross, and we, if you are born again, and you commit sin, this is a very heavy weight on your heart. You feel very oppressed "How can I have done this? I have offended my Savior and my Lord." Now there's no fear at all, that now I'm going to lose my salvation. That has been put to bed long before, because we have eternal life. But there is this feeling of oppression, this feeling that I have offended my Savior. And so you can't wait, finally, to go to the Lord and pour it out. "Oh Father, forgive me. How could I have done this? I don't want to live this way. Strengthen me that I won't move in this direction of sin anymore." This is the forgiveness that the born again believer is looking for.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you. Good-by.

HC: Thank you. Good night.

Hebrews 10:26 Explained and Sunday Worship (206B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Would you explain Hebrews 10:26? When was worship for Christians changed to Sunday, and are we wrong in worshipping on Sunday? Should we really be worshipping on Saturday? And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you very much. Good night.

The first question that has been raised is concerning this verse in Hebrews 10:26,

where we read, "For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin, but a fearful prospect of judgment and the fury of fire, which will consume the adversaries." Is this talking about the possibility of losing our salvation, if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth?

Well, let's assume that someone has been saved. Let's first of all ask the question, what has he been saved from? What has he been saved from? From his misery? From his loneliness? From himself, somehow? No. The Bible teaches that before we're saved we're under the wrath of God. We're sinners, and God's wrath abides on us. We're destined for hell.

And Christ came as the sin-bearer. He took my sins, all of my sins, and paid for those sins. Therefore I am saved from the wrath of God. I'm saved from the consequences of my sins. I stand before God as if I am completely righteous.

And so could I find a sin now that I could commit that would make me lose my salvation, if I've actually been covered by Christ's blood, if I'm actually born again? Well, no, because Christ became sin for me. He covered that sin, too. There is no possible way that I could lose my salvation. Every one of my sins has been paid for.

So we know that when we read Hebrews 10:26 it's not talking about a born again believer. A born again believer cannot come under God's judgment. He has passed from death into life. He does not come into judgment, as we read in the Gospel of John. He has eternal life. So it has to be talking about something else.

Now the Bible sometimes uses the word know in the sense of being saved. But at other times the Bible uses the word know in the sense of just having an intellectual knowledge, being acquainted with truth. Now there are all kinds of people in the church today, in the various congregations where they are found, who know that Jesus Christ is the Savior. They know that they are sinners, they know that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, born of a virgin. They know that Jesus is God. They know that He went to the cross in order to die for sinners. They know all of these things. But they have never become born again. Jesus told Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." In other words, you must be the personal recipient of this salvation. You must be personally surrendered to Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Otherwise all of this knowledge won't avail anything. Now what happens, if someone has a knowledge of the truth, of salvation, but has not become born again? Eventually one of two things will probably happen. He will finally be arrested by God and broken down by God to the point where he will begin to cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me." And so today there are many people in the church who have heard the Gospel for years and years and years, who finally become born again. Praise God for His patience and longsuffering with such.

But on the other hand, unfortunately, there are many in the church today who know the way of salvation, but eventually they don't like it anymore, this trying to make like a Christian. And so either they go running after another gospel that looks more exciting than the true Gospel, which is grievous sin. Or they leave the church altogether, or religion altogether, and simply begin to live like the world. And they in either case are sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth. And walking in that direction brings them to a point where there is no salvation, because salvation is not "out there." Salvation is where this truth was that they had been hearing, where the true Gospel is proclaimed. That is where they're going to find salvation. They're

not going to find it when they leave the true Gospel. And as long as they walk in that direction, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. All that is in front of them is hell.

Now wonderfully, even after a man has rejected the Gospel in this fashion and has begun to run after other gospels, or has turned his back altogether against any kind of a gospel, God can still save. And even in that extremity the possibility of salvation exists. So we should not stop praying for these who walk in this way.

Now with regard to the second question about the Sabbath, let me try to briefly outline the Bible's teaching on this. In the Old Testament God did declare in the fourth table of the Decalogue or the Ten Commandments that we are to remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy, because God in six days created the heavens and the earth, and He rested the seventh day.

Now if that was the only command we had in the Bible and the only information in the Bible concerning that command, then today we should be observing the seventh day Sabbath, because God so commands. But the Biblical rule is that we interpret scripture by scripture. We can't stop there. We've got to ask ourselves, is there anything else in the Bible that relates to the question of the seventh day Sabbath?

And as we continue to study the Bible, we discover that this seventh day Sabbath became a part of the ceremonial law. God used it as a figure of Christ Himself. We read that He gave the sabbaths in order that the Israelites might know that it was God who sanctifies them. And so we're not surprised to read in Leviticus 23, where God outlines the various feast days, the various festivals, ceremonial festivals that were to be observed by Israel, that the first feast day that's named is the observance of the seventh day Sabbath. And it goes on with the observance of the Passover. And then it goes on into the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and so on.

Now when Christ came, the Bible teaches that all of these ceremonial laws were completed in Christ, and we're not to observe them any longer. Any man today who would want to observe the Passover would be going contrary to the Word of God. He would indicate that he doesn't trust Christ as his Savior, that Christ has not actually come. If any man would be circumcised today for religious purposes, again he would be trying to walk in the shoes of Old Testament Israel. He would be negating the truth of the Bible, that Christ has come and completed that particular ceremonial law.

Now by the same token, when we come to the seventh day Sabbath, we want to make sure that we are not observing that accidentally, or incidentally. And so the church, already in the Bible days, began to observe the first day of the week. We find this in Acts 20:7. The church at Troas gathered together on the first day of the week, to break bread. And on that occasion Paul preached to them. We find in I Corinthians 16:1 & 2 that Paul admonished the church of Corinth to lay aside on the first day of the week that which they were going to give, so there would be no gathering when he came. And of course whenever we give to the Lord, that's part of our spiritual worship, and it's on the day that we worship.

And so the early church began to observe the first day as a day set aside for spiritual nourishment, refueling of the spiritual fires, a day when there was no obligation to work. It's easy to see why they selected the first day. On the first day Christ rose from the grave. And so every Sunday in a certain sense is a commemorative service concerning the resurrection of Christ.

It was on the first day that the Holy Spirit was poured out. As a matter of fact, it was on the first day that God began to create the heavens and the

earth, when He said, "Let there be light." And it is the church that has been mandated by God to go out into all the world and shed the light of the Gospel. And so it's altogether fitting and proper that the church worships on the first day.

We are altogether in accord with the law of God when we worship on the first day of the week.

Is Jesus Always the Same in Hebrews 13:8? (244A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have five scripture references I wish you'd comment on. They're Mark 16:17 & 18, John 14:12, II Corinthians 3:5,6, Hebrews 13:8 and Jude 20. And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. I'll try to speak briefly about each one of these

The question is raised concerning Mark 16:17 & 18. There we read, "And these signs will accompany those who believe. In My Name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them. They will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover."

Now as we do with the rest of the Bible, any time we read a verse, we want to begin to read it in the light of everything else the Bible teaches. If we read this verse all alone, it would seem to indicate that God is teaching here that when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then we should begin to be able to do certain miraculous things. If we would pick up a rattlesnake, it would not hurt us. If we would happen to drink strychnine, either accidentally or because someone gave it to us, to kill us, it would not hurt us. And certainly when it says that we can lay hands on the sick and they will recover, we should have the power to be able to go into any hospital and go from bed to bed and lay our hands on the sick, and there should be recovery. That is apparently what this is teaching.

But when we begin to look at these verses in the light of everything else in the Bible, we find that it isn't quite like that. We do find that there were a few signs that did accompany the early church as it first began to spread out with the Gospel, just a few. The ability to do miracles was confined, insofar as we can discover in the Bible, to just a few of the apostles. They indeed were able to heal the sick as God gave them power. They were able to speak in foreign languages, as we read in Acts 2. And we do read of the apostle Paul, when he was shipwrecked, that a poisonous viper clung to his skin, and yet he was not hurt by it.

But we also read that we're not to walk by signs and wonders. We're to walk by faith. We're not to walk by sight. The fact is, Jesus said to the Pharisees, "An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a sign." This means, therefore, that it was not God's intention that we live by miracles. We are to live by faith in the Lord, humbly trusting Him.

And these signs that are related in the Bible were related and recorded in order that we might have insights into the nature of salvation which God has provided. In other words, when He healed the blind man, He was showing that even as He was able to physically heal that blind man, so He is able to spiritually heal those who are spiritually blind.

So I do not believe that this passage is suggesting in any sense that today we could find those who could lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover. The fact is, I don't know anyone who could go into the hospital and empty it, because he could go from bed to bed. Actually, we don't try to understand doctrine by experience anyway. And just

strictly from a Biblical vantage point, we know that this would not be possible.

Now the second question was raised concerning John 14:12: "Truly, truly I say to you, He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do because I go to the Father."

Now this verse is widely quoted by many who are convinced that Mark 16:17 & 18 is normative for the believer today, that Jesus did miracles and therefore we can expect to do miracles, and even greater miracles than He did.

Well, let's examine that for a moment. Jesus not only healed the sick. He raised the dead. He healed the lepers. He multiplied the loaves and the fish, a tremendous act of creation. He turned the water into wine. He stilled the storm. He walked on the water. He raised Lazarus from the dead, after he had been dead for four days.

Now when we search the Bible, not only do we find that there is no one who did miracles as great as these consistently, but we also, when we look around, find that no one anywhere does miracles of this nature. And so immediately we know that God is not talking about the doing of miracles when He is speaking about the work that we would do.

When we search the Bible further, we find that Christ had two major tasks to do. There were two major areas of work He had to accomplish. And this is where we're going to find our answer as to the meaning of this verse 12 of John 14. And both of these areas of work are quite related.

One aspect is something that we have no part in. And that is His work of going to the cross and dying for our sins. We have no part in that. That is, we do not add in any sense to the salvation that Christ has provided for us. That work was unique. He went to the cross alone.

But Jesus also came as the one who preached the Gospel. We read in Luke 4, where He said in verse 43, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose. And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee." Now that was the work that God gave Him, to be a preacher of the Gospel.

Now what is the work that God gives us to do? He says, "Ye are My witnesses." We are His ambassadors, Christ as it were making His appeal through us. He says, "Go ye into all the world and bring the Gospel, making disciples." So you see, that identifies with the work that Jesus did.

Now when we examine the success of Jesus, we find that it was very marginal. He preached for over three years, and there were only a handful of believers in all of Judea. But then Jesus went to the Father, and the Holy Spirit was poured out. God began His program to evangelize the world. And Peter preaches one sermon on Pentecost afternoon, and 3000 are saved. You see, literally this promise came true. "He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do [I work to bring the Gospel, and you will bring the Gospel]. And greater works than these will he do." We will be more successful than Jesus, because "I go to the Father." That is, "inasmuch as I go to the Father, God's program to evangelize the world will begin." And therefore you can expect to see far greater success of your efforts to share the Gospel than were realized when Jesus was still on this earth.

Now the third question that was raised is relative to II Corinthians 3:5 & 6. There we read, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us. Our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit. For the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Now I'm grateful for this verse, because this points up a very insidious lie, a very insidious doctrine that is being taught by many without realizing that it is something that is very terrible in nature.

There are those who read II Corinthians 3:5 & 6, and they're saying, "The written code, which is the Bible, that kills. That's the letter of the law. But we have to trust the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit, He will give us light." Effectively they're suggesting that we are freed from the shackles of the Bible. We don't really have to pay too much attention to the Bible. We can trust that that Holy Spirit, working in a very unstructured and free way, uninhibited by the rules of the Bible, can do a much more mighty and wonderful work than that which is suggested by the Word of God. This is frequently the implication that comes out of this.

Now this is a very unfortunate and deceitful kind of an idea. This is exactly the kind of thing that would appeal to Satan very greatly. If he can only draw us away from the Word of God, if he can only make us look with some disdain upon the Word of God, if he can only get us into an arena, into a state of mind, into a practice where we are not listening to the Word of God, but we are susceptible to thoughts that might come into our minds, or susceptible to outside influences of one kind or another. And bear in mind that Satan is not limited by the rules of God, that He will not break the silence between the supernatural and the natural. God permits Satan to come with his occult practices of bringing the supernatural into the real life.

And so this just leaves the door wide open for his kind of activity. Now the fact is, the Bible is the living Word of God. It is the articulated, verbalized voice of God, whereby God has declared what we want to know. It is the holy Word of God.

And when it's talking here about the written Word or the written code, or the letter, it is true that it kills. The Bible does kill. The Bible shows us that we're sinners and that we're under the wrath of God and that we're subject to hell. It should drive the sword home, right into the very vitals of our hearts, that we're in deep and terrible trouble.

But it is God the Holy Spirit who gives life. Now how does He give life? Well, He gives life through the Word of God. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit. It not only convicts us of sin, which is the beginning point in our path to salvation. But it also convicts us of the fact that through Christ we can be saved of our sins. It convicts us of the fact that we desperately need this salvation, ere we spend eternity in hell. The Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, convicts us that God is holy and perfectly just, and sin is a terrible thing in the eyes of God.

The Word of God is the means by which God effects our salvation. Remember what Ephesians 5 declares? That we are washed with the washing of the Word. It is the Word of God that is identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, who went to the cross for our sins. And it is God the Holy Spirit who takes that Word and applies it to our hearts. He cleanses us of our sins. But He does this through the written Word.

So check your life. If in any way you find a disdain for the written Word, if in any way you hold it on a little lesser level than anything else in the Bible, or let me put it in another way. If in any way you hold it equal to anything else in the world, then you know that the Bible is no longer the infallible Word of God to you. It is something else. And that means that in all probability you have another Gospel than the true Gospel.

Now another verse that was offered for an understanding is Hebrews 13:8. We read there, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Now

this verse, again, is frequently quoted by those who would want to say, "After all, Jesus healed all kinds of people during His day. And since He is the same today, we would expect that He would heal people from their illnesses today." Or, "He will do other works of miracles today, even as He did then."

Now the Bible isn't saying here in this passage that Jesus' program is the same today as it was yesterday and forever. The details of His program will change from time to time. Jesus Christ is the same. He is Eternal God. He never changes. He's immutable. He is Eternal God. But His program changes.

Now in the days of Noah, did he do miracles? We don't read of any. Jesus Christ is the same. He existed then, too. Did He heal any lepers in the Old Testament? He healed 10 of them, just like that. Well, He did heal Naaman the Syrian. That was all. And there were many many lepers in the Old Testament. Jesus is the same. His program is different.

For 400 years, from the days of Malachi and Zechariah, until John the Baptist was born, there was absolute silence. And yet the Bible was not complete at that time. Was Jesus the same? Yes, He was the same but His program was different. You see, the fact that Jesus did something back when doesn't mean He's going to do the same thing today. His program will change from time to time.

If you are going to say that Jesus healed 2000 years ago, and therefore He heals today, then you're saying that His program is the same today as it was then. And then I should be able to go to Jerusalem and find the God-man Jesus still teaching over there. But He isn't there, because His program is different. He had completed that aspect of His program and had left this earth and had gone to be with the Father. And so His program is changing, depending on what God has in view.

And it will continue to change. Today the Gospel is still going to every nation. The Bible teaches that God's program will change again. There will be a brief period before Christ returns when the Gospel is silenced all over the world. Well, Jesus is the same. He's absolutely the same. He doesn't change. But His program will change, as God gets His preordained work done.

And then we have a last question concerning Jude 20. "But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith. Pray in the Holy Spirit." "Pray in the Holy Spirit." Now who is the Holy Spirit, He is Eternal God. He is Eternal God Himself.

Now when we become saved, we enter into God. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We are washed in the Holy Spirit. We enter into God Himself, whatever God means by that kind of language. And I'm not able to explain all of this, because I can't understand God that well. But I know that God uses this intimate and wonderful language to indicate the precious relationship we realize with God when we are born again. When we pray in the Holy Spirit, it means that as children of God who are in Christ, we are communing with God our Father, in whom we dwell. It's this marvelous oneness that exists in the life of the believer in relationship to God Himself.

The fact is, in Romans 8 we read that the Holy Spirit takes our incomplete prayers, our prayers that we hardly know how to pray, and brings them perfectly before the throne of grace, because we belong to Him. As a born again believer, if we are communing with God, we are praying in the Holy Spirit.

This is the only way that we can pray to God, if we're really going to commune with Him.

Well, thank you for those good verses. They're all excellent verses that teach wonderful truths from the Word of God. We must be carefully, however, that we read them in the light of the whole Bible.

The Kingdom of God is With Us in Hebrews 1:3 (265A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: For my Bible Study lesson, I have to prove that Christ's Kingdom is here now. And I have three verses. I have Luke 17:20 & 21: "Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the Kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, 'The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs that can be observed. Nor will they say, Look, it is here, nor There it is. For behold, the Kingdom of God is in your midst.'"

And then I have Luke 24:26: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and entered into His glory?" And then I have Hebrews 1:3: "Who, being the brightness of His glory and the expression image of His person, and upholding all things by the Word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins sat down on the right hand of God, the Majesty on High."

Now are those correct answers?

HC: Yes, those are good verses. Your question is, "How can we prove that the Kingdom of God is right now?" Remember what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3?: "You cannot see the Kingdom of God unless you are born from above [or born again]." And then in verse 5 He tells us how we enter that Kingdom. He says, "Verily, verily I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." And so anyone who is born again, or who is born of water and the Spirit, has entered the Kingdom of God.

Now if we've entered the Kingdom of God, then it must be now. Then also read Colossians 1:13, where God says that we have been transferred from the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son. And then remember that John the Baptist, and also Jesus, said repeatedly, "The Kingdom of Heaven [or the Kingdom of God] is at hand." In other words, it's present right now.

You have a good start. And if you have a concordance, you might look up the word kingdom.

CALLER: This is helpful. Thank you very much.

HC: Well, I hope so. Thank you. Good night.

Understanding Hebrews 8:11 (288B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Brother Camping. I would like your explanation of Hebrews 8:11. And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: In Hebrews 8 God is indicating that the old covenant, that is, the covenant of grace as it is modified by the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai, is being supplanted by a better covenant that is relating, of course, to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, apart from the ceremonial laws. In other words, the ceremonial laws have all been completed in Christ, and they are not in view right at this moment.

And then in this context He is quoting from Jeremiah 31, where God prophesies concerning this new covenant, and says, "The days will come when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. And this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put My laws into their minds and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

And then verse 11: "And they shall not teach everyone his fellow [for everyone his brother], saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

Now I'm not certain of the complete implication of this verse. I do know that whatever it means, it came into being from the moment of salvation, or from the moment of the cross. Now in the Old Testament days it was only occasionally that someone was qualified to be a prophet. And they were the ones who taught the others concerning the ways of the Lord. They had the mandate to bring the Gospel, if you will. But the typical believer, while he was saved exactly as we are saved, was not qualified to be a witness.

But once Christ went to the cross, and God began His program to evangelize the world (which is really what's in view here in Hebrews 8), every believer is qualified to be a witness, from the moment that he is saved. And we can read the Bible, and we can know the truth.

Now that doesn't mean that some of the New Testament believers are not especially called to be teachers. And it doesn't mean that we can't learn from each other. But the fact is that every believer does have the qualification to be a witness. And whether we are least in the Kingdom or great in the Kingdom, it makes no difference at all. We are qualified to be a witness, because our sins have been covered and it's God's program to utilize us as ambassadors of Christ, to help evangelize the world.

I think this is the meaning of this passage, although I'm not absolutely certain whether there isn't some other implication also. I hope this will help a little bit.

How is it that Christ "Learned Obedience" in Hebrews 5:8? (323B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I don't understand in the Book of Hebrews why it speaks of Jesus as having to be made perfect through suffering, because Jesus was already perfect.

HC: The question is raised, What does the Bible mean when it says that Christ "learned obedience"? That is found in the Book of Hebrews, in Chapter 5, verse 8: "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. And being made perfect He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."

Now that certainly is an interesting verse. How could it be that the perfect Lord Jesus, how could it be that He had to learn obedience? I think the answer has to be that this is not speaking of the fact that there was any lack of obedience in the personality of the Lord Jesus Christ. I can say that very confidently because of course He was without sin.

But in being obedient to the Father, He had to learn what a dreadful path this really would be. God the Father sent the Lord Jesus Christ to earth to pay for our sins. But the immensity, the enormity of the suffering He must endure would not be known to Christ until He actually endured it.

Now I say this based upon two verses that come to mind. One is when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane. He said, "Father, is it possible that this cup might pass from Me?" And three times He asked this of the Father. "Is it possible that this cup might pass from Me?" Already the wrath of God was beginning to weigh on Him. And we see this in the Biblical language, that sweat was pouring off His body like great drops of blood into the ground.

And we read in Hebrews that He was there with "loud cries." The utter terror of beginning to experience the wrath of God. It's also emphasized in the statement when He hung on the cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It's the awfulness of experiencing something so horrible that even though Jesus Christ was God, He could not appreciate altogether the utter awfulness of it.

But just because He endured it, He was learning what obedience God really entailed. Now I say this also, based on a verse that's found in Matthew 24, and I think in Mark 13:32. Mark 13:32, Christ is talking about Judgment Day, and He says, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Now that's an interesting verse, isn't it? It's as intriguing as the verse that He learned obedience.

You see, Christ was going to endure Judgment Day. And He had not yet endured it when He is speaking these words. The angels who have fallen are going to endure Judgment Day. And at this point in time they have not yet endured it. The unsaved of the world are going to endure Judgment Day. And as yet they have not endured it.

Now Judgment Day is spoken of in the Bible as the day of the Lord, or as the hour of judgment - particularly, for example, in Revelation 18, which speaks about the hour of judgment. And in this verse 32 God is indicating that all those who must experience the judgment of God do not know what it is. They don't know the immensity of the wrath of God. Even Jesus did not, because none who are to endure it had endured it as yet.

Now God the Father is the one who poured out His wrath on the Son. And therefore, He certainly is the one who was controlling just how much was required to satisfy the justice of God. But Christ, in His human nature, emptying Himself of His glory, learned what obedience to the Father really was, as He endured the awful wrath of God for our sins.

There is no one on the face of the earth today who knows what hell is. No one does. When people say, "I went through hell," they don't know what they're talking about. The unsaved of the world will slowly on come to know what hell is, as they spend an eternity there. But they'll have to be there forevermore before they know the full impact of the wrath of God for their sins. It's not pleasant to contemplate hell, not a bit pleasant. But I hope that everyone who is listening to this program tonight will be so agitated in their souls, so exercised, that they'll know that, "I don't want to go to hell. That's the last place I want to go to."

Now there is an escape from hell. But in order to escape from hell it means we've got to humble ourselves before God. We've got to come with a broken and a contrite heart to Him and cry out for His mercy. We can't be on any kind of an ego trip. We can't believe that there's anything worthy within us, if we're going to escape hell.

Unfortunately, most of mankind is not ready to admit the true nature of their sins before God. They're not ready to admit that they're a miserable, lost sinner, without any hope. That's too demeaning to their sense of well-being, or their pride. And so they remain unsaved.

But if it's the moment of truth, and we look at ourselves as the Bible looks at us, then we're ready to admit, with no holds barred at all, without drawing back at all, that indeed we're under the wrath of God, we are sinners. We deserve to go to hell, and we don't want to go to hell. And we begin to cry out to God for His mercy. We begin to trust in what the Bible declares about our sins, about hell,

and about the salvation that Christ has provided. That's the path to salvation.

The Identity of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:1 (325C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, I'd like to ask about Melchizedek. Who was he? Also, if Jesus died on the cross, how is He God, too? I do believe in Jesus Christ, but I'm being confronted with Jehovah's Witnesses constantly, and I cannot answer the question about His death and being God at the same time. Thank you.

HC: The first question that's raised is concerning Melchizedek. Who was he? And the second question is: How can Jesus be God if He could die on the cross?

Let me answer the second question first. If Jesus was indeed God, as Christians claim that He is, how could He have died on the cross? I could phrase the question a little bit differently: If Jesus had not been God, how could He have been our Savior? If He had simply been some kind of a super man, a very good man at that, how could He have endured the wrath of God so that it effectively became the equivalent of an eternity in hell? Because you see, that is required to save us.

Now of course many people deny the eternal nature of hell. They teach that judgment is really, ultimately, nothing more than annihilation. But that is not taught in the Bible. The Bible indicates that the wrath of God is poured out forever and ever on those who are unsaved, and their torment goes on forever and ever, as we read in Revelation 14.

In order for Christ to redeem us, it was necessary that that grievous penalty be paid. If Christ were anybody but God, He could not have paid for our sins. Only God would be able to absorb the awfulness of God's wrath to such a degree that in the space of three days and three nights of suffering He endured the equivalent of an eternity in hell for us.

The fact is, if anyone believes that Jesus was not God, they do not have a Savior. They can call Jesus Savior all they want, but they have a savior of their own making, who is unable to save them, because anyone other than God could never have paid for our sins.

Now when we speak about Jesus dying on the cross, some have the idea that the Roman soldiers or the Jews actually killed Jesus. And in a sense they did. That was their purpose, to take His life. Certainly the two thieves on the cross were killed by the Roman soldiers, as punishment for their crimes. And Jesus was put on the cross as a common criminal, also to die there on the cross.

In another sense, however, they did not kill Jesus. Remember, Jesus said, "It is finished," when He hung on the cross. And then remember, He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." After He had suffered all that was required while hanging on the cross, Christ gave Himself up to the Father. He left His body and went to be with the Father.

He did this of His own will. His life actually ultimately had not been taken from Him. The two thieves next to Him had their legs broken because it was the night before the Sabbath day, or the afternoon before the Sabbath evening, and it was necessary that they be taken from the cross before the sun went down. To hurry their death their legs were broken. When the soldiers came to Jesus, they did not break His legs, because He had already died. Did He simply die more quickly than the others? No. No. When He had suffered as He was required to suffer, to pay for our sins, He said, "It is finished." And then He declared, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Christ gave up His life willingly altogether. He willingly

went to the cross, He willingly suffered for us, and He willingly let His body be put into the grave.

The intent of the Jews, the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas the High Priest, the Roman soldiers, was to take His life. In actuality, Christ gave His life.

Now the other question has to do with Melchizedek. We read about him in Hebrews 7. And in connection with Melchizedek we understand from Hebrews 7 that he appeared to Abraham back in the Old Testament. In the language of Hebrews 7, however, we discover that Melchizedek was actually God Himself. The language will not permit any other understanding but that He was God Himself.

We read in verse 1 of Hebrews 7, "For this Melchizedek, King of Salem, Priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being by interpretation King of Righteousness [now the only King of Righteousness is God, the Lord Jesus Christ], and after that also King of Salem, that is, King of Peace."

Remember what the angel declared when Jesus was born? "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." Remember what Isaiah said concerning the coming Messiah? That He would be the Prince of Peace. More than that, in verse 3 of Hebrews 7 He declares, "without father, without mother." Do you know anyone else who was without father or mother, except Adam and Eve? No. Nobody at all was without father or without mother. Only Adam and Eve.

But it also says, "having neither beginning of days nor end of life." Now Adam and Eve had beginning of days and had end of life. And therefore it cannot be referring to Adam and Eve. It can only refer to God. He has no beginning, He has no end. He is without father or mother. He is from everlasting to everlasting.

"but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually [or forever]." He was a figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a type of the eternal priesthood of Christ Himself. In order to establish typology in the Old Testament, God did set up a great number of types in the Old Testament. Abraham was a type of God, Moses was a type of Christ, David was a type of Christ, Elijah was a type of John the Baptist, and so forth.

In order to establish a perfect type of the character and nature of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, there was no man who would be a perfect type, and so God Himself appeared in the form of a man. He did not take on a human nature, He did not become man as He did when Jesus Christ became man, but He did appear in the form of a man, in the person of Melchizedek, in order to set up a type, a perfect type of the eternal character of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Can One Lose His Salvation in Hebrews 6:4-6? (338E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi. Would you explain the verses in Hebrews 6:4-6?

HC: Hebrews 6:4-6 is a passage that troubles many many people, because when you read it, it looks like someone could lose his salvation. It speaks of those who have been enlightened, those who have tasted of the heavenly bread, those who have been partakers of the Holy Spirit, those who have repented, and yet they fall away. And if we would build theology just on these few verses, we could conclude that we could lose our salvation.

The Biblical rule, however, is that the Bible is its own interpreter. And no verse, either in the Old Testament or the New Testament, ought to be understood

until we have carefully searched the whole Bible, to discover if there is anything that might impinge upon that verse.

Now we know absolutely that if we are born again we cannot lose our salvation. This can be proven from many many vantage points, both in the language of the Bible as well as in the nature of our salvation, the fact that Christ became sin for us and paid for all of our sins. Therefore there is no sin left that could cause us to come under the penalty of sin, causing us to go to hell.

The Bible teaches that we have eternal life. The Bible teaches that nothing can snatch us away from the hand of God. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. So we know that Hebrews 6:4-6 under no circumstance is talking about someone who is saved.

The way to understand Hebrews 6 is to first of all read Hebrews 3 and Hebrews 4. That's really setting the context. In these 2 chapters God is pointing to the nation of Israel, which was in the wilderness in the days of Moses. Now they were eating of the heavenly bread, the manna. They had repented in the sense that they had left Egypt. They had turned away from Egypt and had followed Moses on the wilderness journey on the way to the Promised Land.

They were partakers of the Holy Spirit in the sense that God the Holy Spirit overshadowed them in the day in the clouds and at nighttime in the pillar of fire. They were enlightened, in the sense that Moses was there teaching them about the way of salvation. He was teaching them about the Promised Land, and all that went with it, and about obedience to God. All of these expressions you find in Hebrews 6 would apply to the nation of Israel.

But you read in Hebrews 3, in the closing verses, that most of them perished in the wilderness because of unbelief. Their knowledge, their enlightenment, the fact that they were in the presence of the Holy Spirit, and all of these other things, availed nothing because it did not meet with faith in the lives of those who experienced these things.

And so today, if someone grows up under the hearing of the Word, if he grows up in the presence of the true believers, and in the presence of God as He operates in the corporate church, he may know all kinds of verses from the Bible. He may know the outline of salvation right down to a tee. None of these things avail anything if it does not meet with faith in the life of the hearer.

Now what is faith in this sense? Faith is an abandonment to Christ as Lord and Savior. We have hung our whole life on Him. He is the only one that we ultimately want to be obedient to. He is the one that we have committed our life to. He is the one we trust altogether as the one who has forgiven all of our sins.

To put it in other language, it means that we read the Bible trusting altogether that it is the divine Word, and we read it with a view to being obedient to it, both in its doctrinal teachings as well as in the practices that it calls for, because the Bible is the voice of God. The Bible is the revelation of the will of God.

Only those who have done this are truly saved. A knowledge of the things the Bible teaches, a knowledge of the way of salvation will not save us. If we are not born again, if we have not abandoned ourselves to Him altogether, we're still going to end up in hell as sure as anything.

1 PETER

What is the "Day of Visitation" in 1 Peter 2:12? (093C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Mr. Camping. I was reading in 1 Peter 2, where it says in verse 12: "that they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation." When is the day of visitation?

HC: The day of visitation would be Judgment Day, I would think, because only then are they going to glorify God. Only then is truth going to be apparent. They're going to realize that the believers were right all the time.

CALLER: So that's when the good works are apparent then.

HC: Yes. That's when it's the day of reckoning, you see. Now the world looks at the believers and they look upon them as refuse. They look upon them as the waste of the world. But when Judgment Day comes, then everything will be brought into its proper focus.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much. Good night.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

The Devil as a Roaring Lion in 1 Pet 5:8-9 (586C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I'd like to know about 1 Peter 5:8 & 9, where it says, "The devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Does that mean Christians that are wandering?

HC: The question is raised concerning 1 Peter 5:8 & 9, "Be sober. Be vigilant, because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." Now who is he seeking to devour!

Well, I've become convinced in my study of the Bible that Satan does not know who are the born again believers. All he knows is that there are these congregations where people call themselves Christians, and they serve the Lord. But he also knows that amongst them there are those who can be snared away from the true Gospel. And he can come to them with his wiles, he can come to them through intimidation, through persecution. He can come through other gospels. He can come in a lot of different ways, and there will be those who will throw in the towel, so to speak, and turn away from the true Gospel and begin to follow a gospel patterned after Satan's liking, where they think they're really serving Christ, but actually they are not serving Christ.

And he is seeking for anyone whom he can devour. He doesn't know who they are that will fall, but he knows that in that congregation there are those who are not truly born again. He doesn't know who they are by name, but he does know that they exist within that congregation. So he's going to heckle and hassle that congregation as a roaring lion.

It's just like having a flock of animals out in the wilderness someplace. The lion is always looking for what he can devour. And who does he devour? Well, he devours the young and the aged, the weak cattle that are on the outskirts of the flock, the ones that do not have real strength. And he'll bring one down and have his food for the night. And that's the way Satan hassles the congregation. He looks for those who will prove to be weak in the faith because they have never become born again, and he will either tempt them back into materialism, or he will tempt them into another gospel, or he will persecute them so they will renounce the faith, or whatever. But

this really, I think, is what God has in view.

CALLER: Do you think He's talking to people that are not Christians?, Or is He talking to everybody?

HC: Well, constantly in the Bible God warns us, "make sure that you are saved." And this is another question. This is another way of saying the same thing. Be sure that you are saved, because if you're not saved, Satan is right out there with all of his wiles. And remember, he's the master deceiver. He's the father of lies. And he's going to snare you off into another gospel, or he's going to draw you away in some other way. And you resist him. And remember what Ephesians 6 says? What is the armor that we put on in order to resist Satan? It's the armor of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the feet shod with the Gospel of truth, and the Sword of the Spirit, and so on. It all has to do with salvation. We get as close to salvation as possible so that indeed we've become born again.

And only when we're born again, and absolutely born again, and know this, are we safe from Satan.

CALLER: How much are we really fighting against Satan, or are we, if we're in Christ and we're truly born again?

HC: If we're in Christ, if we're truly born again, Christ has done the fighting for us. He has become our Conqueror. That is, on our behalf He has conquered. And Satan is a completely defeated foe. We have no fear of him any longer. We are safe in Christ, because Christ has won the battle altogether for us.

Now until we are born again, however, if we're not born again, we're not safe in Christ. Our sins have not been paid for, and we are fair game for Satan. Even though we are corporately identified with the Kingdom of God because of joining that church, nevertheless he's going to hassle and hustle us, and he's going to keep after us. And those who are not born again eventually will fall away.

CALLER: Oh. So that's why in Ephesians it tells us to put on the armor because after we have it on we don't have to worry.

HC: That's right. Put on the whole armor of God. Then we can resist the fiery darts of Satan. Then we're safe, you see.

CALLER: And how did you come to the conclusion that Satan doesn't know who's who.

HC: Well, I came to that conclusion in a very very interesting way. In our Sunday School class we were studying the Book of Ezra. And as we were going through Ezra, we discovered that indeed it was like many other parts of the Bible. It was an historical parable. And it actually was a fact of history, all the things we find recorded in Ezra, but there were spiritual truths that were contained in the language of these historical events. And we discovered as we went through Ezra that those who were on the other side of the river (and we find that reference in a number of places) were really a picture of Satan and his forces, that were seeking to frustrate the building of God's temple, or the sending forth of the Gospel. Ezra came of course to bring the Gospel, to reestablish the law. And the people on the other side of the river were against this.

And then, amongst other things, in Ezra 5 these men from the other side of the river, who spiritually represented Satan and all of his hosts, said to those who were busy with the law of God, "What are the names of the men that make this building?" In other words, they didn't know the names. And they sent a letter to the king, and they said in verse 10 of Ezra 5, "We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. And thus they returned us answer saying, We are servants of the God of Heaven and earth and build the house

that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up." That has to do with the erection of the temple that Ezra was building at this time. That's particularly in view. And the erection of that temple was a figure of building the house of God. We are all temple builders.

But in this we discovered that these from across the river did not know the names of those who were doing the building. And so immediately the truth began to shine through that Satan does not know who those are that are born again. And I don't know of another verse in the Bible that would suggest that he does. And that of course immediately indicated why he continues to hassle the church and everybody that's in it, because he keeps hoping that he's going to snare someone else away from the true Gospel. And because there are enough people in any congregation who are unsaved, he is victorious now and then, as one will get snared off into another gospel or as one will depart from the church and go back into his old ways, and so on. And so he's very encouraged all the time as he goes along.

CALLER: We know that Satan no longer has dominion over a true born again believer. Does he know that he doesn't have any more dominion over him? And if he does, why would he still be hassling him?

HC: You see, a lot of times we give Satan credit where credit is not due. We must remember, Satan is not God. Satan is not omnipresent. Satan is not infinite in his knowledge. Satan can't be everywhere at once. Satan is a fallen angel, who is a created being.

Now by right of conquest, anyone who is unsaved is a slave of Satan, and those who are far enough away from the true Gospel can be used of Satan in many ways. As wicked people Satan can entice them to persecute and to do wicked things and so on, if God permits him to do this. And frequently God does permit him to do this.

But when a person joins the church, when he is a member of the congregation, whether he's born again or not, then he has come very close to the shelter of salvation. He's where God's people are and where the blessings are all around. And this is not the easiest place for Satan to work. Now he can have an emissary in there. There may be someone in the church who is a false prophet, and definitely the Bible speaks of this. And this false prophet is going to be working his best to try to lure anybody he can in that congregation away from the true Gospel. But let me ask you this. Is there any human being who really knows who is born again? No, we don't know who really is born again. We suspect that this one or that one is born again, and we have to make sure in our own life that we are born again. But we can't really ultimately know who is born again. Only God knows that.

And so Satan likewise doesn't ultimately know who is born again. But he keeps working away at a congregation, hoping to find those who are not, and he rejoices when he can bring someone into another gospel, or lure them away from the congregation. And this is really the activity that any congregation faces. And I really think this relates to 1 Peter 5, where it talks about Satan going about as a roaring lion. He's hassling the flock just like a lion would hassle and come against the sheep, the flock of sheep. If there are any on the outside, or on the outskirts, or who are showing weakness, he will kill that one. And the closer we are to the Shepherd, and the more we entrust our lives to the Shepherd, the safer we are.

Thank you for calling and sharing. Good night.

Casting Our Cares Upon Christ in 1 Pet 5:17 (598A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have one question. It's about 1 Peter 5:7. It says, "casting all your cares upon Him because He careth for you." How do you go about doing this?

HC: How do we cast all our cares upon Christ? God really helps us know how to do this in Philippians 4:6. There God says, "Be careful [that is, be anxious] for nothing." All of the cares of this earth, they are what make us anxious. And He says, "Be careful for nothing. But in everything with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God. And the peace of God that passeth understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." There is the formula.

I have a care, I'm anxious. I'm anxious about a loved one, I'm anxious about a sin in my life, I'm anxious about what tomorrow will bring, I'm anxious about this, I'm anxious about that. And God says, come to the Lord with prayer and supplication. Now to supplicate before the Lord means that we don't come arrogantly, we don't come demanding of the Lord. We come as a suppliant, someone who begs the Lord, "Oh Lord, have mercy. I don't deserve this at all, what I'm asking for. But oh, Lord, in Thy gracious mercy, is it possible?" And we rest all this with Him.

Now notice it also says in Philippians 4:6, "with thanksgiving." At the same time that we come with our anxieties, with our cares to the Lord, as we abandon ourselves afresh to Him, we also thank Him for the salvation He has provided. We thank Him for keeping us through the day. We thank Him for the wonderful Savior He has provided, and all the other multitudinous things we can think of to thank Him for. And there are so many.

And then we have the promise, not that God will take the care away, or the anxiety away, but He will give us the peace of God. He will take the anxiety away, but the cause of the anxiety will remain. But we will be able to view that cause now with the peace of God that passes understanding.

CALLER: When I'm worried about things, I ask God to take this away, or give me the peace about it that He wants to give me, but I don't seem to get it. I just seem to wait around and get frustrated.

HC: The problem is that when we go to the Lord with our anxieties we bring them all to God, and we pour our hearts out to God. And then when we get off our knees, so to speak, and we finish praying, we take all those anxieties right back with us. We don't leave them with Christ.

Now the bottom line is that we don't trust Him, you see, sufficiently. We've talked to Him about it, and we've told Him all about it, and we know that He is Eternal God, who cares for us, and nothing happens except it's a part of His divine will, and He's given us promises that He will never leave us nor forsake us. But having known all this, we don't really trust Him. This is all a matter of faith, you see. We've gone through the motions, we've talked to the Lord about it, but we don't dare leave it there. And so a great part of our prayer has to be, "Oh Lord, strengthen my faith. Help me to trust all of these things to Thee."

And if you have your anxieties, if you've talked to the Lord about it and yet you have the anxieties, then you've got to begin to pray, "Oh Lord, forgive me for my faithlessness, that I don't really trust You. I've talked to You about it, but I don't trust You. And oh Lord, forgive me, and strengthen my faith that I will learn to leave them all with You."

CALLER: That really helps. Thanks a lot.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

2 PETER

God Wishes for None to Perish in 2 Peter 3:9? (345A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I was calling in with regard to a question on predestination. The Bible says that God wishes for none to perish.

HC: That's Second Peter 3.

CALLER: It seems that a loving God would not create beings just to destroy them. That doesn't seem very loving. And also, John 3:16. It would seem that God only loved part of the world and not all of it. I'll take my answer over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. Good night.

The question is really raised, Is God really fair? Is He really a loving God? Aren't we somehow in error on this doctrine of predestination? How can that accord with the idea of a loving God?

You see, the problem is that we do not understand the holiness of God. We do not really know what it means to be a perfectly righteous God. We're all tainted by sin. Even after we're saved we still have a body that lusts after sin. We're very much at home with sin. Sin is not that big a problem, basically, to mankind, is it? It's everywhere. Everywhere we look we see sin.

But we begin to sense that sin must be something really terrible, when we realize that the punishment for sin is to spend an eternity in hell. That's not a very short time, you know. That's a pretty terrible thing. And when we read the language of what hell is, as the Bible speaks of it as a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and a place where there's eternal torment, and a place of eternal burning and outer darkness, and so on, we begin to sense that, my, oh my, if God is perfectly just (and certainly He is, because He is holy God), sin must be terrible, to require that kind of terrible punishment. This begins to give us a tiny little insight into the holiness of God.

Now let's look at the human race. And it seems like we have to think about this from time to time. And I'm glad that we can, because we lose sight of these facts. God creates a beautiful world for mankind. This earth was perfect. God saw everything, that it was very good. There was no sin, there was no curse, there was no blemish of any kind upon this earth. And as the crown of God's creation He puts man here, to rule over this creation, to have dominion over it, to be fruitful and multiply, and be a people that would serve God perfectly and live with Him, and have fellowship with Him.

What more could God do? What greater privilege could man have? But mankind, beginning with Adam and Eve, and continuing right down to the last baby that's born on the face of this earth, of their own volition rebels against his Creator God, denies his Creator God, and goes his own way. Rather he begins to serve the creature, or the creation, as we read in Romans 1, rather than the Creator God. It's an open affront. It's repudiation of the God who created us. Certainly God ought to stamp us out. He ought to throw us all into hell, what terrible insolence! What terrible rebellion! What terrible arrogance, that we turn against the Creator God in this fashion, when He has put us in this beautiful world in which to live.

We don't deserve any blessing from God. We don't deserve any mercy from God, when we consider what we have done in rebelling against Him. And bear in mind, we're not animals. We're not non-

thinking individuals. We're created in the image of God. We're created with a natural sensitivity to worship God. We know there's a God in Heaven. We within our hearts have a sensitivity to God's justice. We know intuitively that it's wrong to murder and to steal and to lie, and so on. And yet in spite of this we go our own unholy way. God ought to stamp us out.

Then on top of that, to make matters much much worse, God comes with His gracious offer of salvation. Now this offer of salvation is not an idle kind of a thing. If anyone is going to be saved through the Lord Jesus Christ, it is required that Christ would have paid for his sins, that Christ would have endured the wrath of God, so that God's perfect justice could be taken care of.

And so this is a tremendous, tremendous offer of grace that God is giving to the world, that whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ should not perish but could have everlasting life. And again the Bible tells us that because of the nature of our rebellion against God there's not one of us that would respond to that Gospel. We hate God as Creator, we're in rebellion against Him as Creator, and under no circumstance are we going to want to be redeemed by Him. We like what we are. We like our sin. We're going to take our own chances with eternity. We're going to go our own way.

Could mankind, created in the image of God, affront God any more? Could they be any more rebellious? Can't you see that there isn't the slightest reason why God ought to save any one of us? Don't you ever think that God is unjust in that He lets anyone go to hell. We all deserve to go to hell. Our sins cry out to God's holy Heaven for the way we regard God.

But Christ said, "I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It was God's intention from before He ever created the universe that He's going to have a people of Himself. And so God decided just whom He was to save.

Now the fact that He would save one person, does that mean that He was ungracious to the rest of the human race? No, not a bit. The rest of the human race had an opportunity to be saved, but they didn't want to be saved. The fact that the one who was saved had to be drawn by God, had to be irresistibly drawn by God so that his mind was enlightened and his will was surrendered to God, that didn't change anything. This person didn't deserve to be saved, but God said, "I want you. I'm going to save you." That did not mean that the rest were left with any sense of injustice in any way, because they didn't want to be saved.

Now the fact that God has saved a large number of people (a small percentage in comparison with those who are still going to hell, but nevertheless in total a substantial number of people), that is grace magnified over and over again. Why would God do this? Why did I deserve to be saved? Never! I didn't deserve it at all. Why am I saved? I didn't deserve it. It's all God's grace.

That is the message of salvation. We don't have to think for a moment that the fact that some are not elect is injustice on God's part. Read Romans 9, where that very question is raised, Is there injustice on God's part? And the answer comes right back, By no means! God has a right to have mercy upon whom He will have mercy.

Now in Second Peter 2:3 we read that God does not wish that any should perish, but that all should come to a knowledge of the truth. We also read in the Gospel of Luke that Christ wept over Jerusalem. And in another place it says that He declared of Jerusalem, "How oft I would have gathered you as a hen would gather her chicks, and ye would not."

We must remember that it is not a pleasant idea to God that man must

go to hell. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, the Bible declares. That is not a pleasant idea to God. God loves His creation, and mankind is part of His creation. But you must remember that God's justice demands that the penalty for our sins be paid, that mankind goes to hell.

It's like the judge who has the criminal in front of him who is guilty of a crime. And the law declares that this man must go to jail for the rest of his days. The judge has no pleasure at all in sending that person to jail for the rest of his life. I am sure that that must be a traumatic experience for a judge. But the law demands that this person has to go to jail. And if this judge is going to be faithful to the law, if he is going to be a righteous judge, then he must send that person to jail. Now that is exactly a picture of God's holy justice. The wages of sin must be paid. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

God wept over Jerusalem because He knew that they were coming under God's judgment because of their sins. He is the Creator of these people. And to see His creation in open rebellion and under the judgment of God is a painful experience for God. But God's holiness and His justice demands that they must pay the penalty.

Now why is it that He didn't save everybody? I don't know. That's God's sovereign good pleasure that He didn't save everyone. We do read in Romans 9 that even the wrath of men shall praise Him. We can't understand the whole picture. We only know this, that God says, "Make your calling and election sure." We only know this, that God says that "Whosoever cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Actually, after we're saved, and we try to find out why we came to Him, we'll discover that it was because God drew us.

Now in Second Peter 3, which says that He does not wish that any should perish but that all should come to Him, He of course is particularly talking there about the elect, those whom He had planned to save. The context is that of the patience of God in the face of the continued wickedness of the world. If God would end this world before His prescribed time, that is, before the last of the elect have been saved, then God's whole elective program would have been frustrated. And God does not wish this to be. He wishes that all who are to be saved will be saved.

Now when God really desires that some is going to be saved, no human being could resist the will of God. Don't you ever think that God is saying to us, "Now look. I've done all that I can for you, and now it's up to you." That's not the Biblical teaching. When Christ decided to save us, this decision was made before He ever created this universe. And you can depend upon it that all whom He decided to save will be saved. God will draw them. This is John 6:37-44. And read those verses very carefully.

Well, thank you for that question.

1 JOHN

How Does One "Test the Spirits" in 1 John 4:1? (113C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I've been looking at 1 John 4, and it's got me puzzled. It says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." How can you test them? How can you know?

HC: The easiest way we can test the spirits is to discover what the person is doing with the Bible. Well, let me see if I can develop this just a little bit, because this is a very excellent question.

First of all, the question is: How are we to test the spirits? We read in verse 1 of I John 4: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, to see whether they are of God." And then in verse 2 it tells us how to test the spirits: "By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist."

Now is this saying that if anyone at all acknowledges that Jesus is come in the flesh, then we can know that that person definitely is of Christ and not of Satan? No, it's not saying that. The key word here is the word confess. Now we have to understand what confess means in the Bible. Satan and his evil spirits, you know, acknowledge that Jesus came in the flesh. When Jesus cast out demons, the demons would say to Him, "We know who you are. You are the Holy One of God." Or they would say, "Have you come to torment us before our time?"

But you see, that was not confession. That was acknowledging Jesus. But you see, the word confession in the Bible means to repent. It means to have the same mind with God. And the evil spirits, of course, could never confess Christ because they were antagonistic toward Christ. Their wills were deliberately opposed to that of Christ.

And so just because people today say, "Jesus this" and "Jesus that," that in itself is not confession. Just because they say, "Lord, Lord this" and "Praise the Lord, the other thing," that in itself is not confession. Confession means that our will has been surrendered to Christ.

Now the Word of Christ is the Bible. And if I say I am surrendered to Christ, and yet I do not submit to the authority of the Bible, if I say, "The Bible is the Word of God, but there's also these other revelations that are from God," and so on, going quite contrary to the Word of God, then I am showing by this that I am not confessing Christ. I am showing by this that my will is not surrendered to the Word of God as the holy book, as the only infallible Word of God. I have a gospel that goes beyond the Bible.

And so this shows that I do not belong to Christ at all.

CALLER: I do appreciate your help. Thank you. Good night.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

What is the "Unforgivable" Sin in I John 15:16-17? (235A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Would you please explain I John 5:16 and 17? What is the sin that leads to death that this verse is talking about? And is this death the death of a believer? Or is this the second death? And if you sin and then die before you can ask forgiveness, can you lose your salvation? What is the unforgivable sin, and can it ever be forgiven?

HC: All right. I'll try to get at those questions. Thank you.

The question that has been raised is a multiple question, and it is concerned with the matter of the potential possibility of a Christian losing his salvation. Is it possible, the question is asked, that there is some sin that we could commit that would be unforgivable? And this is suggested in I John 5, where it says in verse 16, "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not unto death, he will ask and God will give him life, for those whose sin is not unto death. But there is sin unto death. I do not say that one should pray for that."

And a corollary question is: Supposing I committed a sin and didn't have time to ask for forgiveness. Would this sin in some way endanger my salvation? First of all, we have to get at a basic principle here. What is salvation? What have I been saved from? We have to understand

this before we can get into these questions.

The fact is that before we are saved, we stand body and soul as sinners before God. We're under the wrath of God, and the Bible declares that "the wages of sin is death." And the death that God has in view is eternal damnation. It is to spend an eternity in hell, under the wrath of God. That is the ugly picture of where we begin.

Now Christ came to save us from the wrath of God. He came as our substitute in bearing the wrath of God in our place. We read in II Corinthians 5, in verse 21, "for our sake He [that is, God] made Him [that is, Christ] to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in Him [that is, in Christ] we might become the righteousness of God."

You see, for those who have become saved, Jesus became sin for me. He looked down the avenues of time, and He saw all of the sins that I would ever commit, from the day I was born until the day I die, the sins I would commit before I was saved, and the sins I would commit after I am saved. Every sin that I would ever commit (and there are thousands of them), He took upon Himself all of those sins, as well as the sins of everyone else who would ever believe on Him.

Now He went to the cross. And it is at that time that He stood before the bar of God's justice and was found guilty. He was guilty for my sins, not for His own sins. Christ in Himself was sinless. But He was guilty of my sins. And God condemned Him to the equivalent of an eternity in hell, which of course would be required in order to satisfy God's justice in relationship to my sin. And so God poured out His wrath on Him, in order that my sins might be paid for.

So now all of my sins have been paid for. I am a child of God. I am a citizen of God's Kingdom. Why then do I pray daily, "Oh Father, forgive my sins"? Is this in order to make sure that the sins I committed today were also covered by Jesus' blood? No, no, that can't be. All of my sins were covered by Jesus' blood when He went to the cross. The reason I pray, "Oh Father, forgive me," is to reestablish fellowship. Like a child is to the father, I have disobeyed. And so I go to my Heavenly Father each day, "Oh Father, I didn't do as well as I should have. Now I know my sins are covered by Jesus' blood. I know that I am your child. Oh Father, forgive me. I don't want to live this way. Strengthen me that I might live in accordance with Your will. Give me more desire than ever, a stronger faith than ever. Help me to desire to read Thy Word and feed on Thy Word, that I might be strengthened in living for Thee." And so on.

This is the conversation that the born again believer has with his Heavenly Father.

Now should I, in a rash act of anger, let's say, receive a stroke or a heart attack, become unconscious, and it was sinful anger, and I die without ever talking to the Lord about that last act of sinful anger, does that impair my salvation? Not at all. Not at all. That sin, too, was covered by Christ's blood.

There's no way, there's no way that anything can separate me from the love of God, as the closing verses of Romans 8 teach. "There is neither life nor death, nor principality nor power, nor things present nor things to come, nor anything in all creation that can separate me from the love of God."

And so if we have become a child of God, and really born from above, so we've experienced the resurrection of our souls, so that we actually have been raised with Christ, and have eternal life, we never never never have to fear hell again.

But then what is God talking about in I John 5? He's talking about a brother who

commits a sin unto death. What can that be? Well, when we search the Bible, we find that there is only one sin for which there is no possible redemption. And that is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. That is spoken of, for example, in Mark 3.

Now in Mark 3 God details for us what blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is. The scribes and some of the Pharisees accused Jesus, because they believed this to be so, of being under the power of Satan, under the power of the devil. And so they were really saying that it wasn't the Holy Spirit at all who was giving Christ the power. It was Satan who was giving the power. And Jesus said, "For this sin there is no forgiveness." This is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

And that's the only sin that the Bible names for which there is no forgiveness. Now anyone who has committed this sin would never ask for forgiveness. They are so seared in their conscience, they are so antagonistic toward Christ that they would never want Him as their Messiah. These same scribes and Pharisees not only rejected Jesus as their Messiah, but they crucified Him.

Now were they brothers of Jesus? Yes. Yes, they were brethren in the congregation. They belonged to the same congregation that Jesus did. They went to the same temple, to the same synagogues that Jesus did. And so if we knew someone in the congregation who, up until this time, had been a Christian brother, and now he has come somehow under the teaching and the belief that Jesus after all was under the power of Satan, then we would know that this brother had committed a sin unto death, and there's no point in praying for that person any longer.

Now there are those who teach that the sin unto death spoken of here in I John 5 is the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now every sin in a sense is a sin unto death. Every sin is to be paid for by eternal damnation. The rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ is one such sin. It is a sin that will bring eternal damnation. It simply adds to all the other sins that person commits.

But the fact that a person commits a sin, outside of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which we've already talked about, or the fact that someone rejects the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, that does not guarantee at that point that there is no possible salvation for this person. Many people have rejected Christ again and again and again and again. And ultimately God has broken them down, and perhaps in their old age they have become born again believers. You may know of relatives in your own life, or maybe this has happened to you.

The fact is, the Bible teaches that there is all kinds of hope, even though a person for the moment has rejected Christ. That is not the sin unto death.

Then we would have the dismal, terrible picture of a loved one to whom we've witnessed, and they have said, "No, I don't want to be saved. I can't accept Christ. The salvation plan you offer is too horrendous for me. I don't want to go that way." Then we would have to conclude, there's no point in praying for this loved one anymore. He's committed a sin unto death. There is nothing else that can happen. He is destined for hell, and that's the end. What a terrible thing this would be, wouldn't it, when we think of all of our loved ones who have repeatedly turned a deaf ear to the witness of the Gospel.

But that is not the case. As long as that person is living, and as long as that person has not blasphemed the Holy Spirit, that is, has come to the conclusion that Jesus was under the power of Satan (and I've never met an individual who has committed that dread sin), and as long as this has not happened, regardless of how frequently they have rejected Christ, as long as they are living, there is

still the hope of salvation. And we are to continue to pray and pray and pray and pray, and beseech the Lord that possibly salvation might come to our loved one. This I think answers the question.

The sin unto death is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and it is the only sin we're not to pray for. Thank you for that.

What is the Sin that Leads to Death in I John 5:16? (339B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I've got a difficult verse in the Bible here, I John 5:16: "If anyone finds his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask God, and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death. I do not say that he should make request for this." I don't understand about the sin that leads to death.

HC: The question is raised as to what we're to do with the language of I John 5, which speaks of a sin unto death.

Now the complicating piece of information here is that it talks of a brother, "If anyone sees a brother commit a sin unto death." Ordinarily in the Bible, when we read "brother," the first idea that comes into our mind is that it's talking about a fellow Christian, someone who belongs to our congregation. Again and again the Bible addresses itself to the congregation as brethren. And sometimes we get the idea that whenever God uses the word brethren, He's talking about born again believers.

We must remember, however, that God is represented on this earth by the corporate body, the organized body of Christ called the church, or the congregation, or the denomination, or the assembly of believers. Everyone who belongs to that is called a brother in the Lord. But that is no evidence of any kind that all of them are born again. The fact is, when we study the Bible carefully, we must come to the conclusion that in any congregation there is a good percentage of those who are members who are not born again. Now we don't know who these are, but God knows who they are.

Now what is the sin unto death? There are those who say that the sin unto death is to reject the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, actually, every sin in a certain sense is unto death. "The wages of sin is death," whether it's the sin of rejecting Christ or the sin of lying, or the sin of cheating, or the sin of being unkind, or whatever. It is a sin unto death in that general sense.

But that kind of a sin is not in view, because the Bible says here, don't pray for this one who has committed a sin unto death. Actually, everything else in the Bible says that we are to pray for those who are sinners. We are to pray for our unsaved loved ones. And yet all of them have committed sins that are going to lead to eternal damnation.

So we know that that kind of sin is not in view. It's another kind of a sin that there's no point in praying about any longer. Now when we search the scriptures we find there is only one sin for which there is no forgiveness. And that sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. We read about this, for example, in Mark 3.

Now the brethren of Christ, that is, the members of the congregation to which Christ belongs, had committed this sin – blasphemy – against the Holy Spirit. It was the scribes, the members of the temple in Jerusalem, to which Jesus belonged, who blasphemed the Holy Spirit. And then God tells us what this is. They accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan. In other words, they accused Him of being under the power of an evil spirit, or under the power of Satan rather than being under the power of God. And so they blasphemed the Holy Spirit.

And so then in that context Jesus said, "Every sin will be forgiven you, except for the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. For they had said, He has an unclean spirit." And so if a situation would arise in our congregation where a fellow member—and no saved person would ever commit this sin; that's an impossibility, because a saved person has eternal life—whom we thought was saved, somehow got around to the idea that after all, Jesus was under the power of Satan, that He really wasn't under the power of God, if he really began to believe that, he would have committed the sin unto death, and there's no point in praying for such a one.

Now it's interesting, of course, that these scribes never did want to be saved. They were terrible in their opposition to Christ. They not only rejected Him, but they crucified Him. And if someone in the church came around to the idea that Christ was under the power of Satan, then you can depend upon it, they never would want that salvation, either. They would want nothing to do with Christ.

Now I believe that's the only way we can answer this particular question.

CALLER: All right. I understand now. Thanks a lot.

JUDE

Praying in the Holy Spirit in Jude 20 (244A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have five scripture references I wish you'd comment on. They're Mark 16:17 & 18, John 14:12, II Corinthians 3:5,6, Hebrews 13:8 and Jude 20. And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. I'll try to speak briefly about each one of these.

The question is raised concerning Mark 16:17 & 18. There we read, "And these signs will accompany those who believe. In My Name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them. They will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover."

Now as we do with the rest of the Bible, any time we read a verse, we want to begin to read it in the light of everything else the Bible teaches. If we read this verse all alone, it would seem to indicate that God is teaching here that when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then we should begin to be able to do certain miraculous things. If we would pick up a rattlesnake, it would not hurt us. If we would happen to drink strychnine, either accidentally or because someone gave it to us, to kill us, it would not hurt us. And certainly when it says that we can lay hands on the sick and they will recover, we should have the power to be able to go into any hospital and go from bed to bed and lay our hands on the sick, and there should be recovery. That is apparently what this is teaching.

But when we begin to look at these verses in the light of everything else in the Bible, we find that it isn't quite like that. We do find that there were a few signs that did accompany the early church as it first began to spread out with the Gospel, just a few. The ability to do miracles was confined, insofar as we can discover in the Bible, to just a few of the apostles. They indeed were able to heal the sick as God gave them power. They were able to speak in foreign languages, as we read in Acts 2. And we do read of the apostle Paul, when he was shipwrecked, that a poisonous viper clung to his skin, and yet he was not hurt by it.

But we also read that we're not to walk by signs and wonders. We're to walk by faith. We're not to walk by sight. The fact is, Jesus said to the Pharisees, "An evil

and an adulterous generation seeketh for a sign." This means, therefore, that it was not God's intention that we live by miracles. We are to live by faith in the Lord, humbly trusting Him.

And these signs that are related in the Bible were related and recorded in order that we might have insights into the nature of salvation which God has provided. In other words, when He healed the blind man, He was showing that even as He was able to physically heal that blind man, so He is able to spiritually heal those who are spiritually blind.

So I do not believe that this passage is suggesting in any sense that today we could find those who could lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover. The fact is, I don't know anyone who could go into the hospital and empty it, because he could go from bed to bed. Actually, we don't try to understand doctrine by experience anyway. And just strictly from a Biblical vantage point, we know that this would not be possible.

Now the second question was raised concerning John 14:12: "Truly, truly I say to you, He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do because I go to the Father."

Now this verse is widely quoted by many who are convinced that Mark 16:17 & 18 is normative for the believer today, that Jesus did miracles and therefore we can expect to do miracles, and even greater miracles than He did.

Well, let's examine that for a moment. Jesus not only healed the sick. He raised the dead. He healed the lepers. He multiplied the loaves and the fish, a tremendous act of creation. He turned the water into wine. He stilled the storm. He walked on the water. He raised Lazarus from the dead, after he had been dead for four days.

Now when we search the Bible, not only do we find that there is no one who did miracles as great as these consistently, but we also, when we look around, find that no one anywhere does miracles of this nature. And so immediately we know that God is not talking about the doing of miracles when He is speaking about the work that we would do.

When we search the Bible further, we find that Christ had two major tasks to do. There were two major areas of work He had to accomplish. And this is where we're going to find our answer as to the meaning of this verse 12 of John 14. And both of these areas of work are quite related.

One aspect is something that we have no part in. And that is His work of going to the cross and dying for our sins. We have no part in that. That is, we do not add in any sense to the salvation that Christ has provided for us. That work was unique. He went to the cross alone.

But Jesus also came as the one who preached the Gospel. We read in Luke 4, where He said in verse 43, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose. And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee." Now that was the work that God gave Him, to be a preacher of the Gospel.

Now what is the work that God gives us to do? He says, "Ye are My witnesses." We are His ambassadors, Christ as it were making His appeal through us. He says, "Go ye into all the world and bring the Gospel, making disciples." So you see, that identifies with the work that Jesus did.

Now when we examine the success of Jesus, we find that it was very marginal. He preached for over three years, and there were only a handful of believers in all of Judea. But then Jesus went to the Father, and the Holy Spirit was poured out. God began His program to evangelize the world. And Peter preaches one sermon on Pentecost afternoon, and

3000 are saved. You see, literally this promise came true. "He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do [I work to bring the Gospel, and you will bring the Gospel]. And greater works than these will he do." We will be more successful than Jesus, because "I go to the Father." That is, "inasmuch as I go to the Father, God's program to evangelize the world will begin." And therefore you can expect to see far greater success of your efforts to share the Gospel than were realized when Jesus was still on this earth.

Now the third question that was raised is relative to II Corinthians 3:5 & 6. There we read, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us. Our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit. For the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Now I'm grateful for this verse, because this points up a very insidious lie, a very insidious doctrine that is being taught by many without realizing that it is something that is very terrible in nature.

There are those who read II Corinthians 3:5 & 6, and they're saying, "The written code, which is the Bible, that kills. That's the letter of the law. But we have to trust the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit, He will give us light." Effectively they're suggesting that we are freed from the shackles of the Bible. We don't really have to pay too much attention to the Bible. We can trust that that Holy Spirit, working in a very unstructured and free way, uninhibited by the rules of the Bible, can do a much more mighty and wonderful work than that which is suggested by the Word of God. This is frequently the implication that comes out of this.

Now this is a very unfortunate and deceitful kind of an idea. This is exactly the kind of thing that would appeal to Satan very greatly. If he can only draw us away from the Word of God, if he can only make us look with some disdain upon the Word of God, if he can only get us into an arena, into a state of mind, into a practice where we are not listening to the Word of God, but we are susceptible to thoughts that night come into our minds, or susceptible to outside influences of one kind or another. And bear in mind that Satan is not limited by the rules of God, that He will not break the silence between the supernatural and the natural. God permits Satan to come with his occult practices of bringing the supernatural into the real life.

And so this just leaves the door wide open for his kind of activity. Now the fact is, the Bible is the living Word of God. It is the articulated, verbalized voice of God, whereby God has declared what we want to know. It is the holy Word of God.

And when it's talking here about the written Word or the written code, or the letter, it is true that it kills. The Bible does kill. The Bible shows us that we're sinners and that we're under the wrath of God and that we're subject to hell. It should drive the sword home, right into the very vitals of our hearts, that we're in deep and terrible trouble.

But it is God the Holy Spirit who gives life. Now how does He give life? Well, He gives life through the Word of God. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit. It not only convicts us of sin, which is the beginning point in our path to salvation. But it also convicts us of the fact that through Christ we can be saved of our sins. It convicts us of the fact that we desperately need this salvation, ere we spend eternity in hell. The Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, convicts us that God is holy and perfectly just, and sin is a terrible thing in the eyes of God.

The Word of God is the means by which God effects our salvation. Remember what Ephesians 5 declares? That we are

washed with the washing of the Word. It is the Word of God that is identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, who went to the cross for our sins. And it is God the Holy Spirit who takes that Word and applies it to our hearts. He cleanses us of our sins. But He does this through the written Word.

So check your life. If in any way you find a disdain for the written Word, if in any way you hold it on a little lesser level than anything else in the Bible, or let me put it in another way. If in any way you hold it equal to anything else in the world, then you know that the Bible is no longer the infallible Word of God to you. It is something else. And that means that in all probability you have another Gospel than the true Gospel.

Now another verse that was offered for an understanding is Hebrews 13:8. We read there, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Now this verse, again, is frequently quoted by those who would want to say, "After all, Jesus healed all kinds of people during His day. And since He is the same today, we would expect that He would heal people from their illnesses today." Or, "He will do other works of miracles today, even as He did then."

Now the Bible isn't saying here in this passage that Jesus' program is the same today as it was yesterday and forever. The details of His program will change from time to time. Jesus Christ is the same. He is Eternal God. He never changes. He's immutable. He is Eternal God. But His program changes.

Now in the days of Noah, did he do miracles? We don't read of any. Jesus Christ is the same. He existed then, too. Did He heal any lepers in the Old Testament? He healed 10 of them, just like that. Well, He did heal Naaman the Syrian. That was all. And there were many many lepers in the Old Testament. Jesus is the same. His program is different.

For 400 years, from the days of Malachi and Zechariah, until John the Baptist was born, there was absolute silence. And yet the Bible was not complete at that time. Was Jesus the same? Yes, He was the same but His program was different. You see, the fact that Jesus did something back when doesn't mean He's going to do the same thing today. His program will change from time to time.

If you are going to say that Jesus healed 2000 years ago, and therefore He heals today, then you're saying that His program is the same today as it was then. And then I should be able to go to Jerusalem and find the God-man Jesus still teaching over there. But He isn't there, because His program is different. He had completed that aspect of His program and had left this earth and had gone to be with the Father. And so His program is changing, depending on what God has in view.

And it will continue to change. Today the Gospel is still going to every nation. The Bible teaches that God's program will change again. There will be a brief period before Christ returns when the Gospel is silenced all over the world. Well, Jesus is the same. He's absolutely the same. He doesn't change. But His program will change, as God gets His preordained work done.

And then we have a last question concerning Jude 20. "But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith. Pray in the Holy Spirit." "Pray in the Holy Spirit." Now who is the Holy Spirit. He is Eternal God. He is Eternal God Himself.

Now when we become saved, we enter into God. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We are washed in the Holy Spirit. We enter into God Himself, whatever God means by that kind of language. And I'm not able to explain all of this, because I can't understand God that well. But I know that God uses this

intimate and wonderful language to indicate the precious relationship we realize with God when we are born again. When we pray in the Holy Spirit, it means that as children of God who are in Christ, we are communing with God our Father, in whom we dwell. It's this marvelous oneness that exists in the life of the believer in relationship to God Himself.

The fact is, in Romans 8 we read that the Holy Spirit takes our incomplete prayers, our prayers that we hardly know how to pray, and brings them perfectly before the throne of grace, because we belong to Him. As a born again believer, if we are communing with God, we are praying in the Holy Spirit.

This is the only way that we can pray to God, if we're really going to commune with Him.

Well, thank you for those good verses. They're all excellent verses that teach wonderful truths from the Word of God. We must be carefully, however, that we read them in the light of the whole Bible.

Did Moses Physically Die in Jude 9? (278A)

CALLER: Concerning Moses' death, did he die, or was he raptured?

HC: Our caller has raised a question concerning the problem of Moses. Did he really die, or was he raptured?

Well, let's go back to Deuteronomy. And there we read in very clear language that he died. Let me just turn to that a moment. Deuteronomy 34:7: "Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. And the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended."

Or verse 5, which is even more plain: "So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in the valley of the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor. No one knows the place of his burial to this day."

So the Bible is crystal clear that Moses died, and God buried him. But now we are amazed to find, in the Gospel of Matthew, that on the Mount of Transfiguration there are two men from Heaven who speak to Jesus about His coming death. One is Moses, and the other is Elijah.

Now of course we're not a bit surprised to see Elijah, because we read in the Bible that he ascended into Heaven in a whirlwind. And therefore he did not die. He went right into Heaven. And certainly he must have received his glorified body as he went into Heaven. Otherwise he could not appear in Heaven.

But Moses is there also. In the Book of Jude, however, we have a little more information about what might have happened to Moses, why he is in Heaven. We read in Jude, in verse 9, "But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you.'"

Now here we have a strange statement about a dispute between Satan and the archangel Michael concerning the body of Moses. I think we can speculate and read between the lines. In view of the fact that Moses comes from Heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration exactly like Elijah, namely, in his glorified body, it would seem that the archangel Michael was sent to resurrect the body of Moses, so that Moses could also be in Heaven in his resurrected body, so that while he died in the land of Moab, and truly was buried, yet he did not remain there. God later on resurrected him so that he appears in Heaven with Elijah.

Now the interesting sidelight to this is that when Jesus was on earth, He had

particularly three disciples who were very close to Him. And you know their names, of course, Peter and James and John. Truly there were twelve disciples, but these three were particularly close to Him. They are the three, for example, that went with Him when he was on the Mount of Transfiguration. They are the three who were with Him in the Garden off Gethsemane, at the time that Jesus was beginning to suffer for our sins.

And so the Bible also records, therefore, about three men who are in Heaven in their bodies. There is Enoch, that we read about in Genesis 5, who at the age of 365 "was not because God took him." And then there is Elijah, who ascended into Heaven in a whirlwind, in the presence of a chariot of fire. And then there is Moses, who also apparently was resurrected, because we see him on the Mount of Transfiguration. Again God has three men in Heaven, even as He was very close to three men on earth here.

Well, I don't know what the significance of that is, except that it's an interesting sidelight to this question of Moses' body.

REVELATION

Why is the Tribe of Dan Missing in Revelation 7? (010B)

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. My question deals with the twelve tribes of Israel, as originally named in the Book of Genesis, Chapter 8. My question concerns Chapter 7 of the Book of Revelation, where it speaks of the twelve,000 representing each of the twelve tribes, with the exclusion of Dan and the inclusion of Manasseh, which differs from the original twelve. I was just wondering what happened to Dan, and why is Manasseh substituted?

HC: And you might ask one other question: Why is Ephraim not named, and Joseph is named instead of Ephraim?

CALLER: Well, I was going back to the original. Joseph was one of the original twelve, and at one point Ephraim and Manasseh were mentioned. Levi was left out because he became a priest and he was restored back in Revelation. But the only difference in Revelation 7, from the tabulation in Genesis, is Manasseh in place of Dan. And so I know there have been these changes along, and I was wondering what happened to Dan.

HC: Well, let me say this. First of all, in every naming of the tribes, you will always find that one is not named. Sometimes it will be the tribe of Simeon that's not named. Sometimes it's the tribe of Levi that's not named. In this case it's the tribe of Dan that's not named. And the reason for this is that there were actually thirteen tribes. The half-tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh eventually become noted as full tribes, but God is constantly emphasizing the number twelve. And therefore, in every enumeration you'll find twelve tribes named. That's the first reason, because God is focusing on the number twelve, which is a symbolical number to indicate the fullness of God's people, or the fullness of the church, even as in the New Testament we have twelve apostles.

Now secondly, both the tribe of Ephraim and the tribe of Dan (and Dan especially, which I'll speak more about in a moment), but in one sense Ephraim and Dan were twins, in that they were the locations of the original worship of other gods.

When the ten tribes separated from the tribe of Judah in 931 BC, upon the death of Solomon, then wicked Jeroboam was their king. He raised up altars at Bethel, which was in the area of the tribe of Ephraim, and at Dan, which was in the area of the tribe of Dan. And this was a grievous sin in the eyes of God. Jeroboam is faulted again and again in the Bible for this. And so these two tribes became notorious for the fact that they

were the locations of this original worshipping of other gods, or of false worship, actually.

Now Dan is especially emphasized in the Bible as a figure of Satan himself, very surprisingly. And I don't know why Dan was named in this way, but it's interesting that in the twelve apostles there was one who was a servant of Satan, and that was Judas. And so it was in the Old Testament that God, for His own particular purposes, provided a figure of Satan amongst the tribes. And we find in Genesis 49:17, "Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a viper by the path." Now a serpent or a viper (that's a figure of Satan himself) "that bites the horse's heels so that its rider falls backward." I suppose that Dan, or Judas, in a real sense is a figure of any false prophets that come out of the church. They were amongst us, and then they came out and began to inveigle the congregation into trying to get them to accept another gospel. And this is where the greatest deceit comes from, right out of the body of believers.

What is the "First Resurrection" in Revelation 20:5? (029E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: When it says in Revelation 20:5 that the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed, and this is the first resurrection, if this is the first resurrection, what actually is that, and what is the second resurrection? I don't understand that.

HC: Well, put a period after "and the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed." You see, in verse 4 it's saying that when the believers are martyred, they actually do not die. Their bodies went into the grave, that is true. But in their essential being, in their inner essence, they went to live and reign with Christ in Heaven.

But the rest of the dead, the unsaved, when they die, they die. Their bodies go into the grave, and their souls go down into Hades to await judgment. And they will be resurrected on the Last Day, along with the bodies of the believers. But they don't have this privilege of going into God's presence when they die. Then it starts out and explains what the first resurrection is. Now the reason for this is that these martyrs have experienced the first resurrection. Now in Ephesians 2:1 it says, "And you who were dead He made alive." And this is repeated in a number of places in the Bible. Now if we were dead and have been made alive, then in some way we must have experienced the resurrection.

In fact, in Ephesians 2:6 it says, "We have been raised with Christ," talking about born again believers. Now actually, Christ rose from the grave. He was resurrected. And if we have been raised with Him, then we have experienced the resurrection in some fashion.

And when we read Revelation 20, it says that those who have experienced the first resurrection are blessed. Well, that's the born again believers. They are holy. Well, we are the only holy people. We are the saints. It says that we are priests of God. That's what the Bible says of us, that we are a holy priesthood. It says? "Over them the second death has no power." That's hell. And only over the born again believers can it be said that hell has no power. So all of these statements all fit together.

Now actually, we experience the first resurrection at the moment we are saved. In our soul, that real part of us, that is, our inner spiritual essence that leaves the body at death, we, as it were, instantaneously died and were resurrected a brand new soul. That's why the Bible says we're new creatures, or we're born again. That's why at the

moment of death, in our soul we can instantaneously go into the presence of Christ without any further change, because we've already experienced the resurrection. In our bodies we can't go to Heaven because our bodies first have to experience the resurrection. And they'll go to be with Christ when they have been raised.

And so these martyrs were able to go into the presence of Christ because they had experienced the first resurrection when they were saved.

The Mark of the Beast in Revelation 20:4 (143E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: In Revelation 20:4, is the mark of the beast on the forehead and on the hand to be taken literally, or is it symbolical?

HC: The question that is raised is concerning Revelation 20:4. What is the beast named there, and what does it mean when it speaks of those who have the beast's mark on their foreheads or their hands?

CALLER: Now in Revelation 13 and in Revelation 17 it speaks about a beast coming up out of the sea with seven heads and ten horns. And that beast is worshipped as God by the unsaved. It is intimately related to the dragon, who is Satan himself. And so we know that the beast is a reference to the kingdom of Satan, or to Satan himself. You can't have a kingdom without a king, nor a king without a kingdom. And the beast and the dragon are references to Satan himself, or to his kingdom.

Now all of the peoples of the world are slaves of Satan. Now when a man had a slave, that slave was marked in some fashion. It either was branded, or his ear was clipped, or whatever. And here it speaks about those who have the mark of the beast, that is, the mark of the kingdom of Satan on them, on their foreheads or their hands. That is, their wills, represented by their hands, have been sold out to Satan. And their foreheads means their intellects, their minds, have been sold out to Satan. They are totally the slaves of Satan.

You see, they are unsaved. They cannot come to life. But if we do not have the mark of the beast, that is, if we are not identified with the dominion of Satan, which of course occurs when we become born again, then to be martyred, or to die, is no victory for Satan. We simply leave our body and go to live and reign with Christ in Heaven as a soul being. And this is what is in view here. "I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded." These are disembodied souls.

CALLER: Yes. Thank you so very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

"He That Hath an Ear" in Revelation 2 and 3 (206C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. In Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation Christ repeats seven times the words, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit sayeth unto the churches." Would you comment on how this is being fulfilled during our time? And I'll take the answer over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you for calling. Good night.

The question is raised concerning a verse that is found quite a number of times in Revelation 2 and 3: "He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying." Now what is God talking about here?

You see, back in Isaiah 6, maybe I should go all the way back there, God has commissioned Isaiah to bring the Gospel. Isaiah was a prophet who prophesied to Israel in about 700 BC.

And after He had commissioned Isaiah, then it says, "Then Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said [that is, Isaiah], Here am I. Send me." And notice the strange language that God uses in Isaiah 6:9, "And He said, Go and say to this people, Hear and hear, but do not understand. See and see, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people fat and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn and be healed."

Now what's God saying here? You see, Israel of old was typical of those who had been the custodians of the Gospel, or the ones who have heard the Gospel for many many years. But Israel had not responded to the Gospel. Israel had gone its own sinful way. And they in fact were not ready to go to the Lord by faith. They wanted a gospel that they could feel, that they could look at. It was easy for them to go after Baal worship. And so today there are many who go to the Bible, not by faith, but they go trying to analyze everything, and make everything come out logically. And therefore they go to the Bible and discover that it's got a lot of contradictions in it. They discover that there are a lot of statements that don't appear to make any sense at all.

What has happened? God has blinded them. They have eyes, but they see not. They have ears, but they hear not. They in their stubborn, egotistical arrogance are going to come to God their way, rather than God's way. But there and there in the nation of Israel of old, as well as in the population, or the peoples of the world today, there are those who hear the Gospel and they are exercised by it to the point where they come broken before God and admit their spiritual bankruptcy. And they begin to cry out to God for mercy. They begin to place their trust, they find they have a trust in their heart that Christ is their Savior, and how desperately they want Him to be Lord of their life.

What has happened? God has given them ears to hear. God has opened their spiritual ears, as they have come in faith to God. And so now the Bible becomes the living Word for their lives, that guides them into all truth. And so when this statement is offered repeatedly in Revelation 2 and 3? "He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," God is saying, effectively, are you one who has had your spiritual ears opened? Have you come to the Bible by faith? Have you come to God with a broken and a contrite heart, with no pretensions of your own, no personal ego of any kind, ready to just implicitly trust and be obedient to what God declares in His Word? Then you're going to hear what God says. You're going to hear how the Holy Spirit has information for you from the Word of God.

But if you come to the Word of God like you come to any book, that you're going to analyze it and try to discover where God has made His mistakes, you're going to find that there's no truth there that satisfies your soul. You're going to find that it's an offensive book, as it talks about a blood theology, as it talks about eternal damnation, as it talks about the fact that man is nothing, that he's a sinner that deserves the wrath of God. You're going to be offended, and you're going to remain in your blindness.

So there is the question, you see. Those who have ears to hear are those who come to the Word by faith.

Understanding Revelation 20:4-5 (212C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question. In Revelation 20, verse 4, does this refer to all of us who are raised with Christ during the time between the cross and the Rapture or only those who are

beheaded or martyred for Christ's sake? And also, does the last sentence of verse 5 refer to verse 5, or does it refer back to verse 4? May I take my answer over the air?

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you very much. Good night.

Let me refer to the second question first. Let's read Revelation 20:4-5, where we have this statement: "Then I saw thrones. And seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed. I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony for Jesus and for the Word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image, and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They lived again and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection."

Now you must remember that in the original Greek, in which this was written, there was no punctuation of any kind. There were no periods. Nor were there capital letters. All the letters were the same and there was no punctuation. Now the translators have chosen to put a period after "This is the first resurrection," and end the verse at that point.

Actually, when we study the context very carefully, "This is the first resurrection" belongs, in a real sense, to verse 6, where it says, "Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection." It is describing, in verse 6, what is the first resurrection. But it also relates to verse 4, because it explains why these people who had been beheaded in their soul existence continued to live and reign with Christ.

Well, the reason that they continued to live and reign with Christ is that they had experienced the first resurrection at the time that they were born again. Their souls had been resurrected with Christ. Therefore they did have eternal life already. And so there was no way that they could die in their souls.

Now in this context (and this gets to the first question), where it talks about those who had been beheaded, it is concentrating on these who were martyred because these are especially the victims of Satan. Actually, the principle that is spoken of here applies to all believers, in the whole period from Adam all the way to the present time. Anyone at all who was saved, at the moment of death, because at the time he was saved he experienced the resurrection of his soul, immediately leaves his body and goes to live and reign with Christ in Heaven. That is a first principle of what salvation is.

But in this context it is especially speaking about those who have been beheaded, because the context of Revelation 20 is concerned with Satan, the fact that Satan has been bound. He cannot deceive the nations. That is, he cannot keep people in his prison-house as the Gospel is being proclaimed to them. They will be set free, and they'll come forth from every nation.

But God is teaching that while Satan has been bound so that his house can be plundered of his victims, he still is able to martyr. He still goes about as a roaring lion He is able to persecute

Now the question is raised, really, Is Satan, after all then, somewhat victorious? While his house is able to be plundered, is he really not winning the victory anyway? Because look at all of these who are being martyred. And God effectively is saying, No, Satan hasn't won anything, because look where these martyrs went. They didn't go into doom and gloom. They, because they have experienced the first resurrection at the time they were saved, left their bodies and simply changed their residence. They went to live and reign with Christ. And our souls go into Heaven to live and reign with Christ.

And so there was no victory for Satan at all. He hadn't won a thing.

Thank you for that question.

The Two Beasts in Revelation 13 (234B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question on the thirteenth chapter of the Revelation. I was wondering if you could explain what the difference is between the two beasts. And I'd also like to know if you could elaborate on the last verse of the chapter, about the beast's number being 666.

HC: The question is raised concerning the two beasts of Revelation 13. What is the difference between them? What do they signify? And then, the question is asked also about the number 666 that is found in the last verse of the chapter.

The first beast comes out of the sea. It has ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns or diadems upon its horns, and a blasphemous name upon its head. And it "was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority." Now this is our first clue, that really teaches who this first beast is. "The dragon gave to it his power and his throne and great authority."

Now the dragon is Satan. Again and again in the Bible God speaks about the dragon as Satan, or Satan as the dragon. And the beast therefore would be the kingdom of Satan, totally synonymous with Satan himself. But it is the kingdom of Satan as it is found in the world throughout time. The seven heads refer to the rule of Satan throughout time.

In Revelation 17 we find another reference to this beast, and we find in verse 8: "The beast that you saw was and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition." It says that "the seven heads are seven mountains, or hills on which the woman is seated. They are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen. One is and the other is not yet come. And when he comes, he must remain only a little while." Therefore, it's speaking already in the past tense of seven of the heads, five of the seven heads representing kings who had already reigned. Now this simply is indicating that it is going all the way back into time, wherever the kingdom of Satan has been. It is the rule of Satan as it is found in the earth.

Now the ten horns more particularly relate to the rule of Satan right at the end of time, and tie very closely, incidentally, into the second beast, or in some respects to the second beast, as I'll show in a moment. But the ten horns do refer to the rule of Satan at the end of time because again, when we read Revelation 17, it says in verse 12, "And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings, who had not yet received royal power. But they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beasts."

Now the interesting thing is that in the Book of Daniel God makes reference to ten horns, out of which the little horn comes. And when we look at the Book of Daniel carefully, we find that in this reference to the ten horns and the little horn, it is really speaking about the false prophets, or it's talking about the church itself. The fourth beast spoken of in Daniel seven has ten horns: "And I considered the horns. And behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things."

"Eyes like a man" is a figure of speech speaking about prophets. If we tie that back into Isaiah 29:10, we can see this. Now the beast, therefore is the kingdom of Satan that rules throughout time, although particularly the period that's in

view here is the whole New Testament period, the forty-two months of Chapter 5. And in verse 3 it says, "One of its heads seems to have had a mortal wound," indicating that at the cross Satan was dealt a death blow. The kingdom of Satan was dealt a death blow because of Christ's victory on the cross.

But yet, "Its mortal wound was healed. And the whole earth followed the beast with wonder." You see, the kingdom of Satan still goes on, even though the destruction of Satan and all the wicked was guaranteed because of Christ's work at the cross. Yet the kingdom goes on.

Then in verse 4 it says, "Men worshipped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like the beast and who can fight it?" Now this beast is what unsaved man is totally involved in. Any unsaved man is a worshipper of the beast, a worshipper of the kingdom of Satan, a worshipper ultimately of Satan himself.

Now in verse seven it says that this beast was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And this of course is pointing to the end of time, just before Christ returns, when Satan will be able to silence the Gospel.

Now beginning in verse 11 it speaks about a second beast coming out of the earth, that had "two horns like a lamb, and it spoke like a dragon." Now the minute it says that it spoke like a dragon, we know that again it is totally Satan related.

Now this beast is Satan in his religious rule, particularly, as he works through false prophets and false christ. "Two horns like a lamb." You see, he appears like Christ Himself. Christ is the Lamb that was slain. Remember, in II Corinthians 11 it speaks about Satan going about as an angel of light. Well, that's another figure that is tied in with this other beast that rose up out of the earth. The phrase "out of the sea" or "out of the earth" is a figure relating to hell itself. Hell is sometimes spoken of as the heart of the earth, or the heart of the seas.

Now this beast works great signs, "even making fire come down from Heaven to earth in the sight of men. And by the signs which it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast, it deceives those who dwell on earth, bidding them make an image for the beast which was wounded by the sword and yet lived. And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain."

Now you see, Satan, as he controls the minds of unsaved men, normally does not show himself to be of any life, or the giver of any life, or of having any life characteristics. A political kingdom ultimately is a fairly dead kind of a kingdom. It exists, and then it doesn't exist. It has no supernatural power.

But when Satan comes through his emissaries, false prophets and false christ, who come with signs and wonders, as predicted in Matthew 24:24, as he comes through occult activity of one kind or another, this makes the worship of Satan far more glorious and marvelous. Now of course those who are worshipping him don't understand that they're worshipping him. They are deceived, because Satan is the great deceiver. But nevertheless, ultimately they are worshipping him.

And they give breath to the image of the beast. They make the worship of the kingdom of Satan a live venture, as if through this there is a vital, energetic eternal relationship with the god that they are worshipping failing to realize that their god is Satan, and that he is doomed to eternal damnation.

Now those who worship the beast are spoken of in verse 18 as having a

number, the number of man. Now as I've said before perhaps, in the King James Bible the translation is, in this instance, a poor translation. In your King James Bible you'll find that it says, "It is the number of a man." But the word that is used here, the Greek word, is the identical word that is used in the Bible repeatedly where it speaks of Christ being the Son of Man. Now under no circumstance would that be translated the "Son of a Man," because Christ under no circumstance was the Son of a man. He was the Son of Man. He was of mankind. In other words, He was a human being.

And here also the same word is used, so it would have to mean that it is the number of man, the number of mankind, the number of the human race. In other words, anyone at all who is unsaved symbolically has the number 666 on his forehead. It is the number assigned to an unsaved man, who is destined for hell, because he is a slave of Satan.

Now this number originally had its beginning in Zechariah 13, or at least it's referred to there, where it says in verse 8: "Two-thirds I will cut off and destroy, but one-third" And it goes on to speak about the redemption of the one-third. The number two-thirds, if written as a decimal, is .666666. And if we just use the first 3 numbers, we get 666.

And there are at least two illustrations in the Bible where this is put forth. We read about David, when he defeated the Moabites, that he caused them to lie down in three lines. Two of the lines he put to death. One line he spared, and they served him. David there was a type of Christ as Messiah, the two-thirds a figure of those who are under the judgment of God, the one-third a figure of those who are saved.

In II Kings 1 we read of Elijah, that he was sent for by the wicked king of Israel. And a company of men came to take him, and he called down fire from heaven, and they were destroyed. A second company of men came to take him, and he called down fire from heaven, and they were destroyed. A third company of men came to take him, and plead for mercy, and they were spared. Again we have two-thirds being destroyed, one-third being spared.

Well, there, just very quickly, is an outline of some of the ideas presented in Revelation 13.

The Identity of the 144,000 in Revelation 7:4 and 14:1 (260D)

CALLER: Could you tell me who the 144,000 are that John is writing about in Revelation?

HC: The question: that is raised concerns itself with the 144,000. The 144,000 are spoken of in two places in the New Testament: one in Revelation 7 and the second in Revelation 14.

Now in Revelation 14 they are shown to us to be those who have been redeemed from earth. They are those, we read in Revelation 14, who are chaste. This is verse 4: "They have not defiled themselves with women." In other words, they're the perfect bride of Christ. Their sins have been covered by the blood of Christ, and they stand before God as if they had never sinned. And they have been redeemed from mankind: "and no lie was found in their mouth." In other words, when we are unsaved we are slaves of Satan, who is the father of lies. And once we are saved, our sins are covered and we're like those who have never never lied. And this is talking about all born again believers.

Now the number 144,000 is used because God frequently uses numbers symbolically. The number twelve is symbolical of the fullness of God's program. And here He's talking about the number of believers, the fullness of believers.

Sometimes He uses it as twelve plus twelve. And so we have the twenty-four elders in Revelation. Sometimes He uses it as twelve times twelve. And so we have the 144,000. Sometimes He uses it as twelve times twelve times twelve. And so we have the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is in size 12,000 stadia by 12,000 stadia by 12,000 stadia. And in the Holy City Jerusalem, which is the fullness of all believers, we have twelve foundations, we have twelve gates, and we have walls that are 144 cubits thick. The whole picture, you see, is symbolical.

And so with the 144,000. It is the fullness of all believers. Now in Revelation 7 they are spoken of as twelve tribes of Israel, because in the Bible God repeatedly speaks of the true believers as being the true seed of Abraham, whereas the blood descendants of Abraham are not necessarily Israel. The true Israel of God are those who are the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Read Galatians 3 particularly, and you will see this.

Well, thank you for that question.

When Was Revelation Written? (483B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Brother Camping. One question I'd like to ask, or two. The first one is, was Revelation written when the Bible was complete as we know it today?

HC: Was Revelation written (that is, the book of Revelation) when the Bible was complete as we know it today? Based on the testimony of the Bible itself, we can know absolutely that the book of Revelation was written as the last book of the Bible, and the last chapter of the Bible would be Chapter 22. It was the last written Word of God. If anything else was written after that, whatever the nature of it may have been, no matter how holy it would have appeared to be, it would have to immediately be discounted as the Word of God because it would be in violation of Revelation 22.

For example, there are theologians who speculate (and I underscore the word speculate) that maybe the Gospel of John was written after Revelation. Well, that's sheer nonsense. That cannot be. That is speculation that is based on no regard at all for the authority of the Word of God. There's no way that any of the books of the Bible could have been written after the Revelation. Had they been, they would never have appeared in the Bible.

CALLER: Any kind of a miracle now is just as impossible, according to the Bible?

HC: Any possibility of an articulated word of God outside of the Bible is impossible, because God says we're not to add to the words of this book. And we know that the miracles were done because God was given historical parables illustrating the nature of salvation. But the rule of salvation is that we walk by faith, not by sight. And when we study the Bible to look for any information at all that might relate to miracles, particularly near the end of time, in every case without exception we find that any language always relates to Satanic activity. And that is terribly ominous.

CALLER: You also made some statements about predestination. Does that mean that people that God didn't plan to save aren't going to be? Or does it mean that God knows who will turn to Him and who won't?

HC: That's a good question. Does God know who will turn to Him and who won't, and those who will turn to Him He predestinates to save? Or does God actually plan whom He is to save, whether they want to turn to Him or not?

Now there's a big school of thought of those who say that God knew who would turn to Him, and these are the ones

that He predestinated. Now let's examine that idea for a moment. In Ephesians 2:1-3 God indicates that those—He's speaking there about those who did become saved, therefore they would have been those who were predestinated in some sense—now He describes them before they were saved. And let me read these three verses very carefully, because this tells us about our condition before we were saved:

"And you hath He quickened (that is, He made alive), who were dead in trespasses and sins." Dead! Now that's a pretty heavy word.

"Where in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." That is, it's talking here about according to Satan's activity.

"Among whom also we all had our conduct in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Now this is describing people who eventually became saved.

Now how could these dead people, spiritually dead slaves of Satan, lusting after sin just like the rest of the world, why would they be inclined to accept the Gospel or to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ? They would have no more desire to do this than anybody else, because they're just as sinful as anyone else. They're just as dead as anyone else.

So the idea that God knew who would turn to Him is contrary to what the Bible allows. That's an impossibility. Secondly, if we would hold that idea, that God knew who would turn to Him, then we have a salvation that is based on works plus grace. In other words, I took the first step. I did a good work by turning to the Lord Jesus Christ. God recognized that, and then He applied His grace to my life and completed my salvation. And so we are partners in salvation, Christ did His work and I did my work. And that is flatly contradictory to the Gospel of grace. "By grace ye have been saved, not of works, lest any man should boast." The moment that we tie in even the least smidgen of our own merits or works into our salvation, then we have to stand before God by our works and we're going to end up in hell for sure. Either we're saved by God's grace or we're not saved.

And so on both of these counts that particular theological idea cannot pass Biblical validation. The fact is, when God predestinated me or anyone else who has become saved, He saw me as a dirty rotten sinner. He saw me as someone who was spiritually bankrupt. He saw me as someone who would never turn to Him. But God inclined my heart and God gave me spiritual eyes so I began to see the sinfulness of my life, so that I would respond to the Gospel. And this is the way He saves everybody that He plans to save.

CALLER: What about in Revelation where it says, "I stand at the door and knock. And if any man opens the door I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me."

HC: Ah, yes. Now the question is, doesn't Revelation 3:20 say something different, because it says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." Doesn't this teach conclusively that after all, it is up to mankind whether he wants to be saved or not, that Christ is simply standing at the door and knocking?

Well, the key phrase, the big phrase that is missed here is, "if any man hear My voice." Now look at verse 22: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Well now, here is Lazarus in the tomb, the brother of Mary and Martha. And Jesus is outside of the tomb, knocking on the door of that tomb: "Lazarus, come forth, Lazarus,

come forth." Well, Lazarus is dead. He can't hear Jesus. He's dead. Jesus could call like this forever and Lazarus wouldn't come forth. But Lazarus did come forth. Why did he come forth? Because God gave him ears to hear and a will to respond. And Lazarus did come forth. And so when Jesus knocks at our heart's door, as the Gospel call goes forth, only those to whom He gives ears to hear will open the door, because they recognize this is a call that must be obeyed.

In other words, it isn't my will that finally made the difference. It is because God inclined my heart and qualified me so that I would be saved. Now you see, this strips me of all ego or all self-congratulation. There's no way that I can take the slightest glory or the slightest credit for my salvation. I can never think, "Oh my, am I not a wonderful person, because look at me. I chose for Christ, while all my neighbors just continue in unbelief." Nonsense. I can't take one ounce of credit. All I can say is, "Oh God, how is it possible that You saved me when by nature I'm just as guilty a sinner as anyone else? How can it be? And oh Lord, if you saved me all I want to do is live out my life in thankfulness to Thee for what you have done for me."

CALLER: But even if you didn't want to be saved, you would be, because that's what He wants.

HC: Even if I did not want to be saved, I still would be saved, is the next question. And you are absolutely correct. By nature I don't want to be saved. There is no human being that wants to be saved. The Bible says in Romans 3, "There is none that seeketh after God." We all love our sin too much. We all like the idea that we think we're king on the throne of our life. We actually aren't. We're actually slaves of Satan. But we've been deceived by him. And there isn't one of us that wants to be saved.

But God begins to deal with us. The Father begins to draw us. And we become increasingly uneasy because of our sins, and we become concerned about Judgment Day and hell. And we begin to seek for answers. And we don't find our rest until we find our rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, God gives us the "want to."

CALLER: Thank you, Brother.

HC: Thank you for calling.

The Battle of Armageddon in Rev 16:16 (571A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have one question. It's about I Peter 5:7. It says, "casting all your cares upon Him because He careth for you." How do you go about doing this?

HC: How do we cast all our cares upon Christ? God really helps us know how to do this in Philippians 4:6. There God says, "Be careful [that is, be anxious] for nothing." All of the cares of this earth, they are what make us anxious. And He says, "Be careful for nothing. But in everything with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God. And the peace of God that passeth understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." There is the formula.

I have a care, I'm anxious. I'm anxious about a loved one, I'm anxious about a sin in my life, I'm anxious about what tomorrow will bring, I'm anxious about this, I'm anxious about that. And God says, come to the Lord with prayer and supplication. Now to supplicate before the Lord means that we don't come arrogantly, we don't come demanding of the Lord. We come as a suppliant, someone who begs the Lord, "Oh Lord, have mercy. I don't deserve this at all, what I'm asking for. But oh, Lord, in Thy gracious mercy, is it possible?" And we rest all this with Him.

Now notice it also says in Philippians 4:6, "with thanksgiving." At the same time that we come with our anxieties, with our cares to the Lord, as we abandon ourselves afresh to Him, we also thank Him for the salvation He has provided. We thank Him for keeping us through the day. We thank Him for the wonderful Savior He has provided, and all the other multitudinous things we can think of to thank Him for. And there are so many.

And then we have the promise, not that God will take the care away, or the anxiety away, but He will give us the peace of God. He will take the anxiety away, but the cause of the anxiety will remain. But we will be able to view that cause now with the peace of God that passes understanding.

CALLER: When I'm worried about things, I ask God to take this away, or give me the peace about it that He wants to give me, but I don't seem to get it. I just seem to wait around and get frustrated.

HC: The problem is that when we go to the Lord with our anxieties we bring them all to God, and we pour our hearts out to God. And then when we get off our knees, so to speak, and we finish praying, we take all those anxieties right back with us. We don't leave them with Christ.

Now the bottom line is that we don't trust Him, you see, sufficiently. We've talked to Him about it, and we've told Him all about it, and we know that He is Eternal God, who cares for us, and nothing happens except it's a part of His divine will, and He's given us promises that He will never leave us nor forsake us. But having known all this, we don't really trust Him. This is all a matter of faith, you see. We've gone through the motions, we've talked to the Lord about it, but we don't dare leave it there. And so a great part of our prayer has to be, "Oh Lord, strengthen my faith. Help me to trust all of these things to Thee."

And if you have your anxieties, if you've talked to the Lord about it and yet you have the anxieties, then you've got to begin to pray, "Oh Lord, forgive me for my faithlessness, that I don't really trust You. I've talked to You about it, but I don't trust You. And oh Lord, forgive me, and strengthen my faith that I will learn to leave them all with You."

CALLER: That really helps. Thanks a lot.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Could you explain to me Revelation 16:16?

HC: Revelation 16:16: "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." The question is, how are we to understand Revelation 16:16, which speaks about this Armageddon?

Now in verse 15 God gives us a clue as to when this takes place: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

Now any place in the Bible where God talks about coming as a thief is talking about Judgment Day; He's talking about the end of the world. We read in I Thessalonians 5:2, where God talks about coming as a thief, and then He says, "Sudden destruction will come upon them, and there is no escape." He's talking about Judgment Day.

In II Peter 3 God is talking about the destruction of the world, that the elements will melt with fervent heat, and He talks about this happening at the time that He comes as a thief. And so this is Judgment Day that's in view.

Now He's speaking here of the final wrath of God being poured out upon all of the wicked of the world, and He speaks of it as a battle. In verse 14 He is

talking about the unsaved of the world, headed up by Satan. And they're gathered together to the Battle of that Great Day of God Almighty. That's Judgment Day. And God insists that this is so because of the next phrase, "Behold, I come as a thief."

You see, ordinarily when two nations are at war with each other, they go along, and they go along, fighting their skirmishes and their individual battles, and so on. And finally there is a final battle that ends the war. One nation has become decisively victorious, and the other nation is completely destroyed. And God of course is speaking here of the warfare that exists between the Kingdom of God on the one hand, headed up by Christ, and the kingdom of Satan on the other hand, headed up by Satan. This warfare has been going on.

But the end of this warfare is Judgment Day, when Satan is judged and all the wicked of the world are judged and removed into hell. And God speaks of this as a battle. And that is the Battle of Armageddon. God uses other language in Revelation 19, where He speaks about Christ coming on a white horse with His sword protruding from His mouth, which is the Word of God. And then He calls all the birds of prey to feed upon the corpses of the slain, that is, indicating that Judgment Day has come, and the wicked are destroyed. That is, they are removed into hell.

Now God uses the figure of Armageddon because the plains of Megiddo were a place where many decisive battles were fought. And particularly from the Biblical vantage point, this is pointing to the victory of the nation of Israel over the wicked Canaanites, headed up by Cicera, during the days of Judges 4 or Judges 5, when Cicera had 900 chariots of iron and the Israelites had none, but 10,000 of the Israelites marshaled together, and they brought great victory over Cicera and all his hosts. And this was in the plains of Megiddo. It was a type of Judgment Day itself.

CHAPTER 4 – CHARISMATIC ISSUES

GENERAL

The Laying On of Hands (240C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I do have one question, please. The laying on of hands, where is it referred to, and is it permissible today?

HC: All right. The question that's raised is concerning the matter of laying on of hands. Is that permissible today, and where is it referred to in the Bible?

Let me see if I can help you. I think one of the earliest places that we read about laying on of hands is back in Genesis 48. And there we read where grandfather Jacob is going to bless his two grandsons, the sons of Joseph. And Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, are in front of Jacob. And he puts his right hand on Ephraim and his left hand on Manasseh. And then he pronounces a blessing upon them.

Now this matter of laying on of hands is picked up later on in the Bible. We find, for example, in Acts 13, when the apostles are sent forth, that we read in verse 3, "Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off."

And when we tie these passages together, and incidentally, in another place we read where the apostle Paul admonished Timothy, "Don't be hasty in laying your hands" on this one or that one. And the implication from all of this is that in the laying on of hands, symbolically it's a representation of imparting a blessing. The blessing that was on Jacob was imparted to Ephraim and Manasseh. The

blessing that was on the church in Jerusalem was imparted to these first missionaries, as they went forth.

It is not mandated in the Bible, it is not called for in the Bible. It has no value in itself. But it can symbolize, at any rate, the idea of the impartation of blessing.

CALLER: Is it wrong to be using it in healing today?

HC: In the case of healing, we must remember that, and the question really is: Is it incorrect or wrong to lay hands in connection with healing? Now the Bible does teach that God cares for us. He is the Creator of the world, and He upholds it by His power, and we are to pray for one another. And in James 5 it does speak about anointing someone with oil if they are ill, although the context would show, if we really developed that, that this anointing with oil was really a figure of bringing the Gospel to this one who was ill, and the healing that was looked for there was spiritual healing rather than physical healing.

Actually, it isn't God's purpose to guarantee healing for us, or to necessarily provide healing for us. He does heal. All healing comes from God. And ordinarily God does this because He is the Creator God, who cares for His universe. And if someone is ill, we have the privilege of going to the Lord to beseech the Lord on behalf of this one that is ill.

But insofar as laying hands on that person, I don't really know how this would symbolize anything particularly. I do believe that some of the apostles laid hands on those who were ill. I think that could be shown from the Bible, again with the idea of imparting blessing. But that miraculous healing of the Bible is something that is not typical for today.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Understanding the Name of Jesus (266B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi, Mr. Camping. You've been talking a lot about the Trinity and so forth. And I noticed, as I've visited different church groups, some of the people's reactions to different things. They seem to be a little different. For example, with regard to our relationship to God and our relationship to Christ. And I've been kind of troubled about this at times, because I've become born again, since I have had this sense of sinfulness and I realize I've got to repent, that I have to turn away from sin, and so forth.

I think I've seen some spiritual growth in my life over the last couple of years. But as I've been around here and there, sometimes someone will come up to you and say something like, "Well, how's your relationship with Jesus?" or they'll say in a Bible study, "Well, we're getting to know Jesus better." And I go home that night, and sometimes the phrases kind of hit me kind of funny, because I guess maybe my background would make me think something like, "Well, let's see, I have a relationship with Jesus. But yet I have a relationship with God, if I know Him."

And sometimes this spills over into areas that people have asked you about. When I pray, it comes more naturally to say, "Oh, Lord," or "Father." And people say, "Isn't Jesus wonderful?" And I don't react to it emotionally like they do, you know? And I think to myself, "Yes, Jesus is wonderful, isn't He? He went to the cross." And I realize He endured the wrath of God for me. And yet I guess when I'm praying I react to the term God, and sometimes it seems like, when so many people speak to me, He's a friend or something. You know? And I guess there's a truth to that, but He's God, too, if you know what I mean. And sometimes I think, "Well, I don't react

emotionally like that to Jesus." Is that my pride, that I won't want to react that way? Now I've got to really trust what the Bible says. The Bible says Christ is the Savior, and that's what I've got to believe, because the Bible says so.

HC: Yes, I follow you. In other words, the question you're really posing is, How are we to relate to this phenomenon today where there is so much emphasis placed upon Jesus? We have songs that say, "Jesus." It's almost as if there is something superstitious about the name Jesus.

CALLER: And then sometimes I just can't react to it in that kind of sentimental type of way.

HC: You know, we get on safe ground when we look at the scripture. Now here is the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, speaking in Colossians 1:3: "We always thank God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you." Now immediately we see two things here. First of all, he puts the Father Number One. We pray to the father. The fact is, in I Corinthians 11 God teaches that the head of Christ is God. Now we can't understand that, but that's the Biblical language.

Okay. And here we find that we're to pray to the Father. And the fact is, I could refer to all kinds of passages like this, as for example, Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ, with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places."

The second truth that shines through here is the statement, "The Lord Jesus Christ." Now the word Jesus is a perfectly good Biblical word: "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." But the word Jesus is not telling the whole story. There is also the word Lord here. And the word Lord indicates that He is the head of the Kingdom. He is the one who is not only the one who has saved us, but He is the head of the Kingdom that we belong to. And we are to recognize Him as head.

The word Christ means He is the Anointed One, that He has been anointed King by virtue of His redemption. Now this comes back to an observation you're making. There is a tendency on the part of some to put Jesus down on our human level, because Jesus was His human name. That was the name that was given Him by Mary and Joseph, Jesus. But He was the Christ.

Now they didn't give Him the name Christ. Christ is the Name that means Messiah. He was the Messiah of the Old Testament. And certainly they didn't give Him the Name Lord. But they were told to name Him Jesus.

Now a lot of people look upon Jesus as not much more than a friend, not much more than someone who was just a wonderful buddy to have around. And they fail to realize that the Lord Jesus is Eternal God, that He is King of kings and Lord of lords, that He is the Almighty Majesty. And we are to look upon Him with awe and reverence and trembling.

CALLER: I don't sort of envision Christ as the person who walked in Palestine 2000 years ago. He did do that then, but I tend to think of God as God Almighty, like you say, the Ruler of the universe. And it's easier for me to have that concept rather than the man as such, although He had to be a man, too.

HC: You see, this phenomenon is further encouraged by an altogether different question. And that is the pictures of Jesus. We have these pictures of Jesus, which are flatly contrary to what God teaches in Exodus 20, that we're not to have make any likeness of God. And yet the picture of Jesus conveys the idea of a benevolent individual, a compassionate man, a longsuffering man. And no

picture could ever, ever convey the fact that the Lord Jesus is Eternal God Himself.

CALLER: You don't think there's too much of a problem, then, just stick with the Bible and try to just pray to God, because Christ is God Himself.

HC: Well, yes. We're always on safe ground when we follow the scriptures. Now Jesus was asked how to pray. And He says, "Pray thusly, Our Father, who art in Heaven."

CALLER: Now we should be thankful to Christ for saving us, so they'll say, "Thank you, Jesus, for saving us." It seems to come easier to me to say, "Thank you, Father, that Christ paid the price for my sins."

HC: I always wonder why people want to improve upon the scriptures. Why not follow the rules of the scripture? Why not follow what God has given us examples of? And then we know that we in the will of God. Now if we're going to formulate our own language and try to be more holy and more direct than what God indicates, well, who do we really think we are? And I wonder why men would want to do this.

CALLER: I thought I'd share that. I didn't know whether it was an unusual thing that I might have experienced. You know, you hear so many different opinions on things, you know. It's hard sometimes to separate your own pride from really wanting to respond to God.

HC: And you see, there's another factor here. Now God has very carefully given us His Word. And by praying to God the Father, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and recognizing that it was the Father who so loved us that He gave His only-begotten Son, and so on, this cautions us that we do not make a caricature of the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not say things about Him that are not so. We just use the Biblical language.

He says, "I and the Father are one." Fine. "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." I don't understand that. I don't understand that. All I know is that it's so, because Jesus said so. Jesus and the Father are one, and yet the Lord Jesus prayed to the Father. He was not praying to Himself.

And when the Lord Jesus was on earth, dying for our sins, He was not in Heaven. The Father was in Heaven. Jesus left Heaven. He emptied Himself of His glory and came to earth, in order that He might pay for our sins. These are things we cannot understand.

CALLER: The same thing with the Holy Spirit, when we read about the Spirit. He's also Eternal God.

I appreciate your clearing that up for me. I worry about that sometimes.

HC: And incidentally, you mentioned the Holy Spirit. And there are those today who are making a caricature of the Holy Spirit. It's the "Holy Spirit" this, the "Holy Spirit" that, the "Holy Spirit" the other thing. And they are never talking about the Father. They are almost suggesting that nobody knew about the Holy Spirit until we came along.

Actually, we're only going to be on safe ground when we carefully read the Bible and let the Bible be our guide. And when the Bible tells us to speak of the Father, let's speak of the Father. And if the Bible is speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, it's speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. And let's just follow what the Bible says, even though much of it we cannot understand.

CALLER: There are so many books on this subject, on the Spirit, and so forth. When you start looking at all these, you can get pretty confused. I was thinking the other day, and I've heard you say, that it's better to just stick with the Bible. You don't get so confused.

HC: Yes.

Was that an Image of the Lord I Saw? (274B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I would like to ask you a question. This friend of ours took a picture. He was in an airplane. There were these two airplanes, and he was going to take a picture of this other airplane. And as he took the picture, this cloud got in the way, as he stopped the camera. And we have a photograph. When he developed it, I guess he didn't notice it, but there's a figure on a cloud. And it has a robe, and it's arms are stretched out. And my family and I have been looking at this picture and I was wondering if there are any scriptures about seeing figures, or images, or something. His arms are stretched out, and he's on a cloud. And this was taken up in the air, as he was taking a picture of another airplane.

HC: The question that is raised concerns the possibility that there might be an image of Christ or of God seen by man in some fashion. Our caller indicates that somebody took a picture while he was in an airplane, and when they developed the picture there is what appears to be a picture of a man with his arms outstretched.

Now incidentally, this phenomenon has been spoken about many, many times. There are certain pictures being circulated with this kind of a scene on them. First of all, we don't know whether those pictures are authoritative or not. People can do all kinds of things, you know, in the darkroom, to doctor up the slides, or doctor up pictures. And there's a tremendous amount of chicanery and deceitfulness going on. So I would never put any trust in any photograph. A photograph is no proof of anything in itself.

We can know that God Himself would not project anything like this. God has given us His Word. This is the revelation of God which we are to go to. And when He comes again, it will be on the clouds of glory, and every eye will see Him. There will be no mistake that it is Christ. It's the end of the world. The universe will be collapsing.

Now this does not mean, however, that Satan himself, who does break through the barrier between the supernatural and the natural through his occult powers, could not possibly do something like this. This is possible. There are those who say they have seen a cross here or there that just will not go away, for which there is no earthly, natural explanation. And so they believe that it is supernatural in some way.

Well, it's not going to be from God. It may be that Satan may do something like this, because Satan is always trying to get people to turn their eyes away from the Bible. If we begin to look for signs and wonders, then we are already on a path to discredit the Bible. The Bible no longer retains its authority that it should have as being the only divine Word of God. Now God does speak about Satan coming with signs and wonders, near the end of time. It doesn't speak about God coming with signs and wonders until Christ Himself appears on the clouds of glory, but that is the end of time. But prior to this nowhere in the Bible does it speak about God doing signs and wonders.

But it does speak in a number of places of Satan doing signs and wonders. In Matthew 24:24 we read, "False prophets and false christs will arise, with signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." In Revelation 13 it speaks about the false prophet coming out of the earth, and he will come with signs, even making fire come down from heaven. We read in II Thessalonians 2 about the man of sin taking his seat in the temple. And in that connection it speaks of him coming with signs and

wonders of falsehood.

And so all of these references refer to Satanic activity. And all of these references refer to the period of time just before Christ comes back, which is probably where we are today. And so if there is any kind of supernatural activity going on, it is not from Christ. It is from Satan, who comes with signs and wonders.

And therefore, as believers, we would not want to have any interest or anything to do with such activity.

Thank you for sharing that.

Do We Pray to the Father or to Jesus? (278D)

CALLER: Could you tell me how we pray? I was talking to one of my friends. I pray to my Father in Jesus' Name. She said she prays directly to Jesus. Could you help us out there?

HC: The question is raised: To whom should we pray?

Now in this area we have to be very very careful not to become wiser than God. We read the Bible, and we do find that there is a triune God. The word triune is not used, but the Bible speaks of God the Father, the Bible speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. In other words, He is eternal God in every sense of the word, and the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit, that He is God.

And so we might think, well, since the Lord Jesus Christ went to the cross on our behalf, we really ought to pray to Him. He is the most dear and precious to us. And many people pray this way.

But we must remember that God had laid out the rules, and these we are to follow. Remember when the disciples asked, "Teach us to pray," what did Jesus say? "Lord Jesus, who are in Heaven"? No, He didn't say that did He? He said, "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed by Thy Name."

Again, when we study the prayers that are offered, we read, for example, of the apostle Paul, who constantly is talking about his prayers. In I Thessalonians 1 it is typical. We read in verse 2, "We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in Our Lord Jesus Christ."

In other words, God is insisting that we pray to the Father. Now this is a remarkable thing, you know, because in I Corinthians 11 we read that the head of Christ is God. The Father is the essence of God in the highest possible way that we could think of God. Not that the Lord Jesus Christ is any less. But it is God the Father who sent the Son. It is God the Father in whose Name Jesus came.

If you read the Gospel of John, through Chapters 5,6,7,8, you will see that again and again Christ referred to the Father, and that He comes on His authority, and that the Father is everything. And it is to Him that we are to pray. And we don't want to get holier than the Bible. We don't want to say, "I know, but Jesus is God, too. And why can't we pray to Him?" Well, let's just be obedient to what God has laid down.

Now it's true that the deacon Stephen, at the moment that he was martyred (we read about this in Acts 7), he had a vision, in verse 55 of Acts 7: "And he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into Heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'" And then he prayed, in verse 59, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

And so this is a very special illustration, in which Stephen is actually looking into Heaven, a very unusual situation. But that's not typical. Throughout the New

Testament we find that we are to pray to the Father.

Now Jesus said, "Whatever you ask, you ask in My Name." In other words, we go to the Father in the Name of Jesus. And "in the Name of Jesus" means to go on the authority of Jesus. Effectively, Jesus is saying, "You can talk to the Father, you can have open access into the throne room of Eternal God. What a magnificent blessing and opportunity this is. And it's all made possible on My authority, because I paid for your sins at the cross. I made it possible that you might become right with God. You have been covered by My righteousness. And therefore you can talk with the Father."

And so this is why we pray, "Our Father." And then we pray, "for Jesus' sake," or "in the Name of Jesus," which is indicating that we are doing so on the authority of Christ.

Now nowhere in the Bible does it say that we pray to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Eternal God, who is active in the world, evangelizing the world amongst other tasks. He fills us in order that we might be qualified to be an evangelist, to be a prophet. But we don't pray to the Holy Spirit, even though He is Eternal God in every sense of the word. We pray to the Father.

Comments on Today's Church Scene (383B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have just been listening to you for a few weeks, and I don't know your feelings about this new charismatic movement that's going through the country, but it's somewhat confusing to me sometimes. And I just wonder what you do think about it, and what you feel about the tongues movement. You do believe in people being healed by God, don't you?

HC: Absolutely I do. No one becomes well except God makes them well. God cares for this world. He supports this world by His power. He is watching over this world. But I do not believe that miracles are being done as Jesus did them when He healed the ten lepers, or when He raised Lazarus from the dead. That's a different matter altogether.

CALLER: Well, yes. I know what you mean, although I've had people tell me that they have seen miracles somewhat to that degree. For instance, my sister-in-law, who has osteomyelitis, had some elders pray for her. And her foot was black, and she said it turned to its normal color at the time that they prayed for her.

HC: Well, let me just say this. The place where we find truth is in the Bible. Our minds are very deceptive. We can't trust what our minds tell us, nor can we believe everything that we hear. There is a tendency on our part to sometimes see things more hopeful than they really are. There is a tendency to exaggerate occasionally. I'm not saying that your sister lied to you or anything like that. All I'm saying is that the way we find truth is not by some kind of evidence out there. It's by what the Bible declares. And the Bible declares that Christ did not go to the cross to give us physical healing. The Bible does say that God upholds this world by His power, and therefore He does heal, if it happens to be His will. Lots of times it isn't His will, and people die of disease.

But God cares for unsaved people, and He cares for saved people. He cares for those who have been prayed over, and He cares for those who have not been prayed over. God is concerned about this world, and He does bring healing. But insofar as the miracles that Jesus did, they were very special in nature. They were instantaneous. He set aside the ordinary rules, the ordinary laws that govern the universe, so that instantaneously a man with a withered hand could have a whole hand.

Now that is not happening today. Instantaneously lepers could become well. And that's not happening today. Instantaneously Lazarus could come out of the grave. And that's not happening today

Secondly, we're living in a day when we're very near the end of time. All of the Biblical information points to this. And Christ warned, when we get near the end of time, that the church would be overrun with those who come with signs and wonders. In Matthew 24:24 Jesus declared, "False prophets and false christ will arise, with signs and wonders, to lead astray if possible even the elect."

The fact is, when we study the Bible we find no reference to signs and wonders near the end of time relating to true Gospel activity. All of the references, and there are a number of them, which relate to signs and wonders taking place near the end of time, are all Satanic in origin. And that's very ominous. That's very traumatic to read about.

If you look at Matthew 24:24, or II Thessalonians 2:8-10, or Revelation 13 or Revelation 16, you'll find in all four of these places references to signs or miracles. And in every case it has nothing to do with the activity of Christ in bringing the Gospel.

CALLER: Well, this is what's so confusing to me. We came from a really fundamental church, and when we moved from Arizona to California we still received the newsletter from our old church. And our pastor, in the last several newsletters that we've gotten, has really denounced, for instance, the new charismatic movement.

HC: Incidentally, on this program I don't like to talk about any congregation or denomination or movement. We'll just talk about what the Bible declares.

CALLER: Oh. Well, it's just confusing to me because of the fact that I know so many wonderful Christian people in this, and if we call these things Satanic, how can these people claim to be Christians? How can we say that it's of Satan? That's what I'm wondering. For instance, healing, or speaking in tongues, or I don't know all the other things that seem to be associated with this, although if you don't want to go into it it's all right. But it's very confusing to me.

HC: Let me see if I can help you. Remember earlier I said that we do not build doctrine by outside evidence. We build it by the Bible. Now you can look at many gospels and sects and cults, and so on, today. And you can find people who are lovely people, who are decent moral people, who are find citizens and who are very zealous for their cause. And if we would try to make a study of the gospel that they hold or the religion that they hold by their lives, by the good things they do, by their benevolent attitudes, and what have you, and their love for their fellow man, we would have to give their particular gospel or religion the very highest approval.

But you see, the test of the true Gospel is not in the lives of people we look at, because we can't look at a person's heart. Only God can look at a person's heart. The test of the true Gospel is, "What does the Bible say?"

Now the Bible indicates that it alone and in its entirety is the divine Word of God. In Revelation 22:18 & 19 we read, "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein. And if anyone takes away from the words of this book, I will take away his share in the book of life," and so on. In other words, God is indicating that we are to look at the whole Bible as the Word of God, and we're not to look at anything else as the Word of God.

That means that any gospel, regardless of how beautiful it may seem, or the people who are involved in it may appear to be, any gospel which believes that the Bible

is the divine Word of God, but which also believes that there is another book or another source of divine truth, such as visions or voices or tongues, or whatever, is by definition another gospel rather than the true Gospel, because those who hold to that kind of a gospel are saying that there are at least two sources of divine truth. There is the Bible, and there is this other source over here.

Or any gospel which declares that only part of the Bible is the divine Word, and that there are parts of the Bible that are not to be looked upon as the divine Word, would also by definition be another gospel.

Now this is the way we have to decide what is the true Gospel. Any denomination or gospel or congregation of belief that one holds has to be understood in the light of, "How do they relate to the Bible? Is it alone and in its entirety the divine Word?"

Now we're living in a day right near the end of time, when the church – the churches, the denominations, the groups of believers as they are found throughout the world – is becoming increasingly lax in maintaining the authority of the Bible. The church is not being true to its responsibility to remain faithful. Now it's still the church of Jesus Christ. It still has a mandate to bring the Gospel. It's still represented, to use Biblical language, by a candlestick in Heaven. But it is beginning to rewrite the rules. It's rewriting the rules on divorce and remarriage. It's rewriting the rules on population control, and rewriting the rules on who has authority in the church, who may preach, and so on. And the church is rewriting these rules.

It's rewriting the rules insofar as what the Bible consists of. It's countenancing books that are called paraphrases of the Bible, which are not the Bible at all. It no longer is nearly as interested in a deep and urgent study of the Word of God. The church is increasingly interested in social activity, in music activity. Now music is fine in itself. Social activity is fine in itself. But God says, in Hosea 4:6, "Because you have rejected knowledge, I will reject you from being a priest before Me." In other words, we are turning away from the Word of God as being the final authority.

Now as part of the judgment on the church, or as part of God's bringing His wrath upon the church because of its activities, the Bible indicates, and all of this was planned and prophesied in the Bible, there's nothing that's happening that's out of control, or beyond what we could expect, that as we approach the end of time the church will be assaulted by those who come with these other gospels, and particularly those who come with gospels that feature signs and wonders. They'll come with a gospel that looks so much like the true Gospel that even the true believers would be deceived if this was possible. It talks about this in Matthew 24:24: "False prophets and false christ will arise, with signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."

The elect are the true believers. Even they could be led astray if they were not held by Christ, because these who come as false prophets and false christ, in the Name of Christ, believing they are followers of Christ, come with a gospel that looks so much like the true gospel that even the elect would be deceived if possible.

And this is a judgment on the church, because the church is not remaining faithful. And ultimately this will result in the silencing of the Gospel. The day will come, and it's fast approaching, when God will take away from the churches and congregations and denominations and groups of believers, as we have known them throughout the New Testament period, the credential or the right to be the custodian of the Gospel.

The Gospel will be silenced. We're not to that point yet, but that time is coming.

Now because we live in this dynamic and interesting and also traumatic time, we have the experience of seeing the vision in the church. Let me illustrate this. Up until our generation, if we had lived, let's say, fifty years ago or one hundred years ago, or two hundred years ago, and we belonged to a congregation, the church members would have come into the fellowship of believers there, and ordinarily (there would have been a few exceptions, but ordinarily) they would have lived and died in that congregation. We would have believed they were children of God, or born again believers. And finally, when Mrs. Jones or Mr. Smith died, we would all be very happy in our sadness that our dear friend had gone home to be with the Lord, that finally he is rejoicing with Christ in Heaven. And this would have been a normal experience.

We, however, are living in a day when the church is being assaulted by these other gospels (and there are many of them), so that anyone at all in the congregation who is not a born again believer and according to everything we read in the Bible, there is no congregation, there is no denomination, there is no church, no group of believers at any time in history that consisted altogether of born again believers. Even the disciple band did not consist entirely of born again believers. The churches of Asia Minor, in Revelation 2 and 3, did not consist entirely of born again believers. And there is no church that consists entirely of born again believers.

Well, as these other gospels come, and they're very glorious gospels, you know. They appear so dynamic, they appear so significant. And certainly they talk about Christ and the blood of Christ, and all these things. As they come, anyone who is not a born again believer, anyone who has been desperately making like a Christian and as near as we can tell is a Christian, will be snared off into these other gospels.

And so this is where the trauma comes. This is where the division comes. This is where the strife in the congregation comes from. And this is what makes it very difficult to live today. This is a day when you cannot evaluate the gospel by the lives of people. You can only evaluate the gospel by the Bible. And you want to make sure that in your own life you remain true to the Bible, as being alone and in its entirety the divine Word of God.

CALLER: That's what I'm trying to do, but it seems so confusing to read all these things. But can I just ask you this? If this is not of God, why do they seem to be glorifying God in all that they do, and bringing others to Him? How could this be serving Satan, if they are bringing others to Christ and winning souls to Him? How could it be detrimental, or how could it be of Satan if this is the case?

HC: All right. Let's raise this question. And that's a very good question. How is it possible that a gospel, any gospel that is not the true Gospel, could really glorify Christ in a tremendous way, apparently, and really apparently bring many people to Christ? Is this possible? And the Bible says absolutely so.

In Matthew 7, beginning with verse 15, Jesus is talking about false prophets. And He says, "In that day (that is, at Judgment Day)," these false prophets will be so certain that they were followers of Christ that they will argue with God at the judgment throne and say, "Lord, Lord." In other words, they were very familiar with saying, "the Lord Jesus" this and "Praise the Lord" that, and so on. "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name (in the Name of Christ)? Did we not do many mighty works in Your Name? Did we not cast out demons in Your Name?" In other

words, "Weren't we against Satan in Your Name?" And what will the Lord say? "Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity I never knew you."

So don't underestimate Satan. Now we read in II Corinthians 11 that Satan comes as an angel of light. Most people quite frequently fail to realize the magnificent deceiver that Satan is. If someone comes to you and lies to you, and it's a flagrant outright lie, so that you can spot it in a minute, you say, "Oh, you liar." That person was not a very good liar, was he? He was a liar, but he was an amateur at the business.

But when Satan deceives, he is the master deceiver. He is the master con artist. When he deceives somebody, they have no idea that they have been deceived. They have no idea. He's so subtle, he's so clever. He comes as an angel of light, that is, a messenger of God, with the message of salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he just twists it enough, so that it's not the true Gospel. That's why Matthew 24:24 says that even the elect would be deceived, if that were possible. That's how clever Satan is.

And so don't you believe it for a moment that Satan won't glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course he will. He'd be glad to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, if in so doing he can gently lead someone away from the true Gospel.

CALLER: Well, it makes me so sorry for the ones that are being led into all this, but I guess the only solution is to just pray for them, and pray for their true salvation and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

HC: Well, this is a day when we want to be sure that we remain with the true Gospel. On this program I never hold up one congregation or one denomination, or one group of believers above another, because I believe there are true believers in most denominations. But this is the only thing we can hold up. There's only one thing we can hold up, and that is the Bible, the Bible. It alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. And if we'll only take that, and remember that, and keep going to the Bible for our authority. If we're going to decide what doctrine is true, check it out in the Bible. Don't check the evidence on the outside, because our minds are tricky. Our minds deceive us. And we're not sure whether we're being told the whole story. We can't read the heart of men, and so on. But we can read the Bible. And in the Bible God gives us the straight story, absolutely straight story. We can depend on what we read there.

And as long as we're reading the Bible and trusting it as the divine Word, Satan can never come at us with his deception. He doesn't speak in the Bible. God speaks in the Bible. The Bible is the voice of God. Every time we read the Bible we know this is God speaking to us. If I would receive a vision or something else, I would have no idea who was speaking to me, whether it was out of my mind, or whether I was hallucinating, or whether Satan himself was coming at me. I'd have no way of knowing, none whatsoever.

But when I read the Bible, I know that is God speaking to me.

CALLER: I sure appreciate your helping me. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Understanding the True Gospel (675A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I was wondering if I could clarify a few things with you. I'm trying to understand your message of salvation. As I understand it, we must know and understand the true Gospel, and we must constantly be on guard against false gospels. And we must be very careful of people who may be giving us false gospels, although they

themselves fully believe in what they're saying, and may apparently be able to back it up with Bible Scriptures. Is this basically correct?

HC: Yes, I would say that is basically correct. Every false gospel (and we call it a gospel only because they still talk about the Lord Jesus and the shed blood, and so on) has an authority that is wider or narrower than the Bible alone and in its entirety. And yet those who follow it are convinced they are following truth, and their doctrines have some Biblical validity. That is, they find verses that will support whatever doctrines they are teaching. Now of course they're looking at those verses from the vantage point of their larger authority, so that they interpret the verses very frequently differently than if they were following the true Gospel. But nevertheless they are convinced that they can back up at least some of what they're preaching from the scriptures.

CALLER: How then is a simple person such as myself supposed to know and recognize the true Gospel, without apparently extensive background and training, which apparently you had?

HC: There are two things that I might say. First of all, the Bible says Jesus' sheep did not hear them. And the context is where Jesus is saying, "All that have come before Me are thieves and robbers." And God identifies thieves and robbers in the Bible as a term that relates to those who are followers of other gospels than the true Gospel, and yet they claim that they are saved.

What I'm trying to say is that the Bible teaches that ultimately it is God who guides us into truth and keeps us from being snared into a false gospel, if indeed we are to be saved, if we are indeed one of God's elect. That is a commitment that God makes. But at the same time, God does warn, "Beware of false prophets." And God tells us to test the spirits, and so on. And wonderfully, there is a very simple test. It's so simple, and yet so few theologians have ever expressed it. And that simple test is that any religion or any gospel is determined by the authority under which it operates. As I've said so frequently, if you are a Muslim how do you know how you are to live, or what you are to believe as a Muslim? Well, you go to the writings of Mohammed. He is the authority, and these writings are looked upon as divine.

And so if you're a true believer, what is your authority? The authority is the Bible, alone and in its entirety. We're not to add to the words of this book, nor take away from the words of this book. Therefore, if someone talks about the Bible, and really believes the Bible is the authority, and yet he also believes there is another source of divine truth, then by definition he has a wider authority than the Bible alone and in its entirety. And therefore they have a different gospel than that which would be determined or structured by the authority of the Bible alone and in its entirety.

CALLER: What I'm concerned about myself is that I understand several messages that I've heard you give, signs or miracles or visions or speaking in tongues, or any of the number of manifestations of the Holy Spirit, are now pure signs of the reverse. These things don't happen any longer, in other words. And now if you receive signs, or if you see a miracle, it is definitely from someone who is representing a false gospel.

HC: All I can do is tell you what the Bible teaches. As the Bible talks about the character of the church at the end of time, where I believe we are, we find that in every case (there are no exceptions to this) where it talks about signs and wonders in the church it always relates to Satanic activity. And that's a very ominous fact.

Now the interesting thing is that those churches that are interested in signs and

wonders (and they're legion today, they're growing and proliferating all over the world) invariably those churches are also interested in visions and voices and tongues, and so on. But visions and voices and tongues are an admission that God is still speaking today, that God is still bringing divine revelation. Therefore the Bible is not alone the Word of God. They are saying there is more to the Word of God than the Bible. And so by definition their authority is a different authority than the Bible alone. And so it's no wonder therefore that they're also interested in signs and wonders. Any gospel that is not the true Gospel is not of God, and if it's not of God it's of Satan. There is only one true Gospel that is of God, and that is the Gospel that is structured by the Bible.

CALLER: What about the case of signs and miracles that are pertinent only to today, but still fit the scriptures? Doesn't that relate to the place where Christ said, "By their fruit ye shall know them," that a good tree cannot bear evil fruit and an evil tree cannot bear good fruit? That's the only real test that I've ever found - that Christ said to test the prophets on that basis, by whether their fruit was good or evil.

HC: But what is the fruit? You see, if the Bible says we're not to add to the words of this book, and now someone says, "That's fine, but I believe that God is still speaking today, that He still comes with visions, and so on," then he is rebelling against God. He is rebelling against the authority of the Word of God. And so regardless of how moral he may appear or how often he talks about the Lord Jesus or the blood of Christ or the church or the resurrection, or whatever it may be, the fact is they are designing a gospel that they want rather than a gospel that is structured by the Bible. This is where the whole thing begins and ends, and that is with the authority. The Bible is the authority. It is the only authority. The entire Bible is the authority. And the moment we depart from that, then we are starting to go down a path that is designed from our own minds, if we're hallucinating or dreaming, or whatever; or it even could be of Satan, if the vision did come from him.

That's the problem that we're facing today. Are we willing to surrender our will to the authority of the Bible alone and in its entirety? That is where the true Gospel is. And we aren't willing to do that if start looking for divine truth in a vision or a voice or something else.

CALLER: Then you're saying that God no longer speaks to people.

HC: I'm very certain He does not, in any kind of a verbalized or articulated way. God indicates that we're not to add to the words of this book I'm very positive about that.

But I also know that in the secular world, for example, mediums and so on are convinced that they are receiving messages from God, and I know that Satan does speak through ouija boards and tarot cards, and so on. And so God certainly allows Satan to break the silence between the supernatural and the natural. Now the Bible warns in Second Corinthians 11 that Satan comes as an angel of light, or as a messenger of light. In other words, he comes looking exactly like the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Bible speaks of Satan's ministers as being ministers of righteousness. So deceitful is Satan that these ministers are convinced that they are serving Christ, absolutely convinced. But God calls them emissaries of Satan, or false prophets.

If Satan is allowed to break the silence between the supernatural and the natural in the secular world, then certainly he'll do it in the church. But he's going to do it in the most holy surroundings. And so we're living in a very dangerous era, a very dangerous time. And the only security we have is that we listen only to

the Bible as the Word of God.

CALLER: You just made a remark that I'll have to question you about. You say that if Satan was going to speak out like that, it would only be in the most holy places. Shall we say from Bethlehem, in a manger? Shall we say from a simple man walking around in the most rural country area?

HC: No. The most holy place insofar as the Bible is concerned is the church. Bethlehem is not a holy place. Bethlehem is the place where Jesus was born, but that doesn't make it a holy place.

CALLER: I would say the manger was.

HC: No, it's not a holy place. Jesus was born there, but that which is holy is that which has been set apart for the service of God. And the temple that God speaks about is the body of believers. And that's exactly where God warns that Satan will operate. In Matthew 24:24 God says, "False prophets and false christians will arise with signs and wonders, so lead astray if possible even the elect." Now the elect are the true believers. They are the ones who have been chosen by God from the foundations of the world. And they are found in the churches and congregations that hold the true Gospel. These churches are going to be harassed by false prophets, who come in the name of Christ, with a gospel that looks so close to the true Gospel that even the elect would be deceived, if that were possible. It's not possible. God gives us that assurance in other passages. But it will be so close to the true Gospel, because Satan comes as an angel of light.

But one of the factors that we can recognize immediately, as stated in Matthew 24:24, is that they will come with signs and wonders. And so any time someone is featuring signs and wonders it's really a red flag: Watch out! Watch out! That can't be of God, because the true Gospel is not interested in signs and wonders. It's interested in walking by faith. And it's an evil and an adulterous generation that seeketh for a sign.

CALLER: Then how would a person know if he was one of the elect?

HC: We know we're one of God's elect if we have become a true believer, if we know that our sins have been paid for and that Christ is our Savior and Lord, and we're convinced that the Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. It is the Word of God. But if we say we're saved, if we say our sins have been paid for, and yet we have become convinced that there is more to divine truth than the Bible, then we don't know what salvation is. The Bible says that if anyone adds to the words of this book, God will add to him the plagues written therein, which is another way of saying that he is still subject to damnation, which brings us to the conclusion therefore that he is still unsaved.

CALLER: The thing is, though, if I believe all the things that you say, then how can I be sure that what I read in the Bible is really the true Gospel, and that I'm not deceiving myself.

HC: You see, we have to start with faith. By faith we have to believe that the Bible is the Word of God. Now the Bible is not something that has just been written in the last 100 years, and it's a popular best-seller because it's caught man's fancy. The Bible is a book that has stood the test of 2,000 years in time, and millions of people have hung their lives on it. And when we study the Bible very carefully, we find that the internal evidence of the Bible clearly demonstrates that it is a supernatural book. There are just far too many truths hidden within it and pouring out of it to ever allow it to be anything but a book that is God breathed. In fact, the Bible says of itself that holy men of old spoke as the Holy Spirit moved them.

We start therefore with the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God. It's not some

publisher's book, it's not some church's book. It is the Word of God itself. And the Bible says of itself that we're not to add to it. And those who have hung their lives on the Bible and have trusted everything that the Bible offers have come to salvation, and they know that they're saved because the Bible is the living Word of God. As they read the Bible, the Holy Spirit witnesses with their spirit that they are a child of God. And this is not in any articulated or verbalized fashion. It is simply that they sense in their hearts that yes, this is truth, I believe this. And God's wish becomes their command.

CALLER: The verse that you keep quoting from, about he who adds to or takes away from this book, is right at the end of Revelation. And when I read it, I can see no reference to the rest of the Bible, only to the prophecies of the book of Revelation. That's where you and I would disagree. How do we know that you're right and I'm wrong, or I'm right and you're wrong?

HC: The Bible is one cohesive whole. The Bible is not a series of sixty-six books, each standing on its own merits, so that you can do with any one of those books as you wish. The Bible is one Word, it is the Word of God. And if you add something to the book of Revelation you have added it to the Bible. And if you take something away from the book of Revelation you have taken it away from the Bible.

CALLER: The point is this. I would agree that you could not add to or take away from any of the books of the Bible. But when I read Revelation, I only read that that is a curse, or a wrath of God, particularly pertaining to that book, because if anyone disturbs one word of that prophecy he throws the whole prophecy off, thereby blinding anyone who would understand it.

HC: Supposing that someone added a verse to the book of Revelation and it was a verse from another part of the Bible. There's a lot of redundancy in the Bible, where God uses the same verse even in the same chapter, over and over. If someone added a verse to Revelation that was found elsewhere in the Bible, they have now thrown Revelation out of balance. But the fact is, they have added something to the Word of God. They have put something there that God has not said, that God has not decreed at that particular point.

The Bible is the Word of God. This is the big point. And we either believe this or we don't believe it. And if we don't believe it, then we can make our additions to the book of Revelation, and once we do that when we read Revelation 22:18 we're going to interpret it in the light of our wider revelation. And we've already accepted the principle that God is still speaking today. And so then we're going to read Revelation 22:18, and we're going to say, "Well, whatever it means, I know it doesn't mean that God is not speaking today, because my later authority indicates that that conclusion is impossible." That's exactly the trap that you get into.

But if we just let the Bible speak to us, then we know that we stop with the book of Revelation. That is the end of revelation. The curious thing is that so frequently those who are interested in signs and wonders are also interested in adding to the Bible, adding further visions, and so on. And yet the Bible is very clear that signs and wonders near the end of time are related to Satanic activity. And yet they don't seem to fear that they may have fallen prey to this.

Secondly, if I would receive a vision, a glorious vision, some holy vision, knowing that Satan goes about as an angel of light, how do I know it's not of Satan? He's no dumbbell. He's not going to come against me with a red suit and a forked tail and a pair of horns. He's going to look like Christ. He's going to

look as much like Christ as he possibly can. And so how do I know that I'm not being conned by him? The only reason I know I'm not being conned by him is to not listen to him, because the Bible says that he goes about as an angel of light. And the Bible says we're not to add to the words of this book. So if I received that vision tonight, I would be on my knees praying, "Oh God, have mercy on me. What happened to me? How did I ever become this kind of a prey? How come Satan became this interested in me?" I would reject it out of hand.

Here God has given us this magnificent Bible, and there is no individual in the whole wide world who has really come to understand it altogether, because it is the matchless riches of the revelation of God's grace, and no one has plumbed the depths of the riches of the Bible. And here it is to read, and every word that you read, you know absolutely, this is the Word of God. God has given us the instruction to compare spiritual things with spiritual, that is, we let the Bible be its own interpreter. And as we search the Bible and compare one part of the Bible with another part, we can begin to get more and more information as to what God is really teaching. It's just a marvelous, marvelous experience in getting into the Word of God. And virtually nobody is doing this. And yet my, how entrancing it is, how intriguing it is, that maybe God would bring a vision or something else. And frankly, I want nothing to do with visions or voices. I don't want to be conned by Satan. I want to be absolutely obedient to the Word of God.

And we live in a free land. If someone else would rather take a chance with visions and voices, and if he's intrigued by signs and wonders, fine. We live in a free land. He can do this. But from my vantage point of studying the Bible, I know that it's not the gospel of the Bible. And if you don't have the true Gospel, then you don't have salvation. And frankly, eternal damnation is a pretty long time, and it's pretty awful. And I wouldn't want to take any chances that I might end up in hell, because I'm following the wrong gospel.

CALLER: OK. In other words, you are certain that you are saved.

HC: I'm absolutely certain I am saved.

CALLER: Because you have studied the Bible, and it fits your beliefs. Your interpretations fit your beliefs, and so you are certain of them.

HC: It does not fit my interpretation. I have studied the Bible, and I have come to the point where I am ready to surrender my will, my interpretation, my anything, to the Bible itself. The Bible is the authority. And any time I can learn, it's going to be from the scriptures, not from my mind. It's going to be from the scriptures. And the more I study the Bible, the more I'm going to learn. It is the Word of God. It is what I bow to altogether.

CALLER: What I mean is, what you read in the Bible substantiates what you believe, and so therefore you are convinced that you are saved. Is that basically what we're talking about? I'm trying to find out for myself.

HC: The Bible teaches that we're sinners, we're under the wrath of God, that we deserve to go to hell, and except for God's grace that's where we go, that if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who has paid for our sins, if we find in our life an earnest desire to do God's will, not for merit, but because we love God and because we find this earnest desire in our hearts, then we can know that we know Him. And so when I find these characteristics in my life, that I really believe this with all my heart and have these desires within me, then I know, based upon the Biblical statement, that I am saved.

CALLER: I agree with basically everything that you've said there. And I

don't believe my faith in God is any less than what yours is. But I do find that I disagree with you on some points of the Bible. And this causes me some problems because . . .

HC: Yes, but it depends on what points you're disagreeing on. If you're disagreeing on the authority itself, if you believe that there is more to divine revelation than the Bible alone and in its entirety, then you have a different gospel than I have. And of course that's your privilege. On the other hand, if you agree with me that the Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word, and yet you disagree on this point or that point, then it's a matter that both of us have to keep studying. And if we keep studying, since truth is one piece, we are going to come closer and closer to each other. No one can have truth unless he has truth; and if two people have truth then they agree with each other.

CALLER: I believe that I am totally open to the will of God and obedient. And I do believe that the Bible is the one and only true Word of God. But I do believe that the Bible does leave some space for directions from God, specific directions from God, at a time period later on in the history of man.

HC: By that statement, if you are referring to an articulated or a verbalized statement, through a dream or a vision or a voice, or whatever, then you are negating your first statement, where you say that the Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. Effectively you're saying, 'But I believe there still is additional divine revelation.' And then you by definition have a different authority.

DREAMS AND VISIONS

Does God Speak to Us in Dreams? (111D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'm a Sunday School teacher, and I have a girl in my class, a teenager, and she wanted to know why she keeps having dreams and they keep coming true. And I didn't know what to tell her.

HC: The question is, What do we do when we know somebody, or this is happening in our own life, that we have dreams and they start coming true? This is a fairly serious business, because it means that we have begun to listen to those dreams as being some kind of a revelation from God. We have that dream, and we think about it and we pay a lot of attention to it. And we really memorize it in our mind, so that later on, when it appears to come true, then we are convinced that it must have been from God.

Actually, the Bible teaches that there is only one source of divine truth, and that is the Bible. If we add anything to the words of this book, God will add to us the plagues written therein. Now we have an enemy whose name is Satan. And he desperately tries to snare us away from the Word of God. And so he may begin to plague us, with dreams or with visions or with whatever, in order to try to get us to listen to something else besides the Word of God.

Or we may be doing this in our own minds. We all dream. Dreams are as common as grass. We would not be healthy unless we dreamed. And it may be that we dream, and just the fact that we are listening so carefully and looking for these things (Will they begin to take place in the future?), causes us to begin to look upon this as the Word of God. And in that sense we are worshipping other gods.

Whether it's from Satan or whether it's out of our own mind, it really doesn't make any difference. We are not to listen to that. And if she will go to the Lord and

ask forgiveness, if she will cry out for His mercy, "Oh Lord, forgive me, that I would ever think about a dream as being some divine message. Forgive me for not listening only to the Word of God," and if she'll level with the Lord and mean business with Him, so that Christ is her Savior and Lord, then she's not going to have this happen anymore, that things would be foretold so that they would come true. ESP, dreams, anything at all that appears to come true is of an occult world that is alien to God.

CALLER: When she told me that when she goes to bed at night and has these dreams, they come true, I began to wonder. I'll have her pray then, and ask the Lord to forgive her for this?

HC: Yes. And if she has a dream, pay no attention to it. We dream every night. Sometimes we remember the dream more vividly than others. A lot of times we don't remember the dream at all, and we think we haven't dreamed. But we dream every night. But we are not to pay any attention to the dream.

You will find that if you are troubled about something, you might have a nightmare. You dreams relate to perhaps a flashing thought during the day, some TV program you watched, or it may relate to just a phrase that somebody uttered. But if we begin to pay attention to the dream, and begin to think, "Maybe God was trying to tell me something," then you're walking into trouble. Then you're opening the door to Satan, to allow him to begin to prey on you. This is the opening he wants. He likes nothing better than that we look for divine truth from a source outside of the Bible, because then he can come with messages in one occult way or another. And if we're identified with the Bible, he'll try to make his messages sound exactly like the Bible, so we get accustomed to this procedure. And then gradually he will woo us and bring us additional information slightly different from the Bible. And in that way we'll no longer be able to interpret the Bible accurately. And so he'll have us.

CALLER: I hope I don't frighten her with this, or cause the pastor to get angry with me. I had spoken to him, and he said, "Oh yes, I've had premonitions." He said, "Don't worry about it. It's nothing. It isn't Satan." He's not much on Satan. But I knew if I asked you, I'd get the right answer. So whether or not he gets angry with me, I'll tell her what you said.

HC: Well, this is what I would recommend. And you can do it very gently. You can just tell her, "Now there is an occult world." But really start out with Revelation 22:18, where God declares that we are not to add anything to the words of this book. The Bible alone is the divine Word of God.

And then emphasize to her, "Now look. To dream is as natural as anything. Everybody dreams. But what we do with that dream, there is where the problem lies. And so don't pay any attention. And ask the Lord for forgiveness, that you might never again pay any attention to those dreams."

CALLER: All right. Well, thank you so much. Good evening.

HC: Thank you. Good night.

Does God Allow Revelation Today Through Dreams? (112B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Concerning the subject of dreams, I don't feel we could possibly reach any agreement, or agree together on dreams, because actually the Bible gives many examples of dreams. For example, in the Book of Genesis it's used to restrain Abimelech from evil. And in the New Testament, in the first chapter of Matthew, verse 20, the angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph concerning the birth of Jesus Christ. So there are many examples where the Lord has used dreams to speak

to His children.

HC: But you see, those examples are all given to us before the Bible was completed. They in fact became a part of the Holy Canon, of the Bible itself. That was entirely possible in those days. They did not have the whole Word of God, as we have today. But now God has completed His revelation. God says we are not to add to the words of this book. It alone is the divine revelation.

And so if God means what He says there, then we would not expect that He would violate His rule and come with additional divine revelation in a dream, or in a vision, or whatever.

CALLER: Joel 2:28 says that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh. It's saying that the young men would see visions and the old men would dream dreams, and it goes on. Perhaps you could explain this Scripture to me better. I interpret it as meaning that as the Lord pours out His Spirit upon all flesh, which would mean all mankind that we are going to be dreaming dreams. And I recall that you asked a lady to ask the Lord to forgive her for dreams she's had. It just seems to me that maybe Joseph should have asked the Lord to forgive him for the dream he had about the birth of God Himself. And these other people who had dreams of revelation from God, according to you they should have asked God for forgiveness for even having had the dream.

HC: No. You see, they had their dreams before Revelation 22:18 was written, before the Bible was completed. Now the "last days" spoken of in Acts 2:17, where Joel's prophecy is quoted, began at Pentecost, because in verse 16 Peter declared: "This [that is, this phenomenon that you see] is what Joel spoke about when he said, 'In the last days I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.'"

And so it is true that it was possible in the Book of Acts, in that timetable, before the Bible was completed, for a born again believer to have a vision or receive a revelation from God in addition to what was in the written Word. They did not have the whole written Word.

But now we have the whole written Word. And God says we are not to add to the words of this book. Now the big question that we have to face is, "Are we going to look at the Bible as the only divine Word of God?" And of course when we obey the Bible, we are worshipping the God who has given us this truth.

Or are we going to say, "Well, the Bible is the Word of God, but God also speaks this way and that way and the other way." In that case, of course, we're worshipping the god who has given us truth in these other ways. And the Bible says that it alone is the Word of God. And so that would make us guilty of worshipping other gods.

It's not accidental, you know. In Deuteronomy 13, God prophesied something that is very much related to this. In Deuteronomy 13 God said in verse 1: If a prophet arises among you (in other words, this is one of our fellow believers, apparently, and notice the next verse) or a dreamer of dreams (that's very significant, you see) and gives you a sign or a wonder (in other words, he's not only a dreamer of dreams—that is, he is convinced that God is still speaking—but he also comes with signs and wonders; he looks more legitimately of God that you could ever believe), and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, Let us go after other gods (in other words, "Let us be obedient to that truth which I am bringing to you, which I believe is divine, which is from sources outside of the Word of God"), gods which you have not known, and let us serve them, you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God is testing you (God

knows about this; He's allowing this to happen to discover, are you going to be faithful to the Word of God or are you not) to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice. And you shall serve Him and cleave to Him.

You see, the moment we go outside of the Bible to look for divine revelation, we immediately are a prey of Satan. The Bible teaches in II Corinthians 11 that Satan goes about as an "angel of light." And he is free to use his occult powers. We see this in the secular world very very clearly. In the secular world we know of mediums who can divine the future. We know of people who can read the future in tarot cards and in the ouija boards, and we know of witchcraft, and all of these things. Satan is very active in an occult way in the secular world.

The Bible tells us that he will be active in the church, where the true Gospel is proclaimed. And so we don't want to get snared by him at all. And the only way we can be absolutely certain that what we're listening to is not the voice of Satan but only the voice of God is to listen to the Bible, because the Bible cannot possibly be from Satan in any sense. But a dream, a vision, a revelation, a voice, any of these other things, since Satan is able to convey truth this way in the secular world, he can certainly do it within the church. And the Bible warns us that he will; he'll come as an angel of light.

CALLER: Yes. Satan is very busy in the church today. But everything that I have mentioned so far has been in the Word of God, all these various dreams, and so on. As an example, if I was to have a dream that one of my children was going to be in an accident, I certainly wouldn't refrain from telling them that particular day to be especially careful while driving. Maybe I wouldn't mention that I had a dream, but I think I would say, "Be especially careful today while you're driving," or if possible I would try to do something to prevent what happened in the dream. I couldn't go to the Lord and ask Him to forgive me for having had the dream. If I didn't say anything and one of my children went out and got hurt or got killed, it would probably produce something within me that would make a pretty weird person out of me.

HC: You see, it isn't the dream that's the problem. It's what you do with it. Now the moment you react this way, and say, "Aha! God has spoken to me," or "I've had this dream and now I'd better warn somebody," you are being obedient to that dream. You have reacted to that dream as if it were the voice of God. You have therefore effectively said this, "I know that the Bible is the Word of God and I want to be obedient to it. But also there is the Word of God that came to me in a dream, because I want to be obedient to that, too." And so now you have added to the Word of God. You have said the Bible is the Word of God, and you have said that this dream is the Word of God. And so you've added to the words of this book. You have looked elsewhere for a divine revelation.

And this is what you have to repent of, that you made any effort at all to be obedient to what you heard in your dream. And you know, Satan is always looking around for a way to get a foothold. But the moment we repudiate him, and we cast our lot only with Christ, and turn away from this other activity, then this activity ceases.

Those who have had problems with ESP, and experiences of this nature, testify that when they surrendered their life to Christ, all of this has ended. All of this kind of occult activity ends. Now maybe I'm an abnormal born again believer, but I can tell you, I don't receive messages in dreams about the future. I don't have any kind of an occult life, where I have

premonitions or where I have ESP going on, or whatever. It just doesn't happen in a normal born again believer's life. But I know this, that if I want to know something about the future, I've got to read the Bible. This doesn't mean that I don't have times when I might feel depressed, or I might have some kind of a heavy weight upon me. It may be that I didn't eat a good meal yesterday. It may be that I have a deep anxiety about a loved one, and this is depressing me, but I'd never look upon these as premonitions, as something that is going to happen.

I know that everything is in God's hands, and if I want to know the future, I can go to the Lord Jesus. We read in Deuteronomy 18, where God is talking about diviners, "These are an abomination." He said, "I will raise up a Prophet like unto you [He's talking to Moses], and Him you shall heed." And that Prophet is the Lord Jesus Christ, and we only listen to Him. And the Bible is the Word of Christ. It is the Word of God. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

CALLER: I understand that prophecy is telling of the future. I'm sure it's one of the spiritual gifts, prophecy. But this is the reason I wanted to refrain from going into dreams, because I really felt that we probably wouldn't reach any mutual agreement.

Dreams and Visions – Joel 2:28 Explained (114D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello What I'd like for you to do is explain Joel 2:28 for me, where it says, "Your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions." The way I feel right now, I've only been a Christian for a few short months. But before I gave my heart to God, I would have these dreams. And I would look them up in the dream book. And they would seem so encouraging. The explanations would be something like, "Good financial success," or "Good things will happen," or things like this. And I've found that my life has been restored. God has restored my life from what I was supposed to be, and from what I did on my own, and where I am right now.

But I feel that the more that we can attune our mental faculties to God, the more He can reveal Himself through our mental faculties. Am I on the right track?

HC: I don't think so. You see, in Joel 2, when God said in verse 28, "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions," we have to look at that in the context of the whole Bible.

Now in the Old Testament, before the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, God saved people just like He saves people today. But He did not mandate them, nor qualify them ordinarily to be a witness. It was only occasionally that a prophet would arise. And that prophet would declare the Word of God. Now that prophet would receive his information from two sources. One was from the Bible that he had complete to that point in time, which of course was an incomplete Bible. And occasionally God would also bring additional information which was the Word of God in the form of a dream, or a personal visitation, or a vision, or whatever. And in this way God added to His Word.

Now it was God's program that when the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, right after Christ went to the cross, that every born again believer would be a prophet, would be a witness, would be qualified to declare God's Word by being filled with the Holy Spirit.

And so to emphasize this, God uses the language of this more glamorous way

that the Old Testament prophets received truth. He speaks about the fact that "your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions." In other words, they will be bona fide prophets. Everyone who is a born again believer will be a prophet. Now that was fine for that day, in the Book of Acts, because the Bible was not yet complete. It was still possible in that day for someone who was a born again believer to receive a dream or a vision. The fact is, we know that Peter received a vision. We know that the apostle John received a series of visions on the Isle of Patmos. All of this was possible because the Bible was not yet complete.

But then God finished His Word. And He declared in Revelation 22:18: "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein." In other words while up until this time you have the written Word, but you also have the possibility of hearing from Me from other sources, that possibility no longer exists. From now on the only way I am speaking is through the Word of God. And if you think that you have something else from Me, which would be equivalent to adding to the Bible, it simply indicates that you are still under damnation. You are still subject to hell. You don't understand that the Bible alone is the divine Word of God.

And so ever since the Bible was completed, there have been those who have had dreams, who have had visions, who have seen apparitions of one kind or another. And many of them seem to be so very holy. But you can depend upon it, none of this activity was from God.

And so today, if someone says, "I've had a dream that came true," that dream was not from God. It may have been out of their own mind. It could have been coincidental that it came true. Or it could be that they're being preyed on by Satan.

And you can see why this is. If I received a dream that I was convinced was from God, and suppose that dream appeared to relate quite strongly to the Bible, and yet it might deviate very slightly but in an area which I could hardly detect. Perhaps in this dream I dreamed that there was going to be a great famine next year, or that there was going to be a war, or whatever. Now you can depend upon it, that every time I read the Bible, if I accepted that dream as being the voice of God to me, every time I read anything in the Bible concerning the future of this world, I'm going to read it in the light of my dream. I'm going to use that dream as the telescope through which I have to look at the information in the Bible. In other words, that information from that dream will cause me to modify what the Bible actually teaches. Because when I read the Bible and try to understand it, I am to look only at the Scripture. It alone is the interpreter, not something out here that I thought was the Word of God.

And so by accepting that dream as the Word of God, it is going to close the Bible to me. The Bible no longer will be a book that I can understand. And the more I listen to this other information which I believe was divine, the farther away I'll get from finding the true understanding of the Bible.

And I think this is the reason that many folks could never come to agreement with me about certain passages in the Bible, because I choose to understand the Bible by letting the Bible alone be the interpreter. But if someone else is going to understand those same verses, and they are looking upon the Bible as the Word of God, and they're also looking upon certain visions or dreams or revelations they've received as the divine Word of God, and they are going to interpret the Bible with that information additionally, they can't possibly come to the same conclusion I would come to.

Thank you so much for calling. Good night.

Are Dreams and Visions for Today? (330C)

CALLER: What does the Bible say about dreams? In Joel it says in the last days your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.

HC: The question is raised concerning the Biblical declaration of dreams and visions. In the days of the Bible, that is, before the Bible was completed in about AD 95, the possibility of believer receiving divine truth directly from God in the form of a dream or a vision was possible. And that's why in the days of Pentecost, AD 33, when the last days began (the last days encompass the whole New Testament period, beginning with the cross), in that day it was still possible to receive divine truth in that fashion.

But once the Bible was completed that possibility no longer exists, because God indicates in Revelation 22:18: "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein." Now that doesn't mean that we lose our prophetic office. The main thrust of Joel 2, as it's quoted in Acts 2:17-21 or 22, is not that throughout the New Testament period people will dream dreams and see visions, but that all believers will be prophets. They will all be qualified to declare God's Word. Now a prophet, in the days of the Bible, had two sources whereby he could receive divine truth. The usual source was the Bible, which was an incomplete Bible in those days. The more exotic, the more exciting source, was to receive a special revelation of some kind in a dream or a vision. And this is spoken of in Acts 2:17.

Once the Bible was completed we continue to be prophets declaring God's Word, but our source of truth now is circumscribed by the Bible. It now is the complete revelation of God. We no longer are to expect that God will speak to us in this more exotic or more exciting way of coming to us in a dream or a vision, because that would violate Revelation 22:18.

CALLER: Okay. So that will not occur.
HC: That will not occur. If someone today receives a vision, or a voice or a dream that they believe is from God, however holy it may appear, or how exciting it may appear, you can depend upon it, it was not from God, because God will not violate His own Word.

HEALING / EXORCISM / SIGNS & WONDERS / MIRACLES

Miraculous Healings (099E)

CALLER: Okay. I've heard you talk a few times about healers, you know, those who heal people. And a friend of mine was listening to one of these preachers. And he said that people there actually went in wheel chairs and walked out, and things like that. And I was wondering why you say that there's no healing going on today.

HC: The question is raised, in view of the fact that you can go to healing meetings today, and see people who come in wheel chairs walk out as if they are healed, doesn't this make a lie of the idea that God is not miraculously healing today?

Well, we first of all cannot trust an experience that we see. We do not build doctrine or truth by experience. That's a pragmatic way of doing it, and this is the way, for example, the scientific community does it. They run experiments, and based on the experiments they form a postulate or an axiom. They arrive at some kind of a law. When you drop an apple and it falls, and then you drop a silver dollar and it falls, and then you drop a feather and it falls, pretty soon you begin to sense that

there's a law. And finally they call it the law of gravity. It's based on experiment, that there is a law of gravity, and so on.

But when we get to spiritual truth, we do not find out what the rules are by experience, because experience can be very deceiving. We have to find out what the rules are by the Bible. The Bible is the only trustworthy guide.

One of the laws, for example, that is being promulgated today by those who believe in miraculous healing is that Christ went to the cross to give us whole bodies, to heal our physical diseases. And they can quote a couple of passages in the Bible, a couple verses of the Bible, that appear to indicate this. But when we read the whole Bible, and compare all the Scriptures, we find that that absolutely is not so. The Bible indicates that even though we're saved, even though in our spirit we go to be with Christ at death, our bodies will go into the grave. Our bodies will waste away. This is God's program, for saved people as well as unsaved people.

So therefore under no circumstance is Christ indicating, or the Bible indicating, that Christ went to the cross to give us physical healing. Secondly, the Bible indicates that we're to walk by faith, not by sight. The Bible indicates that an evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a miracle, or seeketh for a sign, and so on and so on.

Well then, once we understand the biblical statement, then we wonder, "Well then, what's happening out there?" Well, if I go to see a magician, for example, I don't know how he pulled a rabbit out of a hat. I don't know how he did all the things that he did. I saw it with my eyes, certainly. I saw lots of things. But I know they were impossible things. I know that somehow he didn't really do that.

But my mind is very easily deceived, my mind is very tricky. I went to see this magician knowing that he would deceive me this way, and knowing that my own mind would deceive me. This is the basis of many of the circus side shows, and so on. Our mind is very tricky. We see what we want to see very frequently.

And so if people go to a place where there is reputed to be miraculous healing, then they're going to see miraculous healing. Their minds are conditioned to see this. Now true, there is some healing that is taking place. A tremendous amount of illness, and it's real illness, is psychosomatic in nature. Ulcers, hardening of the arteries, arthritis, migraine headaches, skin disorders, paralysis, are just a few of the diseases that frequently owe their basis to body tension, to anxiety that's within a person. And if that person will put his trust in anything at all, then the tension is removed, whether that trust is in the evangelist, in the healer, or in the Bible, or in whatever it is. If there is a real positive trust there, then the symptom will also go away. There will apparently be healing. And it will be real healing. But it's not the miraculous healing that we read about in the Bible at all. It's simply that the tension has been removed.

Secondly, there is a certain amount of chicanery. I don't know how much, and I wouldn't even care to know how much or how little. But I know there is some, where there is just outright deception, in an effort to convince people that there is this kind of healing.

The important thing, however, is that if you go to a healing service, and you look at those on hospital beds, who are very obviously in need of a healing, or could stand a healing very nicely, as you look at their twisted limbs or their emaciated bodies, ridden by disease, whatever it may be, these kind always go out the way they came in, where there is very obvious disease. And these are the kind that Jesus healed, and the apostles healed. When James and John stood

outside the temple gate, and the man was there with the withered limbs, who had never walked in his whole life, you can imagine what pencil thin legs, twisted little bone structure he had from his waist down. And yet instantaneously he stood up and jumped and ran, and so on. Now that kind of healing is not going on today.

CALLER: Okay. I heard about this girl in Oakland who bleeds every Easter, from her hands and her feet, where Jesus was nailed to the cross. And the doctors haven't found any explanation for it. I was wondering, is this another sign that Jesus is coming soon?

HC: It's not a sign from God, if indeed this is happening, and I don't believe everything I read, or that people tell me, because there's tremendous exaggeration today. I just don't believe everything that I read about. But assuming that it were true, it certainly is not a miracle done by God. God does not come with those kinds of signs and wonders today. God comes with the Word of God. It is the place where we're going to find divine truth. If you want some kind of an indication that we're near the end of time, read the Bible. It is the trustworthy account.

CALLER: Okay. And I've just got one more quick question. Who wrote the Book of John?

HC: The Gospel of John was written by the Apostle John.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you.

HC: Thank you so much for calling. Good night.

Are Believers Empowered to Cast Out Demons? (132A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Since I am a Christian, do I have the power, through Jesus Christ, to cast out demons?

HC: Your question is, since you are a born again believer, do you have the same power that Jesus had to cast out someone else's demon?

Now it is true that the Jews of Jesus' day who had become born again (the seventy and the twelve apostles) did go forth, and they did cast out demons. We must remember, however, that the task of the believer is to be a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is the work of God to do the saving. How . . . What does that have to do with casting out demons?

Well, you see, a person who is unsaved is a slave of Satan. He may be beset by demons. He may be demon possessed, or he may be an emissary of Satan, a false prophet. Or he may just be an ordinary slave of Satan, such as most of the people of the world are.

Now when we bring the Gospel, that is the key that unlocks the prison house of Satan. And we are authorized by God to bring that Gospel. We are authorized to witness to those who are unsaved. And whether they are demon possessed, or whether they are simply an ordinary slave of Satan, makes no difference. If they respond to the Gospel, if they come with a broken and a contrite heart, and put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, they will be saved, and then demons will be removed from their life. They no longer will be under the power of Satan in any sense.

And so we are the vehicle that God uses to bring the Gospel, but it is God Himself who applies that Gospel to the life of someone who is unsaved, and frees them from Satan's dominion. Therefore we don't have to go around looking for somebody who is demon possessed. Everyone who is unsaved is a slave of Satan. Everyone who is unsaved is going to hell. Our job is not to try to cast out demons. Our job is to witness and let God do the freeing. Let God apply that Word as He will, in

accordance with His own sovereign good pleasure.

And in fact, when the disciples cast out demons this was simply to give us an illustration, a literal illustration, of the power of the Gospel. It was not suggesting that we are to go around doing these same miracles, but the casting out of demons was a picture to show that Christ's power was greater than Satan's power. The demons could not stand before the Word of God.

Have Signs and Miracles Ceased? (410C)

HC: Good evening Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Good evening. Brother Camping. My wife and I have been discussing tonight how, at the completion of the Bible, sign miracles and tongues and messages from God ceased. I wondered if you could please go into as much detail as possible in showing me in the scripture verses where this shows when this happened, when the Bible was completed.

HC: That signs and miracles ceased?

CALLER: Yes, that when the Bible was completed, now we have the Bible and it alone is the Word of God, that we don't have any more divine truth from elsewhere.

HC: You're speaking of two things now. You're talking about divine truth from other sources, and you're also speaking of miracles. Are you interested in both of these questions?

CALLER: Yes. And I also have another question, concerning Malachi 4:6, the last part of that, where God says, "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." I wondered if you could explain that.

HC: All right, I'll try. The question is raised concerning the matter of miracles and of other revelation. Actually they are two separate subjects. The matter of other revelation, other sources of divine truth than the Bible can be handled very simply.

Until the Bible was completed, God did bring His prophets additional information occasionally. That's the way the Bible was developed. A prophet would receive information from God in a vision or in a dream or by an angel confrontation. This then was written down, and this was added to the Bible, until we have the full revelation of God's will.

As long as this procedure was going on, it was possible, for example, to receive information from God in an unknown language called a tongue, as we read in I Corinthians 12-14. But when God completed the Holy Word, when He came to the last chapter of the last book, remember, the Bible is one cohesive whole. It has one Author, the Holy Spirit. Even though He spoke through a great variety of people, nevertheless there is one Author, and that is the Holy Spirit, God Himself. And when God came to the last chapter of the book He was writing, He declared in Revelation 22:18, "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein." In other words, God effectively is saying, if anyone thinks that there is additional divine truth than what is recorded in the Bible, then by this act of rebellion against God he is indicating that he is still subject to hell. He is still subject to damnation. God has spoken. Everything that had to be said has been said. And this is what we are to look upon as the divine Word.

Now insofar as miracles are concerned, first of all we must remember that while today a great many people relate miracles or signs and wonders to Pentecost, a study of the Bible reveals that there is no such relationship. There were far more miracles done before Pentecost, before the Holy Spirit was poured out, before God began His program to evangelize the world, than

after. No one since the time of Jesus has done miracles as Jesus did. And Jesus, remember, was on earth and did all of His miracles before the Holy Spirit was poured out. This is a very important consideration that those who want to relate miracles to Pentecost must consider.

Now it is true that when we look at the church after Pentecost we do find a few of the disciples, five in number actually, who still did miracles for a little while - miracles of healing particularly. But even in their case, as we go on in the Bible, we find that the Bible gradually has nothing more to say about it. We find finally, for example, Paul, who originally was able to do quite a number of miracles, counseling with Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. There was no possibility of miraculous healing.

More than that, when we study the Bible, we read, for example, in II Corinthians 5:7, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." Jesus Himself said to the Jews, "An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a sign," or "seeketh for a miracle." You see, Christ was already indicating that signs and wonders were not normative insofar as believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Luke 16, in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, in the closing verses, you will recall that the rich man cried out to Abraham, "Send Lazarus from the dead, that he may speak to my five brothers who are unsaved." The fact that someone was raised from the dead should bring them to their spiritual senses. And Abraham answered, "If they do not believe Moses and the prophets," that is, if they do not believe the Word of God, "neither will they believe if someone is raised from the dead." In other words, anyone who suggests that God will first do a sign or wonder in order to encourage someone to become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is not according to the purpose or the program of Christ.

The fact is, when we study John 6, we find that Jesus had a great following because of all the miracles He did. But when Jesus really began to talk about the true nature of the Gospel that He was bringing, then most of His disciples, all in fact except for the twelve, left Him. They weren't interested in the salvation program that Christ was talking about. They simply were excited about the miracles that He was doing.

The Bible declares, "The just shall live by faith." Now the most ominous and conclusive statement that I might say about miracles, which are called signs, the word sign or miracle is the same Greek word in the Bible, in connection with the end of time, where I as well as many others believe we are, because so many signs are pointing to the fact that we are near the end of time, the ominous and terrible fact is (and let this be clearly understood) that every place that the Bible speaks about signs and wonders in connection with the time right near the end of time is always a reference to Satanic activity. It's always a reference to Satanic activity. And that ought to cause anyone at all who is interested in miracles or signs to pause and think it out very clearly. "What kind of a path am I really walking?"

Matthew 24:24 recites, "False prophets and false christ's will arise, with signs and wonders, to lead astray if possible even the elect." II Thessalonians 2 records for us that the man of sin will take his seat in the temple. And he will come with signs and wonders of falsehood."

Revelation 16 speaks about Satan coming with signs. Revelation 13 speaks about the image that Satan erects, that it will come with signs. Everything in the Bible that relates to signs and wonders right near the end of time always is Satanic. Now of course when Christ

comes on the clouds of glory on the Last Day, Judgment Day, that will be a great sign. That will be a great wonder, because this is Christ Himself coming. But that's the end of time. Anything that relates to the years just before the end of time that is concerned at all with signs and wonders is always related to Satanic activity.

This really is so emphatic and so plain in the Bible that it would seem to me that anyone who calls himself a Christian ought to really lie awake nights wondering why he's interested in signs and wonders, if indeed he is.

Now in Malachi 4 we read about the coming of Elijah the prophet, a prophecy that really was pointing to the coming of John the Baptist, prefigured by the prophet Elijah. In verse 5 of Malachi 4, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Of course the "great and dreadful day of the Lord" is the Judgment Day when Christ hung on the cross.

There are two Judgment Days in the Bible. One was at the cross, when Christ paid for the sins of those who became believers. The other Judgment Day will be on the Last Day, when those who are not covered by Christ's blood will have to stand for judgment on their own behalf, to pay for their own sins. That will be the end of time.

"And he (that is, Elijah, or John the Baptist) shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Now I'm not really knowledgeable as to why this precise language is used. I just have never done a word study on this particular verse, and therefore I don't really feel qualified to speak on it. I will say this, however. Because of man's sin, the earth is cursed. Because of man's continuing sin, eventually Judgment Day comes. And one of the activities of Judgment Day is that this earth must be burned with fire. This earth must be destroyed. Of course it will be recreated New Heavens and a New Earth. Having said this, however, I'm not really sure how this ties in with this phrase, "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

I might suggest this, however. And that is that if Christ did not come, and after all, John the Baptist's coming has no standing, no force whatsoever, except in the fact that he was the announcer of the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist's work gained significance only as it anticipated the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the Lord Jesus Christ did not come, of course John the Baptist would not have been there to announce Him, either, because there would be no announcer required. If Jesus had not come, then there would be no salvation at all. There would be no redemption of this world, either. Have you ever thought about that?

This world is going to be redeemed. Christ went to the cross to redeem this world. We read about this in Romans 8, around verses 19-22, that the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by Him who subjected it in hope, that is, in hope for the redemption of this earth. Even as our bodies that are to be redeemed return to the dust of the earth and are destroyed in the earth, but are resurrected a perfect Spiritual body likewise this earth, this universe, is going to be destroyed by fire. But that is preliminary to it being recreated New Heavens and a New Earth, where righteousness dwells, as we read II Peter 3. If Christ did not come then this earth would be forever under the curse of God. There would be no New Heaven and New Earth. And perhaps this is the meaning of Malachi 4:6.

Is Healing Going On Today?

(411B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I have a few questions. One of them is, how rich does the Bible consider rich?

HC: How rich does the Bible consider rich? First of all, the Bible does not consider physical riches as being rich, necessarily. A man can be physically rich, and if he has not salvation, he is of all men most miserable. He is doomed to hell, and is to be pitied.

To be really rich is to be born again, to be a child of God, because then we are heirs of all the promises that are given in the Bible. We are heirs of the New Heaven and the New Earth. We become sons of God. We will reign in this New Heaven and New Earth eternally as kings. There is no one richer than a born again believer.

Now we can't see these riches with our naked eye today. Now we live on this earth in sackcloth, as it were, to use the figure shown in Revelation 11. We live humbly. We live patiently, bringing the Gospel. We are the physically poor of the world to a very high degree, frequently. But we are the heirs. We are the sons of the King. And once we've spent a few years here on this earth, we go home to our homeland which is Heaven. And from then on everything gets better and better. We are the rich of the world, really.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you. And I have another question. In Isaiah 30:15 it says, "For thus sayeth the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel. In returning and rest shall ye be saved. In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. And ye will not." Does that mean you won't be able to be in quietness and confidence, or what?

HC: The question is raised concerning Isaiah 30:15, where God is using this language. First of all, let's get the context. The context of Isaiah 30 is that God is warning Israel that they are subject to judgment and hell, that God is going to destroy them because of their wickedness, their apostasy. And in verse 14 He uses the language of Judgment Day of the last day: "He shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces. He shall not spare, so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a shard to take fire from the hearth or to take water withal out of the pit." God is speaking here of final judgment.

Now in verse 15 He is saying that it doesn't have to be this way. He says, "For thus sayeth the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel. In returning and rest shall ye be saved." You could be saved if you would rest in the Lord, if you would rest in Christ as your Messiah, if you would quit trying to get into Heaven on your strength, on your good works, on your deeds that you think ought to be looked upon as worthy by God, if you would quit trying to satisfy your own personal pride and take credit for what you are doing, if you would only recognize the dismal truth about yourself, that you're sinners and you're under the wrath of God. And the answer to it is to admit this and rest in the salvation that God is going to provide. Rest quietly, and confidently in this.

"But ye would not. But ye said, No. For we will flee upon horses. Therefore shall ye flee. And we will ride upon the swift. Therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one. At the rebuke of five shall ye flee." In other words, they're saying, "We will put our confidence in the things that we own, in our horses, in our physical strength, in Egypt," in whatever they could find their strength in. And God says, "You're going to be destroyed. You're going to be so weak that one could destroy a thousand of you."

And this of course is speaking very pertinently to us today. There are all kinds of people who are placing their confidence in their good works, in their worthy lives, in their righteous deeds, in their desires to please God along this line. They really believe that God will look with favor upon them because look how hard they're trying to please God. And God will say, "No. No."

Or they've placed their trust in their money, or in the lands they own, or in their physical strength, or the guns they have in the house, or whatever else it may be, or in their nation, whatever it may be. And God says, "No. None of those things have any strength whatsoever, because you're still under the wrath of God. You're still subject to Judgment Day and hell unless you have placed your confidence only in the Lord Jesus Christ. You realize that you're a sinner and that you're spiritually bankrupt, and you're in deep and terrible trouble with God. And therefore you cry out to God for mercy. You rest in Christ. You trust only in His Word as being sufficient to save you."

CALLER: Okay. I've heard you talk a few times about healers, you know, those who heal people. And a friend of mine was listening to one of these preachers. And he said that people there actually went in wheel chairs and walked out, and things like that. And I was wondering why you say that there's no healing going on today.

HC: The question is raised, in view of the fact that you can go to healing meetings today, and see people who come in wheel chairs walk out as if they are healed, doesn't this make a lie of the idea that God is not miraculously healing today?

Well, we first of all cannot trust an experience that we see. We do not build doctrine or truth by experience. That's a pragmatic way of doing it, and this is the way, for example, the scientific community does it. They run experiments, and based on the experiments they form a postulate or an axiom. They arrive at some kind of a law. When you drop an apple and it falls, and then you drop a silver dollar and it falls, and then you drop a feather and it falls, pretty soon you begin to sense that there's a law. And finally they call it the law of gravity. It's based on experiment, that there is a law of gravity, and so on.

But when we get to spiritual truth, we do not find out what the rules are by experience, because experience can be very deceiving. We have to find out what the rules are by the Bible. The Bible is the only trustworthy guide.

One of the laws, for example, that is being promulgated today by those who believe in miraculous healing is that Christ went to the cross to give us whole bodies, to heal our physical diseases. And they can quote a couple of passages in the Bible, a couple verses of the Bible, that appear to indicate this. But when we read the whole Bible, and compare all the scriptures, we find that that absolutely is not so. The Bible indicates that even though we're saved, even though in our spirit we go to be with Christ at death, our bodies will go into the grave. Our bodies will waste away. This is God's program, for saved people as well as unsaved people.

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Well then, once we understand the Biblical statement, then we wonder, "Well then, what's happening out there?" Well, if I go to see a magician, for example, I don't know how he pulled a rabbit out of a hat. I don't know how he

did all the things that he did. I saw it with my eyes, certainly. I saw lots of things. But I know they were impossible things. I know that somehow he didn't really do that.

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CALLER: Okay. I heard about this girl in Oakland who bleeds every Easter, from her hands and her feet, where Jesus was nailed to the cross. And the doctors haven't found any explanation for it. I was wondering, is this another sign that Jesus is coming soon?

HC: It's not a sign from God, if indeed this is happening, and I don't believe everything I read, or that people tell me, because there's tremendous exaggeration today. I just don't believe everything that I read about. But assuming that it were true, it certainly is not a miracle done by God. God does not come with those kinds of signs and wonders today. God comes with the Word of God. It is the place where we're going to find divine truth. If you want some kind of an indication that we're near the end of time, read the Bible. It is the trustworthy account.

CALLER: Okay. And I've just got one more quick question. Who wrote the Book of John?

HC: The Gospel of John was written by the apostle John.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you.

HC: Thank you so much for calling. Good night.

Do Miracles Take Place Today? (502A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: You mentioned that you do not believe in miracles of today. Do you have any Biblical support for this?

HC: The question is: do miracles take place today? Now first of all, let's define a miracle. A miracle is where God sets aside the normal rules by which He governs the universe and does something very different. For example, when Jesus walked on the water, He set aside the law of gravity. And that is not happening today. When Jesus multiplied the loaves and the fish, He had to set aside all kinds of rules in order to accomplish that. And that is not happening today. When Jesus raised the dead, that is contrary to the way God governs the universe normally. And that is not happening today. The Bible teaches that an evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a miracle. The Bible says we walk by faith, not by sight. Miracles are not a normal part of God's salvation program.

Now it is true that in the days of Elijah, Elijah was able to do a few miracles, and these are recorded for us in order that we might through these get insights as to the nature of God's salvation plan, because these were actually like historical parables.

The same was true when Moses did miracles, when Christ did miracles, when He opened the eyes of the blind, that was a picture of the way we are. Spiritually we are blind. And even as Christ could open the eyes of the spiritually blind, so He could also open our eyes, who are spiritually blind.

CALLER: But Christ did not necessarily open the eyes of those who were spiritually blind. He opened their spiritual eyes as well as their physical eyes.

HC: Of course the miracle of salvation continues today. And it is true that Christ forgave the sins of this one and that one, and that's the miracle of salvation. But in the opening of the physical eyes, that was a picture, a parable, an historical parable. It was a true fact of history, but it was like a parable. And through this He was showing us that even as He opened the physical eyes so they could physically see, so He opens our spiritual eyes so we can spiritually see.

CALLER: Okay. I don't seem to agree with you, because you do not have any Biblical backing for this. What I would like to say is that, do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

HC: Let me ask you this, I'll answer your question. I certainly do believe in the Holy Spirit. He is God Himself. But let me ask you this, so that we'll know whether we have the same authority. Do you believe that God is still bringing revelations today?

CALLER: I do.

HC: All right. Now if you believe that, in other words, if you believe the Bible is the Word of God (and I think you would probably say that it is), and you also believe that God is bringing revelations today, then your authority is different than my authority. And this is a very important point. You see, if your authority is different than mine, then we're going to read the same verses, and we're going to come to different conclusions, because you're looking at these verses in the light of your authority, and I'm looking at these same verses in the light of my authority.

Now my authority is that the Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. And therefore there is nothing else that could be considered to be a divine revelation. But now suppose that your authority is the Bible plus what might be brought in a vision today. Then since the vision is the later word, it will negate some of the things in the Bible. And

obviously you're going to understand the Bible differently than I would. And we could talk together for a long time and never come to agreement, because we have a different authority.

CALLER: I believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. In John 14:26 He says that the Comforter would also bring things to come. Do you believe that?

HC: The only thing God brings is the Word of God. He has spoken. He has said all that He is going to say. If you believe that God is still speaking today and is still going to give you declarations of the future, or whatever, fine. Then your gospel is different than the Gospel I believe, obviously. You have a different authority. You have a different law-book that you are using. Your law-book is the Bible plus these other things that you are hearing.

CALLER: The reason I called you is that last week you made a statement that there are no more miracles. Christ Himself said in John 14:12, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, whosoever believes in Me shall do the works that I do. Greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father." He said it emphatically so.

HC: You believe that that verse is teaching that we can do miracles?

CALLER: Of course I believe in miracles.

HC: All right. Now let's examine that verse. "The works that I do ye shall do, and greater works than these shall ye do." Now letting the Bible be the authority, we search the Bible to find out what Christ had in view. First of all, let's assume for the moment that He's talking about miracles. Let's look at the miracles He did. He walked on the water, He multiplied the loaves and fishes, He stilled the storm, He raised Lazarus after he had been dead for four days, He healed the ten lepers, and so on and so on.

Now there is nobody, nobody who has done miracles of this nature. It just has never happened. And so we know that that isn't what Christ has in view at all. Secondly, His work was not to come and do miracles. His work was twofold.

First of all, it was to go to the cross to pay for our sins. Now we know of course that Christ does not have that in view, because we cannot add anything to the work that Christ did on the cross. That's His unique work. But He also came to bring the Gospel. He said, "As the Father has sent Me, so send I you." And we read in Luke 4 that He said, "I was sent to preach the Gospel." And that is the work that He also has assigned to us as believers: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel."

Now let's examine that work and see how that stacks up. We find, as we search the Bible, that Jesus preached for about three and a half years. And after that length of time there's a handful of believers. There were 120 in the Upper Room, maybe a little more than 500 in all of Galilee, after three and a half years of preaching.

But then Christ went to the Father, and He began His program to evangelize the world. And on Pentecost Peter preaches one sermon and 3000 are saved. Now he's doing exactly the same work Jesus was doing, but it was a greater work, because far more were responding to the Gospel. You see, that verse has nothing at all to do with miracles, nothing at all. And those who would like to think that it's speaking of miracles are doing so without any Biblical authorization.

CALLER: Okay. I see in Matthew 4:23 . . .

HC: You see? you're not facing this question. You're not facing this verse. This verse very clearly is not talking about miracles.

CALLER: What is it talking about?

HC: About preaching the Gospel. That's the work that Christ came to do.

CALLER: Look at Matthew 4:23.

HC: Matthew 4:23?

CALLER: Let's read it, because He said, Whosoever believes in Him shall do the works that He did. And in Matthew 4:23 He specifically shows . . .

HC: While it is true that He went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of diseases of the people, the fact is that healing people is not the work God assigns to the born again believers. There is no statement in the Bible that says that every believer is assigned the task of healing people. But the Bible does indicate that every believer is assigned the task of bringing the Gospel, "As the Father has sent Me, so send I you," or "Ye are My ambassadors," or "Go ye into all the world and bring the Gospel." We are all qualified to declare God's Word.

But now where in the Bible is it intimated that everyone is either qualified or mandated to heal the sick.

CALLER: Now I do agree with you that not everybody has the gift of healing. By the same token, I cannot deny that there is miraculous power of God being performed. In Joel 2:28 He says, "In the latter days I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh."

HC: Acts 2:17 is not talking about miracles at all. It doesn't discuss miracles at all. It says that your young men will prophesy and dream dreams. And that's another subject that we could talk about at another time. But it doesn't talk about miracles.

Now when we go from verse to verse, you see, you are still convinced that they're all talking about miracles. And I understand that, because your authority is different. You come at the Bible differently than I would come at the Bible. And we can visit the rest of the evening, but we'll never come to agreement.

CALLER: Can you tell me if God ever changes? Does God change?

HC: God does not change, but His program does. His program does. For example, before Jesus went to the cross, there were far more miracles done than at any other time in the history of the world before or since, by more people, to more people, in the presence of more people. Not only did Jesus do miracles, but the twelve did miracles, the seventy that were sent out did miracles, and thousands upon thousands of people witnessed these miracles. And all of this, incidentally, was before the Holy Spirit was poured out, which many people forget altogether. This was before the Holy Spirit was poured out.

Now after Christ went to the cross and the Holy Spirit was poured out, we search the Bible and we find that God's program was substantially different. We only find five of the apostles maybe, and certainly the deacon Stephen, who still did some signs or wonders. But as we continue in the Bible and go through the Book of Romans or Ephesians, or Galatians, we find no reference at all to this kind of activity, because that was not normative after the Holy Spirit was poured out. God's program changed.

Now before Jesus came on the scene, there were no miracles being done at all, none whatsoever. It was not God's program. So God is the same, but His program changes. And so those who want to argue that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever, that's a fine Bible verse found in Hebrews, but that has nothing to do with the fact that we could expect miracles today because Jesus did them when He was living. It has nothing at all to do with that.

CALLER: I would suggest that you and I might meet together personally, to

investigate what God is really saying to us.

HC: No, you see, there would be no way that we could ever come together, because we have different authorities altogether. We have to first start out, if, for example, two judges were going to adjudicate a case, and one was going to use the law of the United States and another was going to use the law of Mexico, they would never come to agreement, because they have different law-books. They have a different authority. And that is the reason on each of these verses that you have quoted we come to different conclusions altogether. Your authority is different. But thank you so much for calling and sharing. Good night.

Divine Healing (557A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I have a question about healing. On a program which we watch on TV they do a great deal of healing, and they always give all the credit to Christ and God. And I'd like to hear what you feel about that healing, and how the Bible relates to it.

HC: The question has to do with so called divine healing. We know from the Bible that God heals. God upholds the universe by His power. He upholds His creation. And any time you receive an injury, or if you're operated, or if you have the flu, or whatever, you are healed by God, who provides His healing mercies. And normally this takes some time. It may be a short period of time or a long period of time. But there is healing.

Sometimes this healing is very dramatic. Sometimes the doctors may conclude that there is no hope, and yet you become well again. This is because doctors have a limited knowledge of the body and the way God cares for our bodies. And if it's God's program, even a person who is very very ill and who has been given up as having no hope can become well again if it is God's will.

The question at issue today is the question of so called miraculous healing. Now miraculous healing has to do with a situation where the ordinary rules by which God governs the universe are set aside. If, for example, I broke my arm and then someone prayed over me and instantaneously my arm would be whole again, that would be miraculous. None of the normal healing processes were included in that. It was just an instantaneous healing.

If I, for example, was born without a hand, or with a crippled hand of some kind so that it was very atrophied, and then someone prayed over me and suddenly I had a whole hand, that would be a miraculous healing. Now this kind of healing is not going on today. That's not possible. The only miracle that God wants us to look at is the miracle of the cross. The Jews came to Jesus seeking for a miracle, and Jesus said, "An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a miracle. The only miracle I will give you is the miracle of the prophet Jonah (or the sign of the prophet Jonah), who was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish. So the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

However, there is a tremendous interest in physical well-being. The world of course is exceedingly interested in this. You can understand this, because the unsaved people, for them this is all that they have to go for. And so they're very interested in this. They would do anything they can in order to have whole bodies. Many people who call themselves Christians also become tremendously interested in this, and think that this really is the great thing that we have to look for. And so this is very highly featured.

Then they begin to talk about miracles. And of course if you look long enough for a miracle, then you will see a miracle. That doesn't mean a miracle really has occurred, but our minds are very deceptive, and so we think that we have seen a miracle.

CALLER: Well, how do you compare this with 1 Corinthians 12:9, where it says, "To another gifts of healing by the one Spirit."

HC: The question is, what about 1 Corinthians 12:9, where it talks about the fact that within the church God has given various gifts? Now first of all, we have to look at the church in its total expanse. The church has existed for 13,000 years. There have always been a body of believers on this earth someplace. And when we look at the Biblical statement of the church for the first 11,000 years, we find that virtually nobody had the gift of healing. There was one leper cured in 11,000 years, God indicates. There was only one leper cured in the Old Testament, or in Israel, and that was the leper Naaman. Elisha was the one who commanded him to wash in the River Jordan, and he was healed. But there just was no miraculous healing going on of any kind, except just with two or three exceptions of this nature. And yet the church existed. The congregation of Israel was the church just as much as the Baptist Church is the church, or any other congregation is the church. And yet there was no healing going on.

Now Jesus came on the scene, and for three and a half years there was a tremendous amount of healing going on by Christ. I mean miraculous healing, where He healed the ten lepers, He raised Lazarus from the dead, He did acts of healing that were absolutely beyond man's mind to get hold of. The twelve apostles did acts of healing, possibly the seventy who were sent out did acts of healing, and so very briefly the church did have those in it who did do acts of healing.

Well, then Christ went to the cross, and the Holy Spirit was poured out. And we search the Bible, and we find that in the early church for a little while, perhaps six of the apostles and one of the deacons did do acts of healing, for a little while. But no one else did; not another soul.

And then God indicates, when we begin to approach the end of time, when He speaks of signs and wonders, that this is by the activity of Satan. And so we would not expect to find any miracles today. So even though the Bible says that within the church there may be those who do healing or miracles, God nowhere infers that this is going to be a constant or a continuing thing, or something that we could expect at any time in the history of the church. No, that is not normative in any way at all. It is not a bit normative.

CALLER: Is it too strong to say that it's your conclusion that if some group practices healing, or apparently practices healing, that is evidence that they're not good?

HC: Oh, I would not make a judgment of any group. I would only say this, that if I am going to preach the Gospel, then I want to stick to the Bible. Now if someone else wants to preach a gospel and they want to include healing in it, and anything else they want to include in it, that's their business. I can't make a judgment of them. But all I know is that I want to stick with the Bible. And the Bible nowhere infers that God guarantees whole bodies for us. The fact is, the Bible teaches exactly the opposite, that our bodies will wear away, will waste away, and finally we will die. This is the nature of mankind. The Bible teaches that. And the Bible rather teaches us that Christ went to the cross to heal us of our sin-sick souls. For we were straying like sheep. By His stripes we are

healed. In other words, Christ went to the cross to give us something infinitely more important than physical healing.

Now if a group wants to speak about healing and make that a big thing in their gospel message, that's their business. And all I know is that there is no miraculous healing going on. I'm very convinced of this from everything I read in the Bible. I know that people see what they want to see, I know that there is a certain amount of chicanery, a certain amount of deceitfulness that's going on, and I know that there's a certain amount of psychosomatic illness, so that when a person places his trust in anything at all then the result of his tension, which might be a real disease, will also disappear. And so it will look like a miraculous healing. And beyond that I do not believe that there is miraculous healing going on.

CALLER: Thank you for your time

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

TONGUES / THE HOLY SPIRIT

Tongues and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (140A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Would you please tell me who in the Bible ever received the baptism of the Holy Ghost without speaking in tongues?

HC: Who did? The question is raised, "Who in the Bible received the baptism in the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues?" Well, the 3000 did. They received the baptism in the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues. We know that the jailer of Philippi was saved, and so he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and he didn't speak in tongues. We know that Lydia and her family were saved, and they did not speak in tongues. All the Old Testament believers, they were saved and they did not speak in tongues.

CALLER: The Holy Ghost fell for the first time on the day of Pentecost. Isn't that true?

HC: Well, yes, you are correct that at Pentecost there was a slight change, in that the believers became qualified to be witnesses at the time they were saved. And this is really why it's spoken of as baptism in the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit came to evangelize the world. And so in a strict sense we would have to say yes, only those who were saved after Pentecost were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

But we only read of three places in the Bible where anybody spoke in tongues, or spoke in a foreign language. The first place is in Acts 2. The disciples spoke in a foreign language at the time the Holy Spirit was poured out. There was no evidence there that they were saved at this point in time, but they had entered into this new program of the Holy Spirit to evangelize the world.

In fact, we see the power that came upon Peter, because he preached one sermon and 3000 were saved. Then in Acts 10 we read about the family of Cornelius, at the time they were saved. Now they were representative of the Gentiles in Judea. The situation in Acts 2 was a representation of those who were in Jerusalem. When Cornelius and his family were saved, they also spoke in a foreign language.

And incidentally, the phenomenon of tongues, in the Book of Acts, is quite different from that which we read about in 1 Corinthians 12-14, because in 1 Corinthians 12-14 God declared that there was to be an interpreter, and not more than two or three were to speak in a foreign language. It was quite different. The foreign language that was spoken of in the Book of Acts did not require

interpretation, because it was simply a foreign language that was understood by others that were there. And there were more than two or three who spoke in this foreign language.

Now in Acts 19 we have the representatives of the world, the twelve Ephesians. They were out in Asia Minor, outside of Judea. And when they were saved, when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, they spoke in foreign languages.

In Acts 2 there were people from 18 different nations, and they understood the disciples in their native tongues. In Acts 10 and in Acts 19 God does not tell us what language it was, but neither was there any interpretation. It just simply says that they spoke in a tongue, and it would have to be in a foreign language.

CALLER: It says they spoke in tongues. And Paul said, "I wish they every one of you spoke in tongues," because he said, "I spoke in tongues more than every one of you," but that it's better to prophesy. So how can you explain that?

HC: Well, you see, it was true that in the days when the Bible was being written, it was a real blessing to receive a direct revelation from God. I'm sure that this must have thrilled these individual members of the church of Corinth, that God had actually given them a message. True, it was in an unknown language, but this really edified them, that God would pick on them to give them a message. And they were asked by God to seek to interpret, so that this message could be made available to the whole congregation.

CALLER: You said a while ago that when a person receives salvation, he receives the baptism of the Holy Ghost, too. But in Acts 19 we find John's disciples, who were already saved, who were already believers. But when Paul asked them, "Have you received the Holy Ghost?" they said they had never even heard that the Holy Ghost had come. So how do you explain that? They were believers. To me it means that when you receive salvation, you are not necessarily baptized in the Holy Ghost.

HC: Your question really is: What are we going to do with this account in Acts 19? Apparently it reads here that these Ephesians had been saved, and yet they had not received the Holy Spirit yet. Does this mean that this is a transaction that takes two steps?

Actually, when we read this, this is apparently what it says. But we must remember, we cannot read the Bible in any part without reading everything else that the Bible teaches also. Now in Romans 8:9 the Bible says that if we do not have the Spirit, we are none of His. If the Holy Spirit has not entered into us, we are not His. We are still unsaved.

Secondly, when the Bible uses the word disciple it does not necessarily mean that we are born again. In John 6:66 it speaks about many of the disciples turning away from Jesus, because they did not like what He was saying. Just because they were disciples doesn't mean that they were born again. Neither does the word believe mean that they're born again. As I pointed out earlier, in Luke 8 we read of those who believed for a while, and then they fell away.

When we just read Acts 19, it seems to be talking about born again believers. But when we read it more carefully, we find that they couldn't have been born again, because the Holy Spirit had not come into them. Therefore they could not have been saved. Now we analyze this, and we see that they were baptized into John's baptism. Now John the Baptist's baptism was the Old Testament baptism. It was outmoded. The ceremonial laws had all been done away with. It was an absolutely incorrect baptism to be administered. It was as if it was putting these men under the ceremonial law again. And therefore they had to be re-baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus

Christ. And this only happened after Paul came there and acquainted them more clearly with the true Gospel. And that's when salvation came to them.

CALLER: You mentioned John the Baptist. When he was preaching once, he said, "I baptize you in water, to bring you to repentance." "But," he said, "there is one who will come after me who will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire." How do you explain that? And you said that the same day you receive salvation, you're baptized in the Holy Ghost, too. So how do you explain it? What you are saying is different from what John is saying.

HC: What does the Bible mean when John the Baptist said, "I baptize you in water, but there comes one after me who will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire." When we are born again, we are washed of our sins. We experience the washing of regeneration, or the washing of the Word. The Gospel itself is the water by which we receive the knowledge of salvation.

And we are baptized in fire in the sense that our cleansing is made possible because Christ has become our substitute in enduring the fires of hell on our behalf. We cannot be saved, we cannot be right before God, unless we have paid the penalty for our sins, which the Bible calls for, and which is an eternity in hell. Hellfire must have been endured.

Now Christ endured it on our behalf, and so we are like those who have come out of hell. We have endured eternal fire, and now there is no longer any condemnation that comes against us. And this is to be provided by the Lord Jesus Christ. He went to the cross in order to do this on our behalf.

CALLER: In Revelation 22:18 it says, "If any man adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written therein." But verse 19 says, "And if any man takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life." So how do you explain verse 19?

HC: How do we explain Revelation 22:19 where it speaks of those who take away from the book of this prophecy?

The Bible is the whole and complete infallible Word of God. Now if I, for example, go through the Bible and pick and choose, if let's say, I take a verse and say, "I like this verse, but I don't like some other verses that contradict it, and so I'm only going to take that verse and I'm going to build my doctrine from that verse," in that case I am taking away from the Bible. Or if I say that the first eleven chapters of Genesis are simply a parable of some kind, that they're not actually history, and I won't accept them as the divine Word of God, then I am taking away from the Word of God.

CALLER: To me you're taking away speaking in tongues from the Bible. Wouldn't that be a way for your name to be taken out of the Book of Life?

HC: The question is raised: If the Bible speaks about speaking in tongues, and now we say that that's not possible, isn't that taking away from the Word of God? Well, let's see. In the Old Testament we read that the males were to go three times a year to Jerusalem, to offer sacrifices. In fact, in the New Testament, Jesus did that, and the disciples did that. Now we don't do that any longer. Are we taking away from the Word of God?

CALLER: But Jesus said that we are not under the Law anymore. Sacrifice was just a matter of the Law, the way they were supposed to do it, but now we don't have to offer any sacrifices. I think the only sacrifice we offer is our own body, our own flesh.

HC: All right. Now how do you know that? How do you know that we're not under the Law?

CALLER: The Bible says it.

HC: Now that's exactly right. The Bible says it. In other words, in one place the

Bible says that we are to do certain things, and in another place the Bible explains further that there comes a time when we are not to do certain things, the very same things. We've let the Bible be its own interpreter.

Now in one place in the Bible it speaks about tongues as a possibility, and it relates the experiences of those in the church in Corinth. But in another place the Bible says that we're not to add to the words of this book once the Bible is completed. And so the Bible has instructed us that this can't be possible any longer. We let the Bible show us and guide us. And so we're not taking away from the Word at all. We're actually making certain that we have the whole Word of God before us.

CALLER: What should we put in place of speaking in tongues? The only way they could know that someone received the baptism of the Holy Ghost is that everybody could hear him speak in tongues. The reason people knew that the 120 on the day of Pentecost received something was that they were heard to be speaking in tongues. And the same with John's disciples. The only way people knew that they had something new, something different, is because they heard them speaking in tongues. Otherwise nobody would know they had received the Holy Ghost.

HC: All right. Now let me ask you. In other words, you're wondering, what evidence is there then of salvation? Let me ask you. When the 3000 were saved, you see, there is only one baptism, the Bible teaches. There is only one baptism. The Bible says, in Ephesians 4, there is only one faith, one baptism. And that baptism is baptism in the Holy Spirit.

CALLER: But look at Hebrews 6.

HC: What do you mean Hebrews 6?

CALLER: I think in Hebrews 6 He spoke of "baptisms," plural, many.

HC: Oh, well, there were Old Testament ablations, there were Old Testament washings. There was the baptism of John the Baptist. This is what Hebrews 6 has reference to. The Bible has a lot to say about washings, about ablations. The word baptism is the word washing, or purification.

But when we get to the New Testament, and we're talking about what salvation is, in Ephesians 4 the Bible says there is one baptism. Now that is the washing that occurs at the time we are saved, at the time that we enter into the work of the Holy Spirit, as He evangelizes the world, because at that time we are filled with the Holy Spirit. We are qualified to be a witness.

Now our water baptism has no substance in itself. It is simply a shadow or a reflection of the Spirit baptism that occurred at the time we were born again. And that's the only baptism that there is. There is only that one baptism.

CALLER: Are you talking about baptism in water or the Holy Spirit?

HC: The Holy Spirit saves us, not the water. The water does not save us. The Holy Spirit saves us.

CALLER: Is it Ephesians 4:4, where he said there is one body? What verse is that?

HC: In Ephesians 4, he's saying this in verse 5: "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

CALLER: One Holy Ghost baptism. But in Hebrews he wasn't referring to anything from the Old Testament. When he talks about baptisms in Hebrews, he didn't say how many.

HC: No. In Hebrews 6 we simply have an outline of everything that God teaches about salvation. We have the whole Old Testament that speaks about salvation. We have the whole New Testament that speaks about salvation. The Book of Hebrews has a lot to say about the Old Testament laws, and how they were pointing to salvation. All of this is in

view here in Hebrews 6. The whole Scripture actually is in view. And the Scripture teaches about many ablations: the washing of the priest in the temple, the baptism of Jesus, and of course the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is the New Testament baptism. But when we get to Ephesians 4, it cuts through all this and says, now when we get all done with this, when we're going to look at what salvation is, there is one body, there is one Spirit, there is one hope, there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God.

Now you asked an earlier question, "What is the evidence of salvation, if there is no speaking in tongues?" Actually, what is ever the evidence of salvation? The outward evidence is non-existent. There is no outward evidence. The only evidence is what has happened within the heart of a man, in that he has become born again, in that he finds in his life an earnest desire to live for Christ.

Now when the 3000 were saved in Acts 2, there was no outward evidence that they were saved, but they were saved. They didn't speak in tongues. The Bible doesn't say that at all.

CALLER: That's the only evidence they had of receiving the Holy Ghost.

HC: No, that is not taught anywhere in the Bible. Nowhere in the Bible is that taught. There are gospels that teach that. But that is not the Gospel of the Bible. When the jailer of Philippi was saved he didn't speak in tongues. When the Ethiopian eunuch was saved, he didn't speak in a tongue, when Lydia was saved, she didn't speak in a tongue.

CALLER: They didn't record that, but if we just build on Acts 19, okay. In Isaiah 28:11 it says, "With stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to these people." What does that mean?

HC: Well, now you've come to a very, very ominous passage. You see, in 1 Corinthians 14 God has something terrible to say, right in the context of this phenomenon of the people at Corinth speaking in a tongue. He says in verse 20, "Be babes in evil," or "Be babes in malice." Now why would He say that? That's a terrible thing to put in here, right when He's talking about what appears to be a joyful thing, of receiving information from God in an unknown language. He says, "Be babes in malice, but in thinking be mature. In the Law it is written, By men of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, And even then they will not listen to Me, says the Lord." Thus tongues are a sign (or a miracle) not for believers, but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers.

Now let's go back to the Law then to find out what God refers to. Let's first of all go to Deuteronomy 28, because that is the initial reference. And then we'll look at Isaiah 28.

Now in Deuteronomy 28 God is talking to Israel before they went into the land of Canaan. And in verse 47 He is warning them what will happen if they're not satisfied with the salvation He has given them. He says in verse 47 of Deuteronomy 28: "Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, by reason of the abundance of all things [in other words, you weren't satisfied with what I gave you], therefore, you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and in want of all things. And He will put His yoke of iron upon your neck, until He has destroyed you. The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you do not understand, a nation of stern countenance, who shall not regard the person of the old or show

favor to the young. And they shall destroy you."

In other words, God is saying, "If you are not satisfied with My salvation, then I'm going to come against you with people whose language you do not understand, and they're going to destroy you as a judgment of Mine."

Now this was re-emphasized in Isaiah 28. In Isaiah 28:11 we read, "Nay, but by men of strange lips and with an alien tongue the Lord will speak to this people, to whom He has said, This is rest. Give rest to the weary. And this is repose." In other words, the true rest that God is offering is the Gospel of salvation. "But they would not hear. Therefore the word of the Lord will be to them precept upon precept, precept upon precept", that is, the word of the Lord will be their judge. It is the Sword of the Spirit to judge them. "here a little, there a little, that they may go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and taken."

Now God is saying that because Israel would not listen to the Word of God, He would bring a people with strange lips and with an alien tongue against them, to judge them. And that nation was the nation of Babylon, the nation that they played the harlot with. And eventually Babylon destroyed Israel. They are the nation that came with a foreign language.

This is re-emphasized in Jeremiah 5. In verse 15 we read, "Behold, I am bringing upon you a nation from afar, O House of Israel, says the Lord. It is an enduring nation. It is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say. Their quiver is like an open tomb. They are all mighty men. They shall eat up your harvest and your food. They shall eat up your sons and your daughters. They shall eat up your flocks and your herds. They shall eat up your vines. They shall destroy with the sword."

In other words, these are the references that God is making in 1 Corinthians 14. And He's saying that God, because God is the author of the Word of God, even though He used the apostle Paul to speak, is saying, "If you aren't satisfied with the Gospel I give you, I'm going to come against you with a people with a language you do not understand. And it's going to come against the unbelievers in the church, not the believers. They're going to be interested in the true Word of God, in prophecy. But the unbelievers, it's a miracle for the unbelievers. And I'm going to destroy you by it." That is what God is teaching.

CALLER: Only unbelievers spoke in tongues at that time?

HC: No. I'm saying this, that God set up a testing program. Now in the Old Testament, in the Garden of Eden, God set up a testing program. He put a tree in the Garden, and this was to reveal whether Adam and Eve would be faithful in being obedient to God. And of course they failed the test. Eventually they ate of the tree they should not have eaten.

Now in 1 Corinthians 12-14, God effectively has set up an identical testing program. In the church of Corinth 2000 years ago, there was a legitimate phenomenon of tongues, in which God actually spoke to these people in an unknown language. Okay, that's recorded for us. But that is going to be used as a testing program. That is, it will be misused at the end of time, as an assault on the church, to snare people away from the true Gospel. And by means of this, God will bring judgment against the church, because they have not been satisfied with the Gospel that He has offered them. He is going to bring an assault against the church. This is the ominous, the terrible implication of 1 Corinthians 14:21.

CALLER: As far as I can understand, you are against speaking in tongues, right? What about verse 39?

HC: Your question is, In 1 Corinthians 14:39, where it says that we're not to forbid speaking in tongues, how are we to look at that? Well, in the church at Corinth, obviously they were not to forbid speaking in tongues, because it was a legitimate possibility in that day. But the Bible itself indicates that it no longer is possible because of what we read in Revelation 22:18.

So if you want to speak in a tongue, that is your privilege. God allows people to go their own way in the world, and people do all kinds of things. You can speak in a tongue, you can look for visions, you can do anything that you wish. You can build your gospel any way that you would like to. That is your privilege.

But if I'm going to be true to the Word of God and let it be circumscribed by the Word itself, by the Bible itself, then I personally would never never want to be looking for some kind of a message from God in an unknown language or in a known language, because then I would know I am going contrary to the Bible. I want to listen only to the Bible as the revealed Word of God.

Thank you so much for calling.

Understanding the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (234A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I'd like to ask a question about baptism in the Holy Spirit, if you could explain how it works, as far as speaking in tongues is concerned? And also some scriptures backing up the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I understand that the Holy Spirit is a free gift of God, upon accepting Jesus Christ. And so I just wondered, why would a person have to be specially baptized in the Holy Spirit? And I'd like to take my answer on the radio.

HC: All right. Fine. Good night.

Our caller has raised a question concerning what the Bible means by baptism in the Holy Spirit, and how that might relate to tongues. Actually, there is no relationship, let's first of all talk about baptism in the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament God used four signs particularly to officially declare what salvation really was, or pointing to salvation.

There was circumcision. And that would indicate that even as the foreskin of a person's body was cut off, so we must have the foreskin of our heart cut off. We must be cut away from our flesh and its sinful lusts. Or another expression that was used was the burnt offering. They would offer a meal offering or an animal sacrifice as a burnt offering. And that was pointing to Christ, who became our burnt offering.

A third sign was that of the shedding of blood, of a turtledove, or a lamb, or an ox, pointing to the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the fact that Christ would endure the wrath of God for our sins.

A fourth sign that was used in the Old Testament was that of water ablations, again to ceremonially indicate that a person had been cleansed of his sins. Now that particular sign, the washing in water, was picked up by God as the language that would speak about what salvation constituted following Pentecost.

Actually, there was a shift, a very slight shift, in the impact of salvation after Pentecost. Basically, salvation was not changed. In order to be saved, one had to have his sins washed away, one had to become born again, one had to become a new creature in Christ. He had to experience the resurrection of his soul. And the Holy Spirit, who incidentally is eternal God, would be given to the person who had become saved.

But following Pentecost, or beginning with Pentecost, God added one additional dimension, and that is, since at Pentecost God began His work to evangelize the world, and in His program to evangelize the world He would utilize every born again believer, by qualifying him at the point of salvation to be an evangelist, or to be a witness, therefore God utilized a different expression in talking about salvation. Christ began to talk about being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

We read this, for example, in the Gospel of John and in the Gospel of Luke or Matthew. But the last time we read about it is in Acts 1. Jesus is saying there in verse 5, "For John baptized with water [that's speaking of one of the Old Testament signs, because John the Baptist was a prophet who was on the Old Testament side of the cross], but before many days you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit." That is, before many days you will become qualified in My New Testament program of not only being saved, but being ready to be a witness. You will be filled with the Holy Spirit in the sense that you will be qualified to be a witness for Me. And this would be characteristic of every New Testament believer.

And so when we are saved, we can speak of the fact that we have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. The word baptize means to wash or to cleanse, to purify. And therefore it denotes that our sins have been washed away, and we have become identified with the Holy Spirit, in His New Testament program to evangelize the world. We are filled with the Spirit from the time that we are saved, and that is a phrase that simply says that we have become qualified to be a witness. That is what baptism in the Holy Spirit has to do with.

Now it has nothing to do with miracles or signs or wonders, or whatever. It is true that when God first begins His program to evangelize the world, in the four areas particularly singled out by Christ to the disciples, God did at least one miracle to indicate to them that He meant exactly what He said, and also to give us further insights into the nature of His program to evangelize the world.

And so in Acts 1:8 He said, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses, in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And so we find in the Book of Acts one illustration in each of these places of a special miracle, to indicate that God meant exactly this, that this is where the Word of God was to be sent, in God's program to evangelize the world.

Jerusalem of course is the record of Pentecost, in Acts 2. Samaria is the record of Acts 8, when the Samaritans believed. Judea is the record of Acts 10, when the family of Cornelius was saved. They were Romans, they were Gentiles, living up in Caesarea. And in Acts 19 we read about the twelve Ephesians who were saved, and that is the record of the ends of all the earth.

Having done that, we never find another miracle that occurs at the time that we are saved.

Now when we talk about tongues, we're talking about something altogether different. In the letter of Paul to the church at Corinth, in the 12th and 13th and 14th chapters, we do find that in that early church there was a phenomenon known as tongues, or speaking in an unknown language. This was a gift that was given to a few in the church at Corinth, including Paul, whereby certain individuals would receive information from God in an unknown language. It bears no relationship to baptism in the Holy Spirit. That is, this was not a gift that was bestowed upon them at the time they were saved. This was simply a gift that did occur in the church at Corinth to various believers there.

And they were instructed to pray that they might interpret. The purpose of interpreting was so that this information that was given to them from God might also be available to the whole congregation. This was a possible phenomenon in that day, because God had not completed the Bible as yet. The holy scriptures that they had had been written down and consisted primarily of the Old Testament. Slowly on letters of Paul were being circulated among the churches. But fundamentally, they had only the Old Testament. And God was still providing information in addition. Peter received a vision. The apostle John received visions on the island of Patmos. Paul received visions. Agabus received a vision. This was possible in that day because the Bible was not complete.

But then, approximately AD 95, God completed the Bible. God is the author of the Bible, and in the last chapter of the Bible He declared in Revelation 22:18: "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein." And with that statement God closed off the possibility of any further information coming from God outside of what He had already written in His Word, the Bible. From that point on we would never expect anyone to receive a vision from God, a voice, a tongue, or whatever, because God would not violate His own rules. God has declared, "I've given you the Word now." Effectively He is saying to us, "I've given you My Word, the revelation of My will. Now you are to study it, you are to be obedient to it." And so we are not to expect any phenomenon like that which has occurred at various times during the time when the Bible was not yet completed, when individuals received visions, or when they spoke in a tongue.

Now there are people throughout the New Testament period, following AD 95, who have declared that they did receive a vision. And some of these have been written up, and they sound very glorious, and they sound very meaningful. And there are people today who still claim they receive visions, and there are people who say that they speak in tongues.

Well, all of this activity may take place. But based upon what the Bible declares, we know that it cannot be from God. It might be out of their own minds. It might be hallucinatory. Our minds are very tricky, you know. Or it might even be from an evil source.

And so we must not expect this gift today. Now anyone at all can be baptized in the Holy Spirit, if he will recognize that he is a sinner, that he is under the wrath of God because of his sins, and that there's no way that he can help himself out of this terrible situation in which he finds himself. And if he will call upon God for mercy, and if he will begin to trust in what the Bible declares concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, that He will forgive his sins if he will trust in Him, then he too can be saved. And when he is saved, when he is born again, then he has been baptized in the Holy Spirit. His sins have been washed away, and he has become identified with the Holy Spirit in His New Testament program to evangelize the world.

More than that, the Holy Spirit has taken up his abode within him.

Well, thank you for that question.

The Pouring Out of the Holy Spirit in Joel 2:28-31 Explained (259C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question for you. I would like to have you explain Joel 2:28 through 31. I would like to know what period in time he is speaking of. It sounds to me as though he was talking to men of that day, but then I read down in Joel 2, and it sounds as if all of this is to

be followed by Judgment Day. So I'm just a little bit confused about whether the time is yet to come for all of these things he's talking about, or whether they have already come.

HC: All right. I'll be happy to speak on that. We have before us a question concerning the meaning and understanding of Joel 2:28-32. Now this is an excellent passage to give us a lesson in how to understand the Old Testament Scriptures. We have here a passage in which God declares, through the prophet Joel:

And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and the maidservants in those days, I will pour out My Spirit. And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the Name of the Lord shall be delivered, for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said. And among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

Now in trying to understand a passage, one of the principles that we must follow is to search the Bible to see if there is anything else that relates to it. Now in this particular instance, we have very excellent information at our fingertips, because we find this very same passage is quoted, not absolutely precisely, but very close to precisely, in Acts 2, where at the time that the Holy Spirit was poured out, on that Pentecost Day back in AD 33, the apostles are beginning to speak in foreign languages, and there are these other signs the tongues of fire on their heads, and the sound of the rushing wind. And now Peter stands up and says that "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel."

And then, beginning in verse 17 of Acts 2, down through verse 21, he quotes these very same verses, not completely exactly, but very close to exactly. For example, in the first phrase, in Joel 2:28 it says, "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh." Well, when Peter quotes it, he, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, adds a little bit more truth. And he says, "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." And then he goes on and continues the quotation.

And so we know immediately that Joel 2, beginning with verse 28 to verse 32, is that which was prophesied concerning the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, or the beginning of God's program to evangelize the world. Now as one of the aspects of evangelizing the world, it was God's purpose that every believer would become a prophet, that is, would be qualified by God to become a witness.

Before Pentecost in AD 33, only occasionally a believer was so qualified. Only occasionally was there a prophet raised up who was under the activity of the Holy Spirit and would be qualified to be a spokesman for God. But it was God's intention that, beginning with Pentecost, immediately after Christ ascended to Heaven, after paying for our sins at the cross, God would begin to evangelize the world, and He would do this by putting His Spirit on all believers, qualifying them to be a witness.

Now the difficult language is verse 30 of Joel 2: "And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke." And then the next verse: "The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." And that is also quoted in Acts 2, because in verse 19 of Acts 2 we read, "And I will show wonders in the heavens

and signs on the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day."

Now is this talking about something different, or is this also to be understood as part of the event that is being described here in Acts 2, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit? Now it's certainly part of the same quotation. And God has declared: "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel." And he's referring to it in the present tense, that this is what has occurred.

Moreover, in verse 21 of Acts 2, it says, "And it shall be that whoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved," which is taken over from Joel 2:32: "And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the Name of the Lord shall be delivered. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said. And among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls." Now from Acts 2:21 we know that this is talking about the fact that the Gospel would go into all the world. And anyone from any nation, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, would be saved. And this is the second part of God's program to evangelize the world. The first part was that every believer would be qualified to be a witness. That's spoken of in Acts 2:17.

The second part is that God the Holy Spirit would bring believers forth from every nation. And that is Acts 2:21. And since Acts 2:21 is covering most of the information of Joel 2:32, and since Joel 2:30 and 31 is all part of the same context that is being quoted in Acts 2, as being fulfilled at the day of Pentecost back in AD 33, we know that we must read verses 30 and 31 and 32 of Joel 2 as being related to that which happened in AD 33.

Now let's see if we can do a little bit better work with this. First of all, let's look at verse 31. That's the easiest one to look at. "The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." Now there are two days spoken of in the Bible that relate to the sun being turned into darkness. One of these days is the Judgment Day of the last day, at the very end of time. We find, for example, in Revelation 6, where God declares in verse 12: "When he opened the sixth seal, I looked and behold, there was a great earthquake. And the sun became black as sackcloth."

And we read in Matthew 24:29, in speaking about the end of time, when Christ would return in judgment: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened." And so we know that this is one possibility. But Judgment Day is at the end of time. So that does not relate directly to the prophecy of Joel 2, because Acts 2 indicates that it was fulfilled back in AD 33.

Well, we also discover that when Christ hung on the cross, the sun did not give its light. Remember? Over the whole world the sun's light was hid for three hours. And so the sun was turned to darkness at that time.

Now at the same time, if the sun is turned to darkness, the moon would not give its light, or it would be turned to blood. That has really a double meaning, the moon being turned to blood, because the moon, well, let me give the physical meaning first. And then we'll look at the spiritual meaning perhaps as an afterthought.

But if the sun does not shine, then the moon does not shine, because the moon gets its light as reflected light from the sun. And so we see the same thing in Revelation 6:12, where it says, "The full moon became like blood," at the time that the sun became black as sackcloth. That's at the end of time.

But when Jesus hung on the cross, the sun did not shine. And therefore the moon would not have given its light. Now was the cross a "great and terrible day"? Well, yes. It was Judgment Day, wasn't it? What kind of Judgment Day? Well, you see, those who are not saved, who do not have Christ as their Savior, must answer to God on the last day for all of their sins. And they will be condemned by God, and they will be cast into hell, to begin to suffer the penalty of God for their sins. That's Judgment Day, at which time the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood.

But there is also Judgment Day at the cross, because Jesus had become sin for us. He was standing before God as a guilty sinner on our behalf, and He was condemned, exactly as the unsaved will be condemned on the last day. He was condemned for our sins, and God began to pour out His wrath on Him, and Christ did endure the equivalent of an eternity in hell for our sins. This all took place when Christ hung on the cross, that was Judgment Day. That was the "great and terrible day of the Lord" just as much as the last day is a great and terrible day of the Lord.

And so verse 31 fits into the context. You see, it's speaking here about an event that would occur when Christ would go to the cross, and the Holy Spirit would be poured out. And here it says that in connection with this, "the sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes," that is, at the time that Christ went to the cross to endure the wrath of God for our sins. This was the great and terrible day of the Lord spoken of in Joel 2:31.

Now let's go back to verse 30 and see if we can figure that one out. "And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke." Now this is language that is actually taken from the Old Testament. Back in II Samuel we find a song of praise penned by David, who is a great type of Christ, incidentally, in II Samuel 22. And he wrote this psalm or this song of praise, which is also found in Psalm 18, incidentally, at the time that he was delivered from the hand of all of his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

Now David is a great Messianic type. He is a type of Christ Himself. And even as David was literally delivered from the hand of his literal enemies, so Christ went to the cross, and there He obtained victory over all of the enemies that sought to destroy Him, namely, Satan and all of his hosts.

And so we read this song of praise, and we find that it is the language of Christ hanging on the cross, enduring hell. II Samuel 22:5: "For the waves of death encompassed me. The torrents of perdition assailed me. The cords of Sheol entangled me. The snares of death confronted me." That is the language of Christ enduring hell for our sins.

Then notice this song going on. Notice verse 8 of II Samuel 22: "Then the earth reeled and rocked. The foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked, because He was angry. Smoke went up from His nostrils and devouring fire from His mouth. Glowing coals flamed forth from Him. He bowed the heavens and came down. Thick darkness was under His feet." And so on and so on.

Now this is poetic language describing the majestic nature of God, as He poured out His wrath on Christ on the one hand, and on the other hand as He brought victory over Satan and all the enemies of God. And notice how similar this language is to Joel 2:30 or Acts 2:19, "And I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth, blood and fire and vapor of smoke." Now to some degree this was literal. The sun was darkened, the moon did not give its light. There was a great earthquake. These literal signs were there. But it is actually

going beyond this, and giving us a psalm of praise, a song of praise, illustrating the majesty of God, as God's wrath is poured out, and as victory is obtained over the wicked.

And so verse 19 of Acts 2 and Joel 2:30 are also speaking of Christ on the cross, as He gets victory over sin, which is a prelude to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, or a prelude to God's program to evangelize the world.

Now this brings us to verse 32 of Joel 2: "And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the Name of the Lord shall be delivered." And we know from Acts 2:20 that this is referring to Christ's promise that whoever turns to the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved.

Now this gives us a little bit of insight as to who these are who will bring the Gospel. "For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said. And among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls." Now that again is somewhat ambiguous language. It's not quoted in Acts 2, but it is totally a part of the context of what is quoted in Acts 2:32. It is directly related. It is in the same context. It says, "All who call upon the Name of the Lord shall be delivered, for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be those who escape." And so it's got to be talking about the events that began with the cross, and were coming into full fruition when the Holy Spirit was poured out in AD 33, immediately after the cross.

Now you see, what God is saying here is that Mount Zion and Jerusalem effectively are figures of the body of believers that is sent forth into the world to bring the Gospel. Mount Zion is a synonym, in this instance, of the body of believers. Now true, the first believers came from Jerusalem. But it actually is a figure that goes on throughout the New Testament period, because the phrase before is covering the whole New Testament period. "It shall come to pass that all who call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved (or shall be delivered)." And that's a promise that continues throughout the New Testament period.

And so Mount Zion and Jerusalem, therefore, while literally began as the believers who were Jews, living in Jerusalem, is actually expanded to include all who are born again believers, and who are those who are being saved. Now it says they "shall be those who escape." Escape what? Well, what does the New Testament say? "How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?" Escape what? The wrath of God for our sins. And so anyone who is a born again believer is included amongst those who escape. They are the survivors, they are those who are not subject to judgment - "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" - they are the ones whom God has called and predestined to be His own.

Now I could go on in Joel 3, which is part of the same context. We see that verses 1 and 2 are also talking about the cross. But that's another subject altogether.

What Does it Mean to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit? (314B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like to talk about the baptism in the Holy Ghost. There's something special that comes after the initial conversion I believe, and I know that we receive the fullness of the Holy Ghost right at conversion, but I hear on TV, on Christian television and from some people at school, about certain people not being baptized in the Holy Ghost yet. And yet they're Christians. And they turn to Luke 4:1, where it says, "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan and went into the

wilderness." One person I talked to said that he always had the Spirit but that at this one time he was filled with that Spirit, for the work that he had to do. Now I just would like to know if you can make this clearer for me.

HC: The question that is raised is concerning the nature of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, or becoming filled with the Holy Spirit. Are we saved, and then later on baptized in the Holy Spirit? Are we saved, and later on filled with the Holy Spirit?

Actually, the Bible teaches, in Ephesians 4, I believe that there is one baptism. There are not two or three baptisms. There's only one baptism. And God speaks of this baptism (Ephesians 4:5 is the verse I'm thinking of). Actually, this baptism is the baptism we receive in the Spirit at the time that we are saved, at the time we become born again. That's the only baptism the Bible knows about.

Now it's true the Bible speaks of water baptism. But water baptism is merely a shadow or a reflection of the Spirit baptism, of the washing of our sins. Baptism means to be washed or to be cleansed, or to be purified.

Now the phrase, "baptism in the Holy Spirit," really finds Biblical emphasis beginning with Pentecost. The reason for this is that back in the Old Testament God used other signs and figures than this in emphasizing who were really saved. He did use baptism, but He also spoke of circumcision. He spoke of burnt offerings and of blood sacrifices, that were pointing to the coming Messiah. But circumcision was really the sign that someone received to indicate that they had become identified with the body of Christ.

But when the Old Testament believer was saved, he was saved exactly as we are saved. The Holy Spirit came into his life. The Bible says in Romans 8:9 that unless we have the Holy Spirit we are none of His. When they were saved, they received the Holy Spirit just as we do. But they were not mandated, nor were they qualified, to be a witness. Only occasionally in the Old Testament do we read of someone who was filled with the Holy Spirit. That is, this is language to indicate that they had been qualified to be a witness.

Now John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. His mother Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit as she exclaimed concerning the Messiah. And His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit. All of this happened before Pentecost.

But that was the unusual kind of thing. Ordinarily a person was not filled with the Holy Spirit. That is, God did not use this language when He spoke about the ordinary believer. But when we come to Pentecost, two things have happened. First of all, all the Old Testament signs have been completed in Christ. Never again is there to be circumcision, never again is there to be a blood sacrifice, is there to be a burnt offering.

But God did pick out of the Old Testament signs the idea of baptism, and highlighted that as the sign to be employed that showed that we had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. But the bigger piece of information was that beginning with Pentecost, every born again believer was qualified to be a witness, because you see, at Pentecost God began His program to evangelize the world. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit, which we read about in Joel's prophecy and in Isaiah, and other passages in the Old Testament, and which was fulfilled at Pentecost, was speaking of the time when God would begin to evangelize the world.

Now in evangelizing the world two things would happen. Number one, God would begin to draw believers out of every nation. Satan had been conquered at the cross, and it was God's program to begin to draw believers out of every

nation. That's the first big thing that happened. And we see this dramatically of course on Pentecost afternoon, as three thousand are saved from eighteen different nations.

Secondly, every believer from now on is qualified to be a witness, so that the work of bringing in the saved from all of the different nations would be accomplished through the testimony, through the witnessing of believers as they're found throughout the world. And God referred to this qualification as being filled with the Spirit.

So you see, our salvation is the same as in the Old Testament, but now we're all like Old Testament prophets. We are filled with the Spirit from the moment we're saved. That is, this is speaking of the fact that we have become qualified to be a witness.

There is no such thing as a second baptism. There are blessings, of course, that keep coming if we're saved. You can speak about a second or third or fourth or a ninth or a twelfth or a nineteenth blessing. Every day God's blessings are renewed. But insofar as baptism is concerned, that occurred at the time we were saved, and only then.

There are a lot of gospels around today. The Bible tells us that there would be a lot of other gospels. But there can only be one true Gospel. And the true Gospel is circumscribed by the Bible. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (the revelation of this Gospel) is given to us in the Word of God, the Bible. The Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word.

Now today there are lots of gospels that talk about the Lord Jesus, that talk about baptism, and talk about the blood of Christ, and all of these things. But any gospel that looks to some other source for divine truth than the Bible by definition must be another gospel, because the moment you say the Bible is the Word of God, and then you say, but there's also the Word of God here or there, in a vision or a voice or a tongue, or an angel confrontation, or whatever you think it is, the moment you say that that, too, is the divine Word, then obviously you've got a different sourcebook. You've got the Bible plus this other information. And therefore, by definition it's another gospel.

And of course, if you have another gospel, then you're going to come to a lot of different conclusions about what the Bible teaches, because you'll evaluate, you'll interpret the Bible not only by the Bible itself but also by the information you received from these other sources.

CALLER: There's one TV show on . . .

HC: Yes, but I don't like to talk about any names or movements or churches, or anything like that. If you just want to mention the TV show and not mention any names . . .

CALLER: No, I wasn't going to mention the name. They just really push the baptism of the Spirit. The people that they have on they let on are all Christians, but they prefer that they have this emotional thing which they refer to as the baptism in the Holy Spirit, where they've all spoken in tongues, and that is the evidence of their being filled with the Holy Spirit. They had been saved a long time before that, probably.

HC: Now, you see, the definition of the true Gospel has to do with what the Bible is. Now if you hold that divine truth comes from another source...in an unknown language like a tongue, or from a vision, or whatever... then you have a gospel, that's true. And you can believe you're saved, and you can call yourself a Christian, and you can talk about the blood of Christ. But you're saved on a different basis than the bible. You've got a different kind of a gospel than the Gospel of the Bible.

We cannot decide what the Gospel is by the lives of people. We can decide what

the Gospel is by the Bible. And so the thing you have to listen to is the Word of God, the Bible. That is the only authoritative source of truth.

CALLER: Okay. I believe that. I know that's true. At times I had been wondering if there was something from God that I hadn't received. And at the same time I knew that that wasn't true. I knew that I had the Holy Spirit right in the beginning. But still, you know, hearing some of my friends say this and that, and telling about their church, where some of these things happen, some of these movings of the Spirit, I was getting kind of shaky about it, wondering why it hadn't happened to me.

HC: Yes. The Bible indicates that the just shall live by faith. The Bible indicates that we don't walk by sight. The Bible indicates that signs and wonders were done when Jesus was on earth, before the Holy Spirit was poured out. Signs and wonders continued for a little while after the Holy Spirit was poured out. But whenever the Bible talks about signs and wonders near the end of time, it always speaks of it as events that do not come from God.

We're living in a day when we really have to place our trust only in the Bible. We have to be more careful than ever. God warns, in Matthew 24:24, that false prophets and false Christs will arise with signs and wonders, to lead astray if possible even the elect.

CALLER: This one church I went to looked so real. I mean, it was full of people. And a couple of people stood up, and God supposedly spoke through them. It all looked so real. And I still don't know if it was or not . . . or what.

HC: The only source of divine truth is the Bible. And anything else, any gospel at all that looks outside of the Bible for divine truth, by definition it's another gospel. And God warns about this in Revelation 22:18: "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein." And so we live in a free land, where we can hold any kind of a gospel that we would like. And that's a wonderful thing, that we live in this kind of a land.

CALLER: But at this church they proclaim the Word of God.

HC: Yes. But you see, if I would have a gospel where part of the divine truth that I regard as my authority is the Bible, then of course I'm going to talk about the Bible, and I'm going to use the language of the Bible. And I may have some correct information, to some degree, from the Bible.

But if I have more than the Bible as my source of divine truth then obviously my authority is wider than the Bible, isn't it? And God warns that we're not to listen to anything outside of the Bible as divine. We're not to add to the words of this book. If I read the Bible and I say, "That's the Word of God," fine. If I have a vision and I say, "That's the Word of God," then I have added to the Bible, haven't I? I've got two sources now. I've got the Bible, and I've got the information that came to me from the vision. And God says if that's the case, then I'm still subject to the plagues that are written in this Bible.

More than that, you'll remember in Matthew 24:24 Jesus said that these false prophets will deceive, if possible, even the elect. Now the elect are the born again believers. They're in the church where the true Gospel ought to be proclaimed, and yet other gospels will look so much like the true Gospel that even the elect would be deceived, if that were possible. And so this indicates how careful we have to be to make sure that the gospel we follow is circumscribed by the Bible.

CALLER: Okay. Now just one more little thing. Do you think I should stay away from this church then?

HC: All I can tell you is that if you want the true Gospel, you should go where the true Gospel is being proclaimed.

CALLER: I do go to a church like that.

HC: All right. Then that's where you ought to go. And the Bible says in Second John 10 that if anyone brings another gospel or another doctrine, you're not to give them any greeting.

CALLER: Okay.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Seeking the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (373A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: In I Corinthians 12, 13 and 14 it talks about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and that we ought to actively seek after these gifts. And I was wondering how we are to go about doing this. Do you just ask for them and hope to receive them, or what?

HC: The Bible, in I Corinthians 12-14, says, "Seek especially to prophesy." Remember that?

CALLER: Yes.

HC: Now why does it say, "especially to prophesy"? You see, the only person who legitimately is a prophet in the eyes of God is the born again believer. And since Pentecost every born again believer, man, woman or child, is given the office of a prophet. The gift that we really are to seek is that we might be qualified by God to declare God's Word. That's what prophesying really means in the broadest sense, to declare God's Word.

Now the source of God's Word is the Bible. This is what we are to declare to others. Now God also speaks about other gifts. There is the gift of faith, and every born again believer has the gift of faith. Now there are other gifts. There's the gift of teaching. Some are better teachers, more qualified to be a teacher than others. But every believer is qualified to be a witness, and that is what we are to seek, to make sure that we are born again.

Now in times past there were some very special gifts, which are also named in I Corinthians 12-14. For example, there was the gift of being able to do miracles. Before the Holy Spirit was poured out, and this is always kind of an amazing thing to me. You know, there are people today who speak about the gifts of the Spirit and relate this to Pentecost. They want to identify with Pentecost, and then they make a big thing about the gifts of the Spirit. And they particularly focus on gifts like doing miracles, or healing. But the fact is that there were far more people who were gifted by God to heal and to do miracles before Pentecost than after Pentecost. And that is never mentioned. But that is the fact.

When Christ was on earth, there were the seventy that went out, there were the apostles, and of course there was Jesus Himself. They had special gifts of being able to do miracles, or being able to heal. After Pentecost we only read of five of the apostles - that is all - there's not another individual after Pentecost recorded in the Bible who was able to heal or do miracles. We read it of Peter and James and John and Philip and Paul. These are the only ones.

And so it is true, what I Corinthians 12-14 indicates, that there were some who had the gift of healing and of doing miracles. But actually, to do miracles or healing is not really an integral part of God's ongoing program. Healing and doing miracles is to bring signs. The word sign in the New Testament is the word miracle. And Jesus already, when He was on earth, warned the Jews, "An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a sign," or for a miracle.

Later on we read that we are to walk by faith, "The just shall live by faith," not by sight. In other words, miracles and healings, miraculous healings, are not a part of God's salvation program, even

though for a little while some did this, during the days when the Bible was still being prepared.

Now there was also the gift of speaking in heavenly languages, called tongues, in I Corinthians 12-14. This was at a time before the Bible was completed. It was still the day when an apostle could receive a vision from God, or an individual might receive an angel confrontation, or he may receive a message from God in a dream. All of this was possible, because the Bible was not complete.

And so also it was true in the church at Corinth. There were some who received some kind of a message from God in a heavenly language, and they were admonished to be sure to have someone interpret it, particularly if it was in the presence of the congregation, so that the whole congregation could be edified by this message from God. And so it became a revelation from God.

Now all of that was possible only until the Bible was completed, because when the Bible was completed God indicated, in Revelation 22:18, "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein." In other words, He closed off the possibility that ever again would He be speaking with divine truth from a source other than the Bible itself.

CALLER: But do you believe then that people who speak in tongues, or who claim to speak in tongues, or the faith healers, are not from God then?

HC: According to what the Bible teaches, anyone who claims to have received a message from God, whether it's in an unknown language, or whether it was in a vision, or a dream, or whatever, you can depend upon it, it was not from God. It may have been out of their minds, it may have been a hallucination, it may even have been from Satan, because Satan goes about as an angel of light. He works overtime in the secular world in the occult activity. And certainly, since the Bible warns constantly about his activity in the church, we would expect to see occult activity in the church.

A lot of the miracles, of course, that are being done are not really miracles. No one is doing miracles today like Jesus did. No one is healing those who have withered limbs, so that instantly they are able to walk around. No one is raising the dead. No one is healing those who have leprosy instantaneously. No one is able to go into a hospital and go from bed to bed and heal each one. That is not happening today.

There is a lot of activity that is looked upon as miraculous healing. Some of this is psychosomatic illness that has been corrected by the fact that the patient is putting his trust in what the healer is saying. Some of it is chicanery. Some of it is deception. And so forth. There may be a lot of explanations for it.

But the kind of healing that Jesus did is just not being done today.

CALLER: Okay, granted. But I know many devout Christians, I myself included, I mean, I have spoken in tongues, and I would hate to think that this was from Satan. I couldn't believe that, not the way I feel when it happens. I feel very close to God. I feel a very personal relationship to Him.

HC: Well, I can't answer to you, or tell you where your tongues came from I can only tell you what the Bible says. Now I do want to say this, that in II Corinthians 11 God does declare that Satan comes as an angel of light. Now I know, speaking for myself personally, I would want to make absolutely certain that any visitation I had was from God. And the only thing I'm certain of is the Bible. I know that that is from God. I also know that Satan does go about as an angel of light. He is able to practice his occult powers. And therefore I would not want

anything to do with anything at all that relates to the occult. The Bible is not an occult book. When we become saved, it is true that a supernatural event has occurred, and that we have experienced the resurrection of our souls, we've become a child of God, and all of this is supernatural.

But the supernatural has not broken into the everyday world in the sense where we can touch it and see it and feel it. And the occult activity is where this happens. The medium, for example, is able to do this, as she claims to be talking with those who have departed. And actually, she's speaking with evil spirits, obviously. Witchcraft is of this nature. Occult activity is everywhere.

If you really want to be absolutely safe in Christ, then you want to listen only to the Word of God, and you want to carefully examine anything that goes on, to make sure that it is not something that is beyond the Word of God. And there are many gospels today, many, many gospels. But there's only one true Gospel. Now each gospel thinks that it is the true Gospel. There are many gospels, for example, which start out with the Bible. They believe that the Bible is the divine Word of God. But they also believe that another book is the divine Word of God. Well then, by definition that's going to be a different gospel than if we believe only the Bible is the divine Word, because our authority is going to be different. The gospel that has another book is going to have a far more expanded authority than just the Bible.

Now by the same token, there are gospels that start out with the Bible, and they also believe that God is speaking through visions today, or revelations outside of the Bible. Well, then their authority is the Bible plus what they expect to receive from these visions or these revelations, or these dreams, or whatever. So by definition it's another kind of a gospel than that which would be circumscribed just by the Bible. Obviously you're going to have a different foundation upon which to build truth.

Now I personally believe that the only true Gospel is circumscribed by the Bible. It alone and in its entirety is the divine Word.

CALLER: I agree with you, but the Bible says that the Spirit will intercede for you when you don't know quite what to pray for. And Paul says, "I thank God that I speak in tongues," and it is something.

HC: But you see, when Paul said that he was still living at a time when God had not completed His divine Word. The apostle John was going to receive a series of Revelations on the island of Patmos after that. And other of the apostles received visions. For that time that was entirely possible.

But now we have the whole Word of God. Now we have the entire Word of God, and it alone is the divine Word. We have to make a decision, and every person makes this decision. Am I going to trust the Word of God and it alone and in its entirety, or am I going to start out with the Word of God and then either take away parts of it that I don't particularly care for, as some religions or some gospels do, or am I going to add to it whatever comes along by other visitations?

Now in either of the latter two cases, you end up with a different gospel, even though you may think you have the true Gospel. But obviously it's going to be a different gospel, and you're going to come up with different doctrines, and that happens much more quickly than if you believe the Bible alone is the divine Word.

Now I admit, the true Gospel is not very exciting. This is one of the problems that people face. There are many gospels today that are very exciting. There are manifestations, and there's so much

outward evidence that some kind of a miraculous thing has occurred. And so this becomes exceedingly exciting and enticing.

The true Gospel isn't like that at all. The true Gospel has to do with a broken and a contrite heart. The true Gospel has to do with coming to God like the publican of old. "Oh God, have mercy on me. I'm a sinner." It has to do with walking by faith, patiently reading the Bible to discover what God's will is, and trusting, and being obedient to what is in the Bible, and not trying to do like those around Jesus, looking for something that is a miracle, like Jesus warned, "An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a sign [or a miracle]."

The true Gospel, as the world looks at it, is not a bit exciting. It strips us of our self-respect, of our pride. We've got to admit that we're nothing but a rotten sinner before God. There's nothing that I can do to contribute to my salvation. My works mean nothing. There's no manifestation. Heaven doesn't open up in a bolt of light of any kind. There's no feeling of some kind in my soul. It means that I simply have trusted implicitly and altogether in what the Bible declares. And that is the nature of the true Gospel, and that is not very exciting to most people. Most people want something far more wonderful than that.

But the true Gospel, once we have it, we know that we are safe in Christ. We know that Satan can have nothing on us. There's no way that he can get at us. He can't deceive us with a vision or something that looks exactly like it is Christ speaking. There's no way he can do this, because we have the Bible as the only source of divine truth.

CALLER: Are you saying then that the sections of the Bible that relate to gifts of the Spirit, that relate to being able to pray to God through the Spirit, were meant for the people then and not us now?

HC: There are statements in the Bible that, in fact, the whole Bible has to be read in the light of the whole Bible. I can point out passages, for example, in the Old Testament where the Israelites were commanded to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, or their children were commanded to be circumcised. And when we come to the New Testament, we see that Jesus was circumcised. And we see that Jesus celebrated the Passover. He was strictly obedient to those Old Testament commands. But we don't do those things anymore. Why don't we do those things anymore? Because later on in the Bible we find that those particular laws were completed in Christ's going to the cross.

All right. Now by the same token, you can read in I Corinthians 12-14 where it talks about gifts of the Spirit, it talks about healings and miracles and tongues. And that was all valid for that day. Those things could have happened. But we have to finish reading the Bible. We interpret scripture with scripture.

Just as we finish reading the Bible and we find that no longer are we to do what Jesus did and be circumcised on the eighth day, nor are we to do what Jesus did and celebrate the Passover or celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Why don't we do it? Because when we interpret those statements in the light of the rest of the Bible, we find we're not to do this any longer.

Now by the same token, when we read the rest of the Bible and find that God has completed His holy Word and that we're not to walk by miracles, then we know that we're not to expect those things today. And yet we have the whole Bible to follow.

The amazing thing to me is, and it's an amazing thing to me, in a sense, in another sense I can understand it. But we have this marvelous holy scripture, which is the revelation of God's will for

man, in which we can read word by word, phrase by phrase, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, and every one of those words and phrases and sentences and paragraphs is the voice of God. And no man has ever plumbed the depths of the riches of the Word of God. And we can spend hour after hour, thousands of hours, studying it and comparing it and chewing on the Word and meditating on the phrases. And we always know, absolutely, this is the Word of God. We absolutely know that it is God's voice for us.

And yet with all of this possibility, men today want something different. They want something more. They want something that they can hear. They may not really be sure of what they hear, but this is what they're going to pay attention to.

Now frankly, I want to rest my case with the Bible. And I know that when I stick with the Bible I'm on very safe ground. And thank you so much for calling. Good night.

Tongues and Other Gifts of the Spirit in 1 Cor 13 (374C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'm calling concerning what I heard on Conference Echoes, the gentleman from Silver Spring, Maryland. And I felt that he was kind of doing some semantical contortions with scripture. I agreed with some of what he had to say, but I think to say that I Corinthians 13:8 says that tongues, or prophesy, or knowledge are no longer applicable gifts to this present age is simply teaching something that is not there, because reading on down, verse 9 says, "For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come then that which is in part shall be done away." And it's obvious from verses 9 & 10 that what he's talking about is when we get to Heaven, because in verse 12 he says, "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known."

And it just seems to me so perfectly clear that what Paul is talking about is that these gifts will pass away when we get to Heaven, and there won't be any need of them there. But there's nothing whatsoever that says that the church is not going to have them here throughout the entire church age. And further, in Mark 16, at the very close of that particular Gospel, we find Jesus making a remark about the signs that follow them which believe. He says, "In My Name shall they cast out devils. They shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents. If they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them. They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

And so it just seems to me that to say that these gifts are no longer with the church is to ignore the total thrust of scripture.

HC: Well, let me comment about this. I did not hear the speaker, but I can look at I Corinthians 13.

Now in I Corinthians 13 God is simply indicating that tongues shall cease. He doesn't say when they will cease. He gives no intimation as to when they will cease. He simply says that tongues will cease.

Now He also says that prophecy and knowledge will pass away. And then He goes on to discuss, in verse 9 through verse 12, about when knowledge and prophecy will pass away. And He does indicate that they will pass away when we see Him face to face, that is, when we get to Heaven. They will continue on this earth, but they will pass away when we come into Heaven.

But there is no suggestion in I Corinthians 13 as to when tongues would cease. It is simply a declaration

that they would cease at some point in time. Now when we evaluate, however, what tongues were, and of course I Corinthians 12 and I Corinthians 14 are the two chapters that especially speak about tongues, there we find that it was a phenomenon that did exist in the church at Corinth. There were those who did receive from God Himself information in a heavenly language. And this served to edify them personally. But they were admonished to seek to interpret it so that the information would also be available to the congregation so that the congregation would be edified.

Now this was altogether possible in that day, because God had not completed His Word as yet. It was still the day when God would speak with revelations coming from other sources than the Bible. They really only had the Old Testament at that time, and so we find the apostle Peter receiving information by vision, the apostle John, the apostle Paul, and individuals in the church at Corinth receiving information in this unknown language called tongues.

But then God completed His divine Word. And in Revelation 22:18 He declared, "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein." Now with that statement God effectively is saying, "Now look. I've completed the Holy Word. I've completed My revelation. And if you think you've received some divine truth by means of a dream or a vision or an angel confrontation, or by a tongue, or whatever, it's not from Me. I have given you the Word of God. And if you are going to look for divine truth from other sources than the Bible, then this is indicative of the fact that you are still subject to the plagues written herein. That is, you're unsaved and you're still subject to hell."

This I believe is what the Bible teaches about this particular gift, that is, any gift relating to additional revelation after the Bible was completed. Now it is true that the Bible speaks about signs and wonders that will still come to pass. The Bible speaks about signs and wonders in a number of places, and tongues was a sign. We read this in I Corinthians 14. The word sign there is the word miracle. And the Bible does speak about signs and wonders, particularly in relationship to then end-time church. But ominously; and unfortunately, all of the references to signs and wonders near the end of time are Satanically related.

In Matthew 24:24 God indicates, "False prophets and false christs will arise with signs and wonders to lead astray if possible even the elect." In II Thessalonians 2 we read of the man of sin taking his seat in the temple. And this I believe is Satan ruling in the church. And he will come with signs and wonders of falsehood. And God in fact will make those who follow this believe a lie, that they will be prepared for judgment. God is not neutral in these times.

In Revelation 13 it speaks about the beast that comes out of the earth, the false prophet. And he makes an image, and he gives life to that image, and brings signs to come to pass, even making fire come down from heaven. This is gospels that Satan himself will design, so that he will enslave the nations of the world to a higher degree than ever before. And he will attest to their genuineness, as he comes as an angel of light, by coming with signs and wonders. That is, he will make them apparently like they are genuinely of Christ. But Satan is the big deceiver. And actually they will not be of Christ.

And then in Revelation 16 again it speaks about the beast and the false prophets coming with signs to deceive, coming with miracles to deceive. Every reference in relationship to signs and wonders near the end of time relates to Satanic activity. Now that's very serious. That's very heavy. That's very

ominous. And it indicates how careful we have to be today, because I do believe, as do many others, that we are near the end of time.

It is a day when we want to make absolutely certain that we get divine truth only from the Bible. It alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. Satan didn't speak through the Bible. Satan can speak in a lot of other ways. He comes with all kinds of occult activities. He comes outside the church, in witchcraft and ouija boards and tarot cards, and so on, and in the church he comes with occult activity. The Bible says so. The Bible says, in II Corinthians 11, that he comes as an angel of light.

Therefore we really want to be on guard, and make sure that the only place where we're going to look for divine truth is the Bible itself. Then we cannot be deceived.

CALLER: I think certainly Satan does go around as an angel of light, granted. But I do not accept the premise, and I cannot accept it, that all of the signs or wonders in the latter times of the church are from Satan. I cannot accept that. For one reason, Joel 2:28 & following says, "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions, and also upon the servant and upon the handmaiden, in those days I will pour out My Spirit. And I [and this is God talking to Joel here] will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be delivered."

HC: Yes, but you see, God is not talking there about Judgment Day at the end of time, the great and terrible day of the Lord, because right after that He says, "And whosoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved," or "will be delivered." And salvation does not come after Judgment Day. Salvation comes all through the New Testament period.

But you see, when Christ went to the cross, that was the "great and terrible day of the Lord." That is when Christ paid for my sins. He was subject to Judgment Day at that time. That is when the sun was darkened, and the moon did not give its light. And that literally did happen, you know. The sun was darkened. There was darkness over the face of the whole earth for a period of three hours, we read. And the language of the signs that were shown is the language of Psalm 18, where God is speaking in dramatic terms about the deliverance that would be provided by the cross.

The fact is, there was a great earthquake. The earth itself reacted to the fact that Christ was on the cross. Now more than that, in Acts 2:16, back there in AD 33, on Pentecost Day, Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, quotes from this very passage, and declares that this, in relationship to the phenomena you are seeing today, as there was the sound of the rushing wind and what appeared to be tongues of fire on the heads of the disciples, and the fact that they were speaking in foreign languages, was evidence that this is the time that Joel prophesied about. In other words, now God is going to begin His program to evangelize the world. The great and terrible day of the Lord has come, and now whosoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved.

Now, if we did not have Revelation 22:18, from the language of Joel 2, as it is explained in Acts 2:17 & 18, where he says, "Your young men will dream dreams and your old men will see visions," we would conclude that throughout the New Testament period (because it's throughout the New Testament period that we have the last

days, it is throughout the New Testament period that whosoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved) we could still dream dreams and see visions. But that aspect of the prophecy was limited by the language of Revelation 22:18. Several decades later God declared that we're not to add to the words of this book.

Now the other implications of that prophecy remain. "Whosoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved." Every believer is going to be a prophet. Now in the Old Testament the prophets were only few and far between. They received their information from God from two sources: from the written Word that was complete to their day, and also by means of dreams or visions, in a more exciting way.

In the New Testament, before the Bible was completed, the prophets had the same experience. They had the Old Testament, which was the written word complete to their day, and occasionally they could receive additional information through a dream or a vision. But once the Bible was completed, now as New Testament prophets throughout the New Testament period, we continue to prophesy, that is, to declare God's Word, which is really what prophesying is all about, but our source of divine truth is only the Bible, because it is now the complete Word of God. It is every part of God's revelation that He wants us to know. And so we don't have to be looking for divine truth from any other source.

Now this of course is a fantastic guarantee for the New Testament believer, that he won't be tripped up by Satan. He won't be snared by Satan, because he's looking around for an additional revelation of some kind. He knows that when he goes to the Bible he's got all the revelation, all that God would speak to mankind about. And he can spend his time very patiently studying the Word, searching the scriptures, and knowing all the time that this is the voice of God, this is the revelation of God. What a wonderful guarantee God has given us.

CALLER: A couple more problems. Number one, I see nothing in the context of Revelation 22:18 which says that that verse is applicable to anything other than prophecy of the Book of Revelation itself.

HC: Now let me answer that very quickly, because we've run out of time. He won't be able to cover any other questions on this program. But you see, the Book of Revelation is an integral part of the whole Bible. If you add a chapter to the Book of Revelation, you've added it to the Bible. If you take away a chapter, you've taken it away from the Bible. So whether you want to understand this book to be the Book of Revelation or the whole Bible is really immaterial, ultimately, because the Bible is one cohesive whole. It has one author. It is one book. Therefore this book does ultimately refer to the Bible.

The Significance of Being Filled with the Spirit (401B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. My question is, What is your interpretation of being filled with the Spirit? And could you give scriptural references wherever you can?

HC: The question is raised concerning the phrase, "filled with the Spirit." There are many who speak on this matter of being filled with the Spirit. It is a rather popular topic today.

Actually, to be filled with the Spirit means to be under the control of the Spirit, that is, to let the Spirit more and more take control of your life. Now in the general sense that is true. But God has a very specific meaning when He talks about being filled with the Spirit.

We find, for example, that John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb. As we search out this phrase, we'll find that exceedingly frequently it is used in the same breath with another phrase, namely, that someone spoke out or witnessed concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

We read, for example, that Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was filled with the Spirit and said, I don't recall the exact words. Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, was filled with the Spirit, and exclaimed, we read about the disciples, right after Pentecost. They were filled with the Spirit, and spoke in other languages. We read in Ephesians 5:18, where God says, "Don't be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit." And remember what phrase follows? "addressing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

I find that when we synthesize all these statements we find that to be filled with the Spirit in the particular sense means that we have become qualified to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now under no circumstance does being filled with the Spirit have to do with something that happens again and again and again. We either have the Holy Spirit, and are a born again believer, or we don't have the Holy Spirit because we're still unsaved. And the Holy Spirit is not given by measure, as we read in John 3. The Holy Spirit is not a commodity of some kind, where we can be half filled, or a quarter filled. We either are given the Holy Spirit in the sense of being filled with the Holy Spirit, or we don't have the Holy Spirit.

According to what we read in the Bible, before Pentecost it was only occasionally that we would read of someone who was filled with the Holy Spirit. I sighted three of them: John the Baptist, Elizabeth, and Zacharias. We read of Micah that he, being filled with the Spirit, said what he had to say. But it's a fairly unusual phrase before Pentecost, although it is found.

But after Pentecost, beginning with the disciples in Acts, we find that that is to be normative for every believer. They are to be filled with the Spirit. That is the command of Ephesians 5:18 & 19: "Be filled with the Spirit."

When we understand that God really is saying that we are to be His witnesses, all of this begins to hang together. Before Pentecost it was only occasionally that God qualified someone to be a witness. It was not His program at that time that every believer would be a witness. And so it was only occasionally that someone was filled with the Spirit. Now this has nothing to do with whether we're born again, it has nothing to do in itself. We can't be filled with the Spirit without being born again. Only those who are born again are legitimate witnesses, or ambassadors, or Christ.

But it really means that you have the Holy Spirit, which was true before Pentecost as well as after. But it means that more particularly you have been qualified to be a witness. And so after Pentecost every believer was to be a witness.

One of the most unusual places where we find a reference to being filled with the Spirit is in the Old Testament, in Exodus 35, where they are building the Old Testament tabernacle. Now the Old Testament tabernacle was the forerunner of the temple. And the superintendent who was named by God to build the tabernacle was a man by the name of Bezellel.

Interestingly, we read of Bezellel that he was filled with the Spirit. In verse 30 of Exodus 35: "And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, The Lord hath called by name Bezellel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And He hath filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of

workmanship, and to devise curious works, to work in gold and silver and brass," and so on.

Now what does that have to do with witnessing? Is my whole synthesis shot down now? Doesn't it stand now because we find that Bezellel was filled with the Spirit? And we don't read of Bezellel that he spoke to anyone. He was not a prophet. He was the superintendent. He was charged with building the tabernacle. He was a craftsman.

And yet it says of him that he was "filled with the Spirit." But you see, that fits right into what we discovered in the New Testament. To be filled with the Spirit is to be a witness, and the purpose of witnessing, declaring God's Word, is to build the temple of God. We are temple builders in the New Testament.

Remember I Peter 2:4 or 5? We are lively stones in the house of God. Or in Ephesians 2 it says that we are built into a temple of the Lord. You see, whenever we are bringing the Gospel, we are being temple builders. But that's exactly what Bezellel was. He was a temple builder. He was the superintendent of the tabernacle. So we're not at all surprised therefore that it speaks of Bezellel that he also was filled with the Spirit. Can you see how beautifully and cohesively the Bible fits together?

To be filled with the Spirit really means, in its most intense Biblical sense, I believe, to be commissioned by God to be a witness, and a witness of the true Gospel, of course. In Ephesians 5, where it says, "Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." God is simply saying, "Be sure that you are a born again individual, so that you are legitimately an ambassador of Christ." And as an ambassador of Christ you of course are filled with the Spirit, so that you can be a legitimate witness of the true Gospel.

Talking in Tongues (558A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Recently a Christian told me that all Christians should be filled with the Holy Spirit and that the evidence of that experience is to speak in tongues. But I was always taught that you shouldn't . . . that tongues was just another gift of the Holy Spirit. But he's saying that it's used to help you to understand the Bible more and to worship the Lord better. And I was just wondering about your opinion. Could you give me some Scripture that would just settle this in my mind? Because he's saying that filling of the Spirit and baptism of the Spirit mean all the same thing. And I'm really confused about it.

HC: The question is, what does baptism in the Holy Spirit mean? What does filling of the Holy Spirit mean?

CALLER: Do all Christians have that experience? He's saying that in order to really be a Christian that's growing you should be filled with the Holy Spirit and receive these tongues.

HC: The fact is that in I Corinthians 12-14, where the matter of tongues is very thoroughly discussed by God, there is no reference of any kind to the filling of the Holy Spirit. Nor is there any reference to the fact that it is a result of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Actually, to be baptized in the Holy Spirit means to be saved. We must be born again. And the word baptism means to be washed or to be cleansed. It's a phrase that indicates that we have been saved and we have become identified with the Holy Spirit in the work of sharing the Gospel. And the gift of tongues that was found in the church of Corinth was not given as some sign or evidence that someone had become saved, any more than any other gift was that sign or evidence.

As a matter of fact, because tongues was a heavenly language in which they

spoke, and when it was interpreted it served to edify the congregation, therefore it was like an additional revelation. And since the Bible says in Revelation 22:18 that we're not to add to the words of this book, we know therefore that that is not possible today. Whatever the phenomenon is that is seen today, it is not of God. It is either hallucinatory, or it is self-hypnotism, or it is out of their minds, or it is of Satan. But it is not of God. That cannot be.

Now when God uses the phrase being filled with the Spirit, every born again believer since Pentecost is filled with the Spirit simply because he is saved. But it means simply that we have become qualified to be a witness. We must remember that the Holy Spirit is Eternal God. He is not a quantity of any kind. God is everywhere present. These phrases, "baptized in the Holy Spirit," "filled with the Holy Spirit," "Christ breathed on the disciples the Holy Spirit," these phrases are not discussing God as if He is some kind of a quantity that now comes into their life. We have to understand these phrases as indicating some part of the program of God in His salvation program.

Now when Christ breathed on the ten apostles in John 21, I believe it is, and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," this was before Pentecost, and He was simply effectively saying to them, I now commission you to be prepared to begin the New Testament congregation, which will begin at Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit was poured out, this was not a quantity of God being poured out. This was simply language to indicate that now God had begun His program to evangelize the world. When the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, it is simply language to indicate that we have become qualified to be a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

CALLER: Okay. And if the church is basing its doctrine on that, and they believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins, but they believe also in this baptism or filling of the Spirit, would you suggest that I continue there? It's making me really confused now.

HC: The question is, at what point do we feel safe within a congregation? I struggled with that question actually for years, and over a period of a couple of years I studied this question very very intensely and very carefully. And I prayed constantly, "Oh Lord, where is truth?" because I was deeply concerned about that very matter. How are we to understand a lot of these things that are happening?

And after a couple of years of very intense study, reading everything I could on the question, both in the Bible and outside of the Bible, it finally dawned on me. You know, sometimes we have very thick skulls, and it takes a while before God really opens our eyes. But finally I realized how we can tell whether we are following the true Gospel or not.

And it's very simple when you stop to think of it. Revelation 22:18 & 19 say that if we add to the words of this book, God will add to us the plagues written therein, and if we take away from the words of this book, God will take away our share in the Book of Life and in the holy city. In other words, God effectively is saying the Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word.

Now before the Bible was completed, it is true that occasionally they would add to it. Someone would receive a message in a vision or in a dream, or in an angel visitation. And then this information was added to what they had already had in the written Word. And so they would have a more complete idea of the revelation of God for their lives.

But when God completed His Bible and came to the last chapter, Revelation 22, there God said, if you add to the words

of this book, it indicates that you're still unsaved. "I will add to you the plagues written herein." In other words, you are in rebellion against Me. You are expanding the Word of God beyond what it ought to be.

And so I came to the conclusion...all right, then it's very simple. I want to always be sure that I believe that the Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. There is no other divine Word. Now we live in a free country. If someone decides, well, this book also is the divine Word, all right. They can do that. But then by definition they're another gospel. They have the Bible plus this other book which they think is divine. If someone says, "I believe the Bible is the Word of God but this message I received in this unknown language called a tongue, or in this vision, is also the divine Word," fine. They can do that, but then by definition they're another gospel, because they have a different source of divine truth than I have, since I only have the Bible.

And even though these groups still talk about the blood of Christ and the death and resurrection of Christ, and so on, nevertheless they are going outside of the Bible in seeking divine truth, and they fall under the problem of Revelation 22:18 or 19. And so I would encourage anyone to seek out a church which holds that the Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. Then you have only one authority, and that's the Bible.

CALLER: Okay.

HC: Thank you for calling and sharing.

Is Talking in Tongues for Today? (565B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Good evening, Brother Camping. I have a question concerning the use of tongues for today. I've heard you speak on this recently, that it is not for today. And I'm seeking some answers about this. I'm a little bit confused about it at this time, because my husband and I thought we had received the gift of tongues. And at one time we were going to a church that practices this in the church, where they have the interpretations, and everything. And we were just wondering if you could give us some Scripture that would help us to understand better whether tongues is for today or not.

HC: Let me ask this question concerning tongues. When you thought that you had the gift of tongues, or whatever you've been taught concerning tongues, was this something that just came out of your own life, or was this presumably something that you believed came from God? In other words, was it God somehow speaking through you?

CALLER: Well, that's how we felt, yes, that it was a gift from God.

HC: It was a gift from God, but actually, or let me rephrase the question. Did you think that the words that you were speaking, even though they were not understandable, were just gibberish, incoherent words, or were they actually words that were conveying some kind of a message, either a message of praise or a message of prayer or a revelation of some kind, that it really was a message from God?

CALLER: The way that we felt was that it was a gift from the Lord and that it was a way that the Lord would speak through us, that there might be things that He would want us to pray about that we would not know how to pray for, or that there might be something that He would want us to pray about and that by using the gift of tongues we would be saying what the Lord wanted us to say.

HC: In other words, God was actually putting words into your mouth, in an unknown language, that was a revelation from God. And it could be in the form of

a prayer, or it could be a praise, or something else.

Now that's exactly what happened, of course, when we read in the Bible some of the prayers that are found in the Psalms. Of course they were not in tongues, in an unknown language, but they were in a known language. And so we find various prayers to God. They are actually spoken by men, but holy men of old were inspired by God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In your case, if you truly believed it was of God, you also hoped that someone might interpret, so that others might be edified by what you had been receiving. Isn't that true?

CALLER: Not entirely. I never spoke out in the congregation, either I or my husband. We basically used it for our own prayer language.

HC: I see. But if it had been in the congregation, then of course you would have hoped that someone would interpret.

CALLER: Well, I don't know. That's what's confusing.

HC: All right. Actually then, let me put it the other way. If we actually were going to believe that tongues were normative for today, and we spoke in tongues in the congregation, according to what we read in I Corinthians 14, then God's rule was that there should be someone there to interpret. In verse 28, "If there be no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church and let him speak to himself and to God." And also of course the women were to be silent in the church, insofar as that phenomenon was concerned, as it took place in the church at Corinth.

CALLER: Right.

HC: All right. You see, when the Bible was being prepared, before the Bible was completed, from time to time God would give additional revelation. He had the written Word, which was complete to that point in time, whenever this was. And then there was additional revelation. And this additional revelation could come in the form of a prayer (and I've already used the Psalms as an example), it could be in the form of a prophecy of some kind, where God is foretelling future events, as was the case with the apostle John on the island of Patmos. He received the visions that now have become the Book of Revelation. Or it could be in the form of exhortation, as for example, when God would speak through one of the prophets, to exhort the people or warn them of impending doom if they did not change their ways, or whatever. But in any case it was additional divine truth that was added to the Word of God.

Now at the time that I Corinthians was being written, that is, when the apostle Paul was writing this letter to the church at Corinth, the Bible consisted of the Old Testament. That was the written Word of God, what we call the Old Testament. There was no New Testament. And in fact, God was still completing the New Testament. God was still giving revelation to this one or that one. And additionally, He was breaking the silence in individual cases, bringing messages directly to them. We find this, for example, when He brought a message to Elizabeth, to tell her of John the Baptist, or to Zechariah, his father, or when the angel spoke to Joseph concerning the fact that Mary was with child of the Holy Spirit.

And there were various other times that God the Holy Spirit spoke in this way. And that's because they did not have the whole Word of God. And whatever they did receive, they could add that to the written Word that they already had, and so they would have a more complete revelation. They would take, for example, the letter that the apostle Paul wrote, and they would begin to recognize that this was the Word of God, and that it could be added to what had already been written in the Old Testament. And so

they would have a more complete revelation.

Well, that was all fine, until God came to the last of His divine revelation. He came to Revelation 22:18, and then God declared, "If anyone adds to the words of this book...." Now that had been going on before, and it was legitimate, that they would add whatever they received from God to the words that had already been written. But now God is saying, "If anyone adds to the words of this book [and there's only one book that's in view and that's the Bible; it's one cohesive whole] I will add to him the plagues written herein." In other words, effectively God is saying, "My revelation is completed. There's nothing more that you are to look for. If you want to know divine truth, read the Bible. I've given you the whole revelation." And by the same token, He also warned in the next verse, "If anyone takes away from the words of this book, I will take away his share in the Tree of Life." In other words, make sure that you believe that the whole Bible is the Word of God.

Therefore, the next year, after Revelation was penned, if some individual received information in a vision or in a voice or a dream, and thought that it was of God, they could know it was not of God, because there was nothing more to add. And so when various individuals came on the scene with their visions (and this has been going on to some degree all through the New Testament period), and they were convinced that it was of God, you could know that it can't be of God because we're not to add to the Word of God.

We're living in a day when a great many people, all over the world, are claiming that God is speaking to them, through visions and dreams, voices or tongues. And invariably, you'll find that if people are interested in tongues, they're also interested in visions and voices and dreams, because it's all of the same kind. It is all based on the premise that God is still speaking today.

And so actually, if you were going to allow that this is happening, that God is speaking today, what we really should do then is go back in history and find every statement that anyone had ever received in the form of a vision or a tongue, that had been interpreted, or whatever, and we could write all this down and gradually have a more and more complete revelation of God. And of course by now the Bible would be several hundred thousand volumes thick, if every one of these things had been written down.

But the fact is, God said no, we're not to add to the words of this book. And so this kind of activity that's going on we know cannot be of God. Now it may be hallucinatory. You know, you want this badly enough and you're convinced that this has to be. And so our minds are very tricky, and so we can engage in self-hypnotism or in self-deception of some kind. And so we will have an activity of this kind. Or it could be of Satan. Satan could be accommodating us. You know, when we are seeking for something that is not God's will, and we ask for it long enough, then we're leaving ourselves wide open to allow Satan to accommodate us with this. Whatever it is, it was not of God.

CALLER: But if you were a born again Christian, Satan couldn't possibly be speaking through you.

HC: Now you raised another interesting question. If you are a born again believer, Satan could not speak through you. Yes, that is true. That is a true statement. But the fact is, the Bible indicates that Jesus, for example, said in John 10:8, "All that came before Me were thieves and robbers." Now the Bible defines thieves and robbers as those who claim to be saved and come into the temple, and say, "We're delivered," and yet they are Baal

worshippers. That is, they are worshippers of other gospels.

And Jesus said, "All that came before Me were thieves and robbers, but My sheep did not hear them." In other words "My sheep," those who are born again, would not get snared into this. And that's a very significant statement. For example, in Matthew 24:24 Jesus said, "False prophets and false christians will arise with signs and wonders, to lead astray if possible even the elect." Now the elect are the born again believers. And He's saying that if it were possible they would be deceived because those who come with these signs and wonders, and incidentally, isn't it a fact that those who are interested in the supernatural activity of tongues and visions and voices are also interested in signs and wonders? They're all part of the same cloth, you see.

And Jesus says, the elect will not be deceived. They would be, "if that were possible," but we have these others promises "My sheep will not hear them," or like Romans 8 indicates, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God," and so on. So the fact that someone thinks he is born again, or says he is born again, is no clear evidence that he is born again. And if we begin to look for divine truth outside of the Bible, then we effectively are saying we don't want the authority of the Bible, we want something more. And we are indicating by this that there's a strong likelihood that we may not be saved.

And so, on the other hand, if you were saved, then it could have been self-hypnotism or some kind. It would not be Satan in that case.

CALLER: Well, this is what I'm wondering, because at the time that we felt we received this we were going to a church where this is encouraged. And this is what we understood that the Bible is teaching. And I guess at the time we didn't research it well enough ourselves. But recently I've been feeling more and more uncomfortable about it and have come to the point where I never use it anymore. But I've just been very concerned about it because my in-laws did start going to this particular church, and they are still going there. And it really does concern me, because there are prophecies given, and interpretations. It concerns me because I had heard you say just recently that this is not of God. So I wonder...

HC: When you use that phrase, "We don't use that anymore," that's an interesting way you've put that. It implies that if you or your husband wanted to speak in tongues, by an act of your will you could speak in a tongue. Now if this were of God, obviously this could not happen, because God doesn't just... we can't turn God on whenever we want to turn God on. God is sovereign in these matters. And this suggests very strongly that whatever you were doing it was simply an activity within your own mind. You had conditioned yourself so that you could go into a certain ritual or a certain speech pattern, and you could do it at will. And because you had been told that this was of God, therefore you felt very good about it that this was happening. But there's a good probability that it didn't go beyond this, that it was just out of your mind.

CALLER: So what would you say then in the case of family that is still going to this church? I do believe that they are born again Christians.

HC: Now that's a very good question, a very pertinent question. When we know someone, and frequently it will be a close family member, or it can be a trusted pastor, or an aged couple whom we've known for years and years, and they've been pillars in the church, and they become involved in a gospel that looks beyond the Bible for divine truth, so effectively it is another gospel, what are we to do? Are we to understand then,

because we're convinced they're born again, that there must be some saving grace in this activity? How can we relate all this together? And this is where it really gets confusing.

Now the answer has to be, and it's a sad answer, but nevertheless it's the only true answer, is that we must discover truth by the Bible, not by what we see in the lives of others. You can look at people in numerous denominations and congregations that definitely we would call another gospel, because they have other books that they also think are divine, and so on, and we can see in their lives a zeal for God, we can see a loving spirit, we can see fidelity to the Word in a lot of ways, we can see family loyalties, we can see many marvelous things. But we know that they're not saved because they don't believe all the things in the Bible concerning the blood of Christ. And that's easy to make a determination in that case.

But you see, the fact that someone is zealous, the fact that someone says he loves God and we see what apparently is the fruit of the Spirit, and all of these other things, in his life, that is not the way we determine whether someone is really a child of God. We have to determine it by the Word of God itself. And the Bible says, "My sheep did not hear them." The Bible says, "the elect would be deceived, if that were possible." And I know of many cases in which a person has belonged to another gospel and has been saved while he was in that other gospel, because we're saved by the Word of God, we're not saved by the church we belong to. But after he is saved, he becomes very uncomfortable, and it isn't long at all until he repudiates the gospel that he has been in, because he has become convinced that it cannot be of God.

CALLER: Do you think that you should go to the people and share the truth that you have received, through scriptures, with them.

HC: Now the question is, what are we to do in situations like this? First of all, we are to pray for them. This is one ministry that God has given to all of us. And when we have loved ones who are unsaved, or are in other gospels, or in other religions that are not the true religion, we truly ought to pray for them. Secondly, we are to witness to them as the opportunity arises. You must bear in mind that they may not be interested in hearing from you at all. They may be completely convinced that they are in the true Gospel, and they will be very antagonistic toward being witnessed to. And of course you cannot force it on them.

Now the Bible speaks of the fact that as we approach the end we will come into great tribulation. And I am convinced that that is one of the aspects that really brings great tribulation to the true believers, as we see loved ones, those whom we love very dearly, snared off into other gospels, and they just have no interest in the true Gospel.

Wonderfully, it is still the day of grace. And even though someone is completely blinded today, he still can be saved. I think the time is going to come, as near as I can tell from the Bible, when we finally enter the final tribulation period, that it will be beyond the day of salvation. In other words, all who are to be saved will have been saved. And then the activity of these other gospels will be very very widespread, according to what we read in Matthew 24, and that will bring great trauma to the true believers, because we'll know it is too late, and yet we have dearly beloved loved ones who are still, who have repudiated the true Gospel. That's part of the sorrow and the suffering that we undergo in this world.

CALLER: Thank you. That really has helped me a lot. It's helped me to have a better understanding of it. Can I give you

one other quick question and take my answer over the air?

HC: Surely.

CALLER: If you are going to a church and you feel that in that church there has been definite signs that it's coming into apostasy, and you feel that the Lord is leading you from that church into a church that does preach the true Gospel according to the Bible, God's Word, do you owe it to the pastor to go to him and explain why you are leaving? Or should you just not say anything unless somebody comes to see you and asks you why you have left?

HC: The question is, how much should you discuss with the congregation that you are leaving the fact that you really think the church is going into apostasy?

I think that certainly it would not hurt to discuss this with the pastor. This probably would be the wise and fair thing to do. Of course it cannot be from the standpoint of bitterness or from the standpoint of one last lick at him because you're so discouraged by what you have heard. It should be done in love. It should be done from the vantage point that hopefully this might encourage him to rethink his position so that he might know this. It could be used of God, in other words, as a chastisement, where he will say, "My, maybe I have been wrong, and maybe I have to do some soul searching." There's always that possibility.

I certainly think that would be the wise thing to do.

Thank you so much for calling and sharing.

Being "Slain in the Spirit" (643B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Brother Camping. I have two questions please. The first is, what is meant by "slain in the Spirit," like when a person falls backwards, seemingly unconscious, when hands are laid on him in healing? Is this referenced in the Bible, and where?

HC: What does it mean to be "slain in the Spirit"? This is a phenomenon that is increasingly popular in many many denominations and congregations. Actually, it is something that relates to something in the Bible, but if it has any relationship to anything in the Bible it is very ominous. It is a very terrible thing that is happening.

In the Bible there are only four references to failing backwards, and each one has to do with the judgment of God. Each one has to do with those who are under the judgment of God, who are subject to eternal damnation. And indeed they are slain, but it's a picture of eternal damnation that has come upon them. And so while this thing is happening today, I really believe that it is not of God. I believe that it is something that is a sign that, I really think that it is, in the Bible to fall backwards is the equivalent of calling down fire from heaven, and it could very well be the phenomenon that is spoken of in Revelation 13, where it talks about Satan even making fire come down from heaven, in verse 13 of Revelation 13.

In other words, it is something that is not at all a blessing. It is not something that I would look upon as being desirable. I believe it is something that if it relates to the Bible at all relates in a terrible way.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you on that one. The other question is, if you're playing cards not for money, but just for the fun of it, like playing Pinochle or Cribbage, is this a sin? And if so, where does it say so in the Bible?

HC: The question is, is it wrong to play cards just for points rather than for money? Is that a sin? Of course the Bible doesn't say you are not to play Poker, that you are not to play Cribbage, you

are not to play Canasta, and so on. The Bible just doesn't put it that way. The more I study the Bible, however, I find that in the Bible casting the lot was a very sacred event. Now casting the lot means to pull straws to see who gets the shortest straw, or it means to throw dice to see if a certain number would come up, or to spin an arrow. All of these things were casting the lot. We have no control over what is going to come up. And in the Bible casting the lot was a sacred event that, when employed rightly, was to determine what God's will was in the matter.

For example, when the nation of Israel was being divided in the land of Israel, we read in the Book of Joshua that the lot was cast. By casting the lot God's will was determined. When a replacement was required for Judas, after he had committed suicide, two men were found that were qualified and the lot was cast to discover God's will, which one would God pick out? Now that's a very sacred and rightful use of casting the lot.

However, when we cast the lot to decide who is going to buy the cup of coffee (we flip a coin), or when we cast the lot in games, even games like Rook and these other seemingly innocent games, I really believe that we are going contrary to the will of God. Now I know many will say, "Wow, that's really getting pretty picky." But as we go along in life, and we want to live more and more close to the Lord, we want to do it God's way more and more, and we must remember that games, most of the games were not designed by Christians who earnestly love the Lord and who had thoroughly studied the Bible. They are designed by the world. And even the so called Christian games, like "Going to Jerusalem" and so on were patterned after the games of the world.

Now there are games that are simply games of skill, that have nothing to do with casting the lot (chess or checkers, or Chinese checkers, or some of these games), and they would be perfectly valid as long as we do not spend so much time with them that we waste our time.

CALLER: Then in your opinion, and according to the Bible, we shouldn't play cards?

HC: In my opinion we should not play cards. Now there's one other factor that may be a little more substantive for many. And that is, the Bible says, "Do not give any appearance of evil." And of course the normal deck of cards that is used for Poker or for Blackjack, or gambling games, has that very heavy association. And so again I think the less we know about cards the better it is for us. We don't even want to be misunderstood as we use those kind of cards.

CALLER: Okay. Well, thank you, Brother Camping.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

CHAPTER 5 -- CHRISTMAS

Questions Concerning the Wise Men (001A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Mr. Camping. I have some questions about the Wise Men. First, why didn't the Jews know that Jesus was going to be born if the Wise men knew?

HC: How is it possible that the Magi or the Wise Men knew that Jesus was going to be born and not the leaders in Israel? After all, Jesus was born as someone of the nation of Israel. He was a Jew, and He was actually to be the most important individual who ever would come to any nation, and certainly to the nation of

Israel.

God had His own mysterious plan. The Magi were in another nation altogether, probably in the nation of Persia. Actually, they knew about His birth, the few shepherds knew about His birth, and two or three individuals, like Simeon and Anna, knew about His birth. And that's about all. It was just not God's plan that anyone else would know about His birth. He was to be born very humbly; He was to be born without any publicity of any kind. God had His own purpose for showing each one that He was born.

Now actually, the Magi represented the world. They represented the whole world, as they brought their gifts to Him. And Christ came as the Savior of the world. Remember when He was introduced by John the Baptist, He was introduced, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." The Magi were not Jews and were actually representatives of the world. The shepherds were a representative of something else, and we can talk about that at another time. But the Magi were actually a representation of the world, all the believes from the world who would come to bring their gifts of love to Him.

CALLER: Do you think they might have been saved? Does the Bible tell us if the Wise Men were saved? And how did they know about the star?

HC: The question is, how did the Magi know this whole thing? We wonder. They saw a star in the East. From the historical record, from a secular record, we know that there were three conjunctions of the planets in the year 7 BC. These are fairly rare in the heavens. The ancients watched the heavens very very closely because what was happening in the heavens, they believed, was a portender of things that might come to pass. And certainly the astronomers of that day became very skilled in predicting eclipses, and so forth. And so the fact that there were three conjunctions during that one year at least would have been very interesting to them.

Now the Bible doesn't talk about this. This is simply from the secular record. However, they also saw a mysterious star, a special star. And from the sacred record, from all the information we can gather, in all likelihood Christ was born in the year 7 BC. And that was the time they saw the star. Now on what basis would they have come to the nation of Israel? First of all, the three conjunctions of the planets, we know from the secular record, were part of the heavens that were associated with the nation of Israel. That's speculation. But that is from the secular record.

However, we also know that there was a time several hundred years later, when very important Jewish people had been citizens of Persia, from which these Magi came. Daniel, for example, was a ruler in Persia under Cyrus, who was the king of the Medes and the Persians. Remember that the nation of Judah had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC. Then in 539 BC, a few decades later, the Medes and the Persians had destroyed Babylon, or conquered Babylon. And so all of the sacred books and the sacred writings that were in the possession of the Jews would have fallen into the hands of the Persians, that is, all those that had found their way into the land of Persia.

Now we can speculate this, that these Magi, well, it's not a speculation that they saw the star. Definitely they saw the star. The first thing they would have done (and now we're speculating) is that they would have gone to all their sacred writings, whatever they had around, to discover, is there anything here in any of them about a star? And finally they would have run across the sacred writings of the Jewish people that had been deposited in Persia about the time of Daniel, undoubtedly. And there they would have read, in Genesis 49, that a

sceptre would rise in Judah; that is, a king would be born in Judah.

In Genesis 49 we read in verse 10, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet". Now the sceptre has to do with the coming of the King. In Numbers 24, and this would have been particularly attractive to heathen Magi, heathen astronomers, because the man who gave this prophecy was a heathen just like the Persians were, we read in Numbers 24:17, "I shall see him, but not now: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth."

Now here we have a star rising out of Jacob; and a sceptre, that is, a king, is to be born in Israel. And so based on that verse, I am absolutely certain that these Magi came to the capital of Israel, Jerusalem. And lo and behold, as they started to move toward Jerusalem, the star guided them to Jerusalem, even apart from any knowledge they may have had of what the Bible may have said. The star would have guided them to Jerusalem.

Now they came to Jerusalem and inquired of the Jewish leaders there, "Where is the King that is born? A sceptre shall rise out of Israel." A sceptre is what a king holds to indicate that he has authority. "Where is the King that has been born?" And no one there knew anything about it. But their theologians realized that in Micah 5:2 God had declared that out of Bethlehem a King would come. And so they said, "Try Bethlehem, maybe there's a king that is born there."

And the Magi found, to their utter delight, that the star they were following led them right to Bethlehem and stood over the house where Jesus was. Now obviously this star was not way up in the heavens. Otherwise it could not have singled out a single house. There is no star that would stand and mark out a single house. It was a very special miraculous star that was just high enough in the heavens so that it could stand directly over one house and not over the neighbors' house. And that is the star that they followed. And it was all a miracle, of course. But they could have gotten their information out of Numbers 24, particularly.

CALLER: Okay, I have two more questions and then I'll hang up and take my answer over the air. How do we know how many Wise Men there were? And do you think they might have been saved? Does the Bible tell us that?

HC: The question is, how many Wise Men were there? Anyone knows that there were three. You pick up any Christmas card, and there are always three and they're riding on camels. The fact is, there were not three. That is strictly someone's imagination, that there were three Wise Men. Undoubtedly there was a whole company of people that came from, I say, Persia. The Bible doesn't say Persia, but the secular record shows that there was a second ruling class in Persia at this time in history called the Magi or Magen. That word identifies with the word that we find in the Bible.

Because Persia was hundreds and hundreds of miles from Israel, three men would never have traveled there. They would have been beset upon by bandits. It would have been the most foolhardy thing in the world to do. Undoubtedly there could have been a company of a hundred or more soldiers and officials from Persia that came along.

Now the reason that we get the idea of three Wise Men is that they brought three kinds of gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But this is simply a company of Magi who came, and they brought three kinds of gifts. But under no circumstance must we think that there were only three of them. The fact is, the

Bible declares that all Jerusalem was troubled. They were really troubled. Why were they troubled? In the first instance, they were troubled, "Is Persia trying to create a war with Israel?" And certainly if only three men had come that would not have been a very scary thing. But undoubtedly there was a fairly large company of people who came, of soldiers and officials who came. And this was quite unnerving to the officials in Jerusalem.

Now were they saved? The Bible doesn't say. It's possible that some of these Magi were saved. That is, they may not have been saved when they came there, but by the time they left they may have been saved. That is not at issue. The Bible doesn't get into that. What is at issue is that through this God is teaching us that the world is going to bring its gifts to the Lord Jesus Christ, the gifts being that the saved of the world are going to come to the Lord Jesus. And Christ came as the Savior of the world, so that whosoever believes on Him could become saved.

Why Did the Angels Appear to Shepherds Only? (002A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Mr. Camping. I'd like to ask you a question about, the other night you were talking about the manger and Christ and the Christmas story, and why He came in a manger. And I was wondering why the angels appeared only to the shepherds and not to anyone else. Why didn't they come to the chief priests and the rabbis or all the princes of the day?

HC: Yes, that's a very curious question, isn't it? We read that there were a few shepherds abiding on the hills, who were keeping watch over their flocks by night. And these shepherds were certainly not very great. These shepherds had no standing. The big people, the high priests and the king and all the others, wouldn't have been out there as shepherds. Why would God come only to these shepherds to announce the birth of the Lord Jesus?

We read about this in Luke 2:8: "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: For behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angels a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it they made known abroad this saying, which was told them concerning this child."

Now notice that in this statement the angel declares this, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior." These shepherds, who were very lowly people, were actually a type or figure or representation of all that Christ had come to seek and to save. Jesus came for the lost of the world. And the lost are those who are the off-scouring of the nations, those who have no standing in the nations. They're just people for whom Christ came to pay their sins. And when we become saved, of course, then we in turn become a shepherd. We, as ambassadors of Christ, are given the task of sending forth the Gospel into the

world. We care for the sheep of the world, if you will.

It's very significant that after they had seen the Christ child they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And that's a picture of all of us. When we come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ we want to use our time and energy and money, etc., in order that the Gospel might go into the world because this is the dynamic task that God has assigned to us.

These shepherds, therefore, were a dramatic picture of all who would believe on Him, all for whom Christ had come to die. And they were the only ones that Jesus told about His birth at this particular time, or that the angels told about His birth at this particular time. And they typified all of us who have become shepherds to the world.

CALLER: Thank you.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Is the Sharing of Gifts at Christmas Unbiblical? (002B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi, Mr. Camping. I wanted to ask you a question. I recently got married, and my husband and I have been talking about how we're going to raise our children in the light of the Bible. And we have been thinking that we don't want to teach them anything, like the world does, about Santa Claus, etc., at Christmas time. But even though we really want to teach them biblical things, we in our family exchange gifts as part of, we have a dinner and we have a celebration, and we do exchange gifts because we just want to. And I really would like to know your opinion about that. What do you think about it?

HC: The question is, on Christmas is there anything unbiblical about exchanging gifts? And the answer is no, there's nothing unbiblical about that at all. The Bible doesn't design Christmas day for us. The Bible doesn't even talk about Christmas day. It is a day that we have kind of arbitrarily selected as a day to celebrate the birth of our Lord, and it's not uncommon that when we're happy, when we're rejoicing, that we do exchange gifts. And as we give gifts to our children, it is really in a sense commemorating God's great gift to us, the gift of salvation. Spiritually we are His children. And that might hold forth.

However, if we're really going to make Christmas meaningful, and of course you've already indicated that you're not interested in Santa Claus. That is totally pagan. That is a denial of the Scriptures altogether. Santa Claus has no part in the life of the believer. But if you're really going to make Christmas meaningful, as you give gifts to your children, talk to them about this, that "Now you've received that toy [or whatever], and we gave you these gifts, but now we're going to sit down and we're going to talk about a gift that God has given to us." And you can really get into the whole message of Christmas, and go through everything that you know about it, about the shepherds and the Magi, and about the manger, that there was no room for Him in the inn. And discuss with your children everything you can about it.

It's a remarkable time, you know, right in the context of the gift-giving, to get into the whole matter of what the birth of Christ really means to this world and to us who have come to believe on Him.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

Is it Sinful to Observe Christmas? (002C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I'd like to ask about the holidays, whether Christians should celebrate them or not.

HC: Well, there are those who try to contend that it is sinful to observe Christmas. Now the Bible does not command us to observe Christmas. It would not be sinful if we did not observe Christmas. We're not commanded to observe Christmas. But on the other hand, to observe Christmas as a day when we celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, is not contrary to the Bible in any way.

And I rejoice that at one season of the year we can focus our eyes, and hopefully the world itself to some degree focuses their eyes on this marvelous event of the fact that God took on a human nature and became a human being so that He could be the Savior of all who would believe on Him. I just don't find anything in the Bible that would say that that was a sinful practice.

CALLER: So you say that you can observe the birth of Christ.

HC: I believe that with all my heart. Now we don't observe it, saying, "We know that Jesus was born on December 25." In fact, we know He was not born on December 25. More likely He was born in October some time, or late in September. At least, the burden of the evidence points to that. But it's immaterial as to the precise day that He was born. On Christmas a day has been selected simply as a day when we celebrate or remember the birth of Christ. And no intention is made that this is the day that He was born.

CALLER: Do you know the day He was crucified, around the time?

HC: Yes, He was crucified in the spring of the year, on Passover Day. He was crucified in AD 33, and it would have been around March or April.

CALLER: Okay.

No Room at the Inn? (002D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Brother Camping. I had some thoughts and a question that I'd like to share with you and get your input on. My comment is this. I've been thinking about how rebellious we all are by nature, and that if it weren't for the Lord's intervention in our lives we would never have any room for Him in our hearts. And my question is this. Is this implication of Luke 2:7, where we read about Mary having to lay the Baby Jesus down in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn?

HC: This is a question that has real significance in our lives. In Luke 2 we find in verse 7, "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." And then it goes on and talks about the shepherds.

You see, we stand amazed. In fact, we stand aghast at the fact that the Lord Jesus, who is Eternal God Himself, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and remember, He was born a King. When He stood before Pilate He said, "To this I was born," when Pilate asked Him, "Are you a King?" He was born a King, and you would certainly expect Him to be born in a palace, or at least under very royal conditions. But we find that there was no room for Him in the inn. And He had to be born in a manger.

Now in the historical context it's fairly easy to understand. The city of Bethlehem was swollen with people who came from all over the land of Judea, all over the land of Galilee, to register. And perhaps it was at the time of the fall feast of Tabernacles. And they had come to enroll. And so everything was jammed.

But on the other hand, we stand amazed that here is a couple. She is about to bear a child. In fact, she is almost in labor. And you would think that somehow, considering the milk of human kindness, someone's home would have been opened so that there would have been a

little bit more comfortable circumstances in which He could be born.

But the fact is that the Bible says that there was no room for them in the inn. Now this word inn is a very curious word. In the parable of the Prodigal Son we find one kind of a word for inn, but in this context it is an entirely different word for inn. It is a word that is found in Luke 22, in a very unusual place. In Luke 22 we find the same word, where it is translated guest chamber. And it is the place where Jesus ate the Passover. We read in verse 11, as Jesus is giving instructions to the disciples to find a place to eat the Passover, at which time He's going to initiate the Lord's Table, "You shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, where is the guest chamber where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?"

Now that certainly is a curious word, guest chamber. Now the Passover had altogether to do with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and you would think that certainly a guest chamber ought to be available, a very special room ought to be available for Him, because He came as the Messiah. But the fact is, there is no room in the guest chamber. There is no room in the inn. There is no room for Him insofar as even the Passover is concerned. How do we tie all of this together?

You see, the problem is that Christ came to His own and His own received Him not. They did not want Him. They did not want Christ as their Messiah. They did not want to honor Him in any way. We read in John 1:11, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." The fact is, the end of it all is that Christ was crucified. His death was plotted by the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews, by the scribes and the Pharisees. They wanted Him killed.

And in the very act of denying Christ the right to the guest chamber, that is, the right to the Passover, the right to having a place of honor, the right to being part of the Jewish nation in all that it is, in the very act of denying Him this, you see, when they cut Him off, when they crucified Him, they effectively were saying, "We don't want Him to be identified with the nation of Israel. We don't want Him to be identified with us in any way. The ceremonial laws, the Passover, and all that goes with that, which was eaten in the guest chamber, that is for us. That is not for Jesus. We want him cut off. We want Him denied any of this." And that already was anticipated when He came, when He was born. Before He is even born He is denied a place in the inn, in the guest chamber. The denial of Christ by His own people is already taking place, symbolically, of course, not in actuality to any high degree, although there is certainly a physical implication here.

But in the denial of Christ, so that He could not have His place in the guest chamber, that is, as being privileged to partake and able to partake of the nation of Israel, in that denial He became the Passover. He became the Lamb that was slain. All of this was necessary in order that He might be the Lamb. He had to be denied these privileges. He had to be cut off from the nation of Israel and denied by them, because He had come to endure hell for our sins. And the nation of Israel was simply the instrument in God's hand to bring about the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, or the atonement, to bring about the fact that He would pay for our sins.

And a few nights ago someone asked about the manger, and we saw that in being born in a manger not only does that indicate the humble circumstances in which He was born, but also that identified Him with the whole creation, with the fact that He came to redeem not only man but the whole creation from the bondage to sin. And it also emphasized of course the humble circumstances of

His birth, that He was rejected of His own nation.

A Christian Perspective on Christmas (003A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. I have a question I would like to ask, and I would appreciate any comments that you might be able to give to me. My family is fairly well to do, and at Christmas time we usually go all out with the traditional celebration. And they're used to drinking egg nog and hot toddies, and they always expect to exchange expensive gifts. But now that I am a Christian I just wonder what my attitude should be about this, and what about my participation in our family celebration? And I'll take my answer over the air.

HC: All right. Thank you so much for calling and sharing. This is a problem that is very very difficult and a problem that is caused by the fact that there are two kingdoms in this world. On the one hand there is the dominion of Satan, to which all of us belong by nature. The whole human race are slaves of Satan by virtue of the fact that we are the human race. And on the other hand, there is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, which we enter into when we have become saved. We read in Colossians 1:13, "We have been translated out of the dominion of darkness and into the kingdom of His dear Son," that is, the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These two kingdoms are mutually antithetical to each other. That is, they are in direct opposition. They are antagonistic toward each other. When we were in the kingdom of Satan, that is, before we were saved, and all of our family and all of our friends were in that kingdom, we got along very well. Everybody was in general agreement that our lifestyle was agreeable, our mores, our conduct was generally agreeable. Oh yes, we fought and scrapped somewhat with each other, but nevertheless there was a certain harmony because we all agreed that we could drink and carouse, and we all agree that we could spend our money this way or that way, generally speaking.

But now one of us becomes a child of God, and that's where the problem arises, because whether we recognize it or not, or whether our loved ones recognize it or not, we have betrayed our kind. We have left the dominion of Satan, and we have been transferred over into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, we have joined the enemy.

And Jesus speaks about this, that if any man does not hate his father or mother then he cannot be His disciple. Now that doesn't mean that we are to physically hate our father and mother, but the context indicates that He is simply saying there that we must love God more than our father and mother. And we are to hate our father and mother only in the sense that they are still slaves of Satan, and we don't like the world any longer in which they live.

The fact is, Jesus said in another place, "I did not come to bring peace on the earth but a sword." Now that seems to be directly contradictory to another verse that says that He came as the Prince of Peace. Indeed, the peace that He came to bring was the peace that comes to those who have been in rebellion against God, who were at war with God and now have come to be at peace with God. That is the peace that Christ brought. But in so doing, when we become at peace with God we become at war with our fellow men who remain unsaved.

Now generally speaking, this goes along fairly well. The fact that we have become a child of God does not trouble the family too much. They may think we've become a little odd, or they may think we have become involved in some

kind of a sect or a cult. They may think that we have been brainwashed somewhat and they worry about us. But generally it doesn't shine through too much. They simply wonder what happened to us.

But it's at a time like Christmas that the antithesis shines through, that indeed there are the two kingdoms. Here is the dominion of Satan. We love our loved ones dearly. Traditionally, historically they have served their drinks and had their booze around and their partying and their Santa Claus, and all of these things. This is a tradition in the family. It has no useful spiritual significance at all. It is simply a time to engage in this kind of revelry.

And now we come along and we become a child of God, and now what am I going to do? I don't want to drink anymore because that's the hallmark of the world. That's the badge of the world, if you will, the one thing that the world today thinks that they need, and it's the ever present item at every party – the spiked punch or the booze – that is readily available. And because we are not of the world any longer, we don't want to serve the world, and we are in a different kingdom altogether, we decide we're not going to drink.

Well, all right, they can countenance that. We don't have to. They will just think, "Well, she's become a teetotaler, what an oddball!" But then some of the other things that go on make the true believer cringe just a little bit. It seems so wrong. Now how are we to conduct ourselves?

We must remember that we are in the world but we are not of the world. We cannot get out of the world. That's the first thing. We cannot become a hermit and go out to the side of a mountain someplace and isolate ourselves from the world, to become separate from the world. Occasionally someone will get that idea and he'll get his little band of followers, and they'll go off to the wilderness someplace and set up a commune of some kind, in an effort to do this. That is contrary to the Bible.

Number two, the Bible indicates that we are witnesses to the world. We have a testimony to bring to the world. That is the number one priority of every child of God. You must recognize that if you have become saved your number one mission field is your family. Oh, I don't mean that now you are to start preaching at them every time you see them. I don't mean that now you've got to become a pastor to them and make a big nuisance of yourself by talking about Christ every time you speak to one of them. The chances are they wouldn't put up with it anyway. They would drive you out of the house after awhile.

But it does mean that first of all your life ought to be lived to the glory of God. You must be the one in your family who is especially patient, who is especially tender, who is especially concerned about others, who is especially looking for the one who needs a little encouragement. Your whole family gets together. And before you were saved, what is the thing that very frequently you wanted? You kind of wanted to be the center of attention. Oh, that's true of most of us anyway. We have a lot of pride in our life. We like to kind of be in the limelight. We like to be recognized. We like to show off. Our stuff. This is one reason that booze is so nice because you take that drink and your inhibitions drop away, and you feel so carefree and happy, and what you say seems so wonderful now, so wise. You don't really know that you're making a donkey of yourself, but in your own eyes you really think you are achieving your goal of being acceptable to the most people.

But now you go to that party. You're invited to a family dinner or a family get together. Go there. But go there thinking, "I'm going to be the fragrance of the

Lord Jesus Christ." No, not in order to gain any pride for yourself, not in a holier-than-thou attitude, now looking down your long nose at the sins of others. There's going to be plenty of sin on display. But remember, the sin is not against you. The sin is against the Lord Jesus Christ. But we live in a sinful world. But in that very sinful environment (which is just a caricature of the sinful environment this world is anyway) you are going to try to serve.

How are you going to try to serve? Well, you have your cousins there, you have your family, and there's someone over here that's kind of sitting off on the side, and a little morose and a little bit downcast, for whatever reason. And very gently you go over and you say, "Tell me something about yourself." Or start talking about something that you know he is able to talk about. And try to open him up, and be a friend to that person. Maybe the hostess of the party is beside herself with anxiety, running in and out of the kitchen, to make sure that the food is going to be properly served. Go to her and say, "Look, I'm here. Is there any way I can help? Where's an apron so that I can help you?" Now you don't try to take over. Don't make that mistake. But you're there, you're available, and try to do what you can.

This particularly becomes acute if it's the kind of a party, now in your case, if it's a wealthy home maybe you have people who come in to do the dishes and clean up. But frequently at these kind of activities the hostess is loaded with the responsibility. Everybody else gets busy chatting away in a corner here or there, and she's stuck with trying to keep the food moving, and so on. You can be the first one over there to see if you can assist in any way.

In other words, just be around to be the one ready to take on whatever task has to be done, no matter how humble it may be. And just be the fragrance of Christ. And if there is an opportunity to witness, gently witness. Seize that opportunity. Don't make a big announcement. Don't stand in the middle of the floor and say, "Now I'm going to tell you about Christ." And you know full well that in their drink-filled minds this is going to, this is not the place for this. It's not going to be accepted. It's just going to be a wet blanket on the whole party. This is not the place for it.

But there may be one individual there who needs your prayers, who needs your thoughts, and you try to minister to that individual. And otherwise just quietly on the sidelines try to be as unostentatious as possible. Whatever you do, don't try to call attention to yourself. And remember, the environment is very sinful because people are sinners. Remember, it is only God's grace that you have become saved. Remember that you have the truth and somehow God may be providing an opportunity for you to share that truth. And you might be praying in your heart for that opportunity, that it might arise.

Someone may drink too much and get in his cups and he is miserably suffering because of it, and you might be there to comfort, where everybody else is too busy with their own getting of attention. This I think is the way you can serve. And while you're in a sinful environment, you don't have to take part in the sin, you may be there ready to serve, so that in the midst of their sins there may be an opportunity to share the Word.

I hope this will help a little bit.

The Question of Sharing Gifts at Christmas (003B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I have a question concerning Christmas. My question is, is it biblical for us to give gifts at Christmas time, to celebrate

Christ's birth? Is there any biblical reason for us not to give gifts?

HC: Interesting question. Are we out of God's will when we give gifts on Christmas? I think the main reason that we give gifts on Christmas is that we see the Magi, these men from probably Persia, and when they came to greet the Baby Jesus (who was about two years of age by that time) they brought gifts, gold frankincense and myrrh. They brought gifts to the baby Jesus, and these gifts anticipated the whole work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The frankincense and myrrh were, the myrrh related to the coming death of the Lord Jesus. The frankincense related to the prayers of Christ, and the fact that He would be the firstfruits of all who would ever believe on Him. And the gold really referred to the fact that believers would come from all over the nations to the Lord Jesus. We are typified by gold and silver and precious stones. But they brought gifts to Him.

And therefore, when we celebrate Christmas, we decide we're going to give gifts to each other. Now that practice of giving gifts when we are very happy, when we are rejoicing, incidentally is a practice that the world has done from time immemorial. We find this dramatically related in Revelation 11, where in verse 10 it talks about the time when the two witnesses are killed. Then those who look at the bodies of these two witnesses rejoice and are happy because these two witnesses have been a torment to them, and they exchange gifts. Exchanging gifts is an idea in which we are rejoicing because of something that has occurred.

The problem, however, is that when we exchange gifts at Christmas, and the idea itself is not foreign to the Bible because the Magi brought gifts to Christ, but we unfortunately frequently and very normally, perhaps, forget to whom the gifts were brought. Now the Lord Jesus of course is the one who received the gifts from the Magi, because it was His birthday. When we have a birthday at home of a child, everybody brings a gift to that child.

But now the question is, how do we bring a gift to Christ on His birthday, that is, on Christmas, when we are celebrating His birthday? One way of course is, the Bible does say that because you have given this to one of the least of these My brethren you have given it unto Me. And so as we give gifts to family members who have a need of this or a need of that, we can say, because we love them and because we have a desire for the very best for them, this gift for our loved one is, as it were, a gift unto Christ. And I suppose that would stand some scrutiny.

However, when we think about the gifts that we give to our loved ones, a lot of them are very frivolous. A lot of them are very unnecessary. A lot of them are very luxurious. They really are not serving that individual well at all.

But there is a way in which we could become far more careful in our gifts and far more Biblical and God glorifying in our gifts. Now remember, the end is that we want to give gifts ultimately to the Lord Jesus Christ, to His glory. Suppose now that we could give gifts so that the body of Christ could be built up, because after all, the body of Christ is intimately identified with Christ Himself.

But how do you build the body of Christ? You build the body of Christ by sending forth the Gospel. But how do you send forth the Gospel? Well, by providing funds so that missionaries can be sent out, so that a radio ministry like Family Radio can send out the Gospel into all the world.

And so while I do not think that it is unbiblical to give modest gifts to family members, I believe that we can enhance our gift giving to a very high degree by making gifts to various individuals and

organizations who are about the task of sending forth the Gospel to enable them to do a better job of sending forth the Gospel. That is, I believe, the highest kind of giving we can do. And that will match, as accurately as possible, the gifts that the Magi brought, as they came to worship the baby Jesus.

Thank you for sharing that question.

Santa Claus and Children (004A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. I would like to know, how would you handle this situation? A little child comes home from public school and starts talking about Santa Claus. How would a parent deal with this without hurting the child? And should the parent make a big deal about this in front of a child? And how should they distract the child's attention away from Santa Claus without hurting the child?

HC: A very interesting question and a very practical question, because every time we start getting closer to Christmas, Santa Claus looms very large in the minds of people.

The fact is that little children by nature are not attracted to Santa Claus. They are actually afraid of him normally. He is an imposing figure with his red suit and his big beard, and children by nature are not very attracted to him. But parents really believe that their little two year-old ought to get the joy of knowing Santa Claus. And so they instruct their children, normally, to be interested in Santa Claus, and they begin to talk to their children about Santa Claus, that he's going to provide a gift for you, Santa Claus loves you, and if you do wrong Santa Claus may not have a gift for you. And they begin to tell all kinds of stories to their children about Santa Claus. By the time the children are in school they are ready to be very interested in Santa Claus.

But now what is a parent really to do? The Bible says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." When we tell our children that there is a Santa Claus and that Santa Claus is going to bring a gift to them, and we really point to that man with the red suit and the white beard, we are lying to our children. It is an outright lie; it's a outright falsehood. It is very serious, for two reasons. First of all, it is grievously serious because we are disobeying God's command to speak the truth. Secondly, it is serious because we are undermining our own integrity with our children. Later on they're going to learn that Santa Claus is only a man dressed up in a red suit and a white beard. They're going to see more than one Santa Claus, and there's going to be confusion. When they get a little older they'll begin to understand. Whether the child recognizes it or not, or whether the parent recognizes it or not, the integrity of the parent has been severely weakened more than he may realize. For both reasons this is a very wrong thing to do.

Actually, when you examine this idea of Santa Claus, Santa Claus is the world's substitute for God the Father. Who is the giver of every good and perfect gift? God is. Who is the one who punishes us for wrongdoing? God does. Who is the one who knows everything about us? God does. But all of these attributes are ascribed to Santa Claus. It is a very insidious, deceitful way of denying that it is God who rules over us.

Now I'm a Christian parent. I have a little youngster. What am I to do? The fact is that we are to begin to teach them these things when we walk by the way, when we lie down and when we rise up. We're to bring our children up in the fear and nurture of the Lord. We have to begin to instruct them that this world is a very deceitful world. And so when they're two or three years of age we can begin to, when we're driving downtown and they see a Santa Claus, we can say, "Oh, do

you see that man over there? He's dressed up in that red suit and that white beard, and he calls himself Santa Claus, and a lot of the children think that he is the one who gives them gifts. But that isn't really so. If they get a gift on Christmas it comes from their parents, or their brothers and sisters, or their uncles and aunts. They are the ones who bring them gifts. But you know, there is someone else who really gives us the gifts, the greatest gifts that are most important, and that is our Heavenly Father. And He is the one who really gives us gifts."

Now you take your child to the next corner or the next store, and you say, "You see, there's another man dressed up in a red suit. Look at all those children sitting on his lap and telling him what they'd like for Christmas. Do you know what's really happening?"

We should tell our children the truth: "The parents are listening, and the idea is that when they hear their children say they want this or that, then the parents will try to get that for their youngster for Christmas." We can be very honest about it. We want our children to grow up realizing that the world is very deceptive. We want them to realize that they can trust their parents with the truth. We want, above all, that our children recognize that God is the giver of every good and perfect gift.

Thank you for that question.

Can We Know the Date of Christ's Birth? (004B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. Could you please explain what it means in Galatians 4:4, where it talks about Jesus being born of a woman in the fullness of time? What is that referring to? Does the fullness of time mean December 25, or what?

HC: Actually, you're asking two questions. One question is, what does it mean that Christ was born in the fullness of time? The second question that you've really asked is, can we know the date of His birth? Was He actually born December 25?

First of all, the fullness of time simply is indicating that God has a very precise timetable for the unfolding of His Gospel program. Nothing is happening by whim or caprice. God does not begin the whole plan of salvation by simply deciding, "I'll make my decisions as I go along, and when it seems appropriate then I'll send the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Savior."

When we think about this, already from before the foundations of the earth, God had elected or named those who were to be saved. And since we're saved in all different generations all through the whole duration of the earth's existence, all of this had to be understood by God in a very meticulous fashion. By the same token, God had a very precise time when the Messiah would come. We find, for example, in Daniel 9 that God prophesied concerning the coming of the Messiah and said that it would be seventy sevens of years, or 490 years after the command to rebuild the temple that the Messiah would be cut off, or that He would bring in everlasting righteousness and He would bring in an end to sin, which means the time that Christ would go to the cross.

Actually, we find that that was anticipating that in AD 33 Christ would be crucified. And I'm not going to try to show this at this moment, but that is exactly what that was really saying. It gives a very precise timetable there for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has a very predetermined, well thought through, definite plan. And everything must happen in exact accord with God's plan.

And so when the time came that Jesus was to be conceived, when the Holy

Spirit would overshadow Mary and Jesus would enter her womb, and He entered into her womb, because after all, Jesus is eternal God, who is from everlasting. This was not the beginning of His creation, as would be true of a human being who is created in the womb. Actually, Christ simply took up His abode within Mary's womb and was born as a baby in the fullness of time.

Now what can we know about the date of Christ's birth? First of all, there is no suggestion in the Bible at all that Jesus was born on December 25. The early church decided that that would be an appropriate date to celebrate the birth of Christ because it was a pagan day that was used to celebrate the fact that the days now would begin to lengthen. It was the time of the winter solstice. The days had been getting shorter and shorter up until about the 22nd of December, and around that date the days would begin to get longer. And so they selected that day to celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus.

That's a very appropriate day, incidentally, because the Bible indicates that He is called the Day. "This is the day the Lord hath made." He is also called the "Sun, who rises with healing in his wings," or the "Daystar that rises in the East." The sun of course has to do with the length of the day. And so it's an excellent day to commemorate the birth of Christ, even though there is not the slightest biblical evidence that He was born on December 25.

Actually, if we would work it out from the biblical evidence, we could probably conclude that Jesus was born in the Fall of the year, around September or October. How can we know this? Well, we can know this because of the priest Zacharias, who was officiating in the temple, who later on became the father of John the Baptist.

Now we find that Zacharias was ministering in the temple during the time of course of Abia (that's in Luke 1:5). And when we go back into the Old Testament, we find that the temple service was divided into twenty-four courses. And when we work out the time of the year when the course of Abia would have been offered, and recognize that that was about the time when Elizabeth, Zacharias' wife, would have become with child with John the Baptist, and then recognize that John the Baptist was six months older than the Lord Jesus (and the Bible is very clear about that fact), then we would come to a conclusion that Jesus in all likelihood was born around September or October, in the Fall of the year.

But God does not seek to give us any further information as to the precise date. God has His own purposes for that, but God does indicate that He was born in the fullness of time. Incidentally, likewise in connection with the year that Christ was born, there is no definite language in the Bible that would suggest the year of His birth. However, there is a lot of circumstantial evidence in the Bible that points to the year 7 BC as the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Right now you are probably saying, "No, that can't be. Our calendar is keyed to the birth of Christ, and that presumes that Christ was born in the year 0, or 1 AD or 1 BC, or somewhere in there." But the fact is, very mysteriously, the priest who many many years ago was assigned the task of working out our calendar made an error in arriving at the birth of Christ. He made an error of several years. We know that this is so because Herod, for example, the Herod who killed all the babies in Jerusalem, actually died in the year 4 BC. There is abundant secular evidence to that fact. While that's not a biblical statement, there is lots of secular evidence, and there's no controversy about it. He died in the year 4 BC.

Secondly, we know that when the Wise Men or the Magi, came seeking the

Christ Child, they told Herod that they had seen the star two years earlier. And so that means that Jesus would have been born in at least 6 BC. And if there were any time at all from the coming of the Magi and the death of Herod, it could easily be that Jesus could have been born anywhere between 6 BC and 9 BC. But all the circumstantial evidence of the Bible points to 7 BC. And from the information we have in the Scriptures, in all likelihood He was born in the Fall of the year, around September or October.

But December 25 is an excellent date to celebrate His birth, because first of all it was a pagan day, and it's always good to commandeer a day that the unsaved of the world have tried to use for their own interests and make it God's day in some way. That's not a bad idea in itself. But also it's because it's the time when our days begin to lengthen in time, and therefore it points to Christ as the Sun of righteousness, who rises with healing in His wings.

But the big truth of all is that everything is under the control of God. Christ was born in the fullness of time. Christ will come on the last day, in the fullness of time, when God's plan calls for it. There is nothing done by caprice in the Bible. Everything is done with utmost precision as far as God's salvation is concerned.

The Problem With Nativity Scenes (004C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Mr. Camping. I was listening to last night's program, and on it someone mentioned about the significance of Jesus being born in a stable. As a follow-up to that, I was wondering, is it okay to have a nativity scene on the mantle in our home? I notice that in some homes it's very common to see these things at Christmas time.

HC: That's an interesting question, too. What about a nativity scene? I remember years and years ago, when I was much younger, and my children were small, and I was not nearly as experienced in the Word of God as I am today, we did have a nativity scene. And every Christmas we would bring out the little stable and the little doll in the stable, and so on. And it was always very pleasant to have in our room, and the children enjoyed it very much.

But as I continued to become acquainted with the Word of God, and I recognized that we are not to make any image of God of any kind, and in order to have a nativity scene we have to have a doll in that manger, and that doll represents Christ. And Christ is God. As a baby He was God, as a grown man He was God. When He hung on the cross He was God. He never ceased to be God. Therefore I gave up the nativity scene as soon as I really came to that conclusion. I laid down the rule very gently of course, that we cannot have the nativity scene anymore. The children were disappointed for a little while, but they got used to the idea.

Now if you could have a nativity scene with some lambs and some goats and some straw and a manger, and so on, and there's nothing in the manger, I suppose you could have a nativity scene. But of course it wouldn't be very meaningful if there was nothing in the manger. And so if you feel you have to have a doll of some kind or a figure of some kind in the manger, representing the Lord Jesus, then based on what I read in the Bible, I think that it is contrary to the Word of God.

CHAPTER 6 – CHURCH AND RELIGION

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Fellowship, Attending Church, and Personal Witness (147C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Mr. Camping. I have a problem and a proposed solution. And I was wondering if you could tell me if you think the solution is right.

HC: Okay.

CALLER: I'm a born again believer, and I believe that by praying, reading God's Word, and loving people by helping them, and fellowship, are all very important. But the last fellowship has been leading me into confusion, and I know confusion isn't from God.

For example, almost every night I try to attend some type of fellowship. This happens to be in various areas, because no place has a fellowship every night. At one fellowship many people speak in tongues, all at the same time, without anybody interpreting. And I feel it's not right.

And in another, a person says to me, "The Holy Spirit is speaking through me. And if you don't agree with me, you're actually disagreeing with the Holy Spirit." And in another, a person visits my home to, I guess, witness to me, and says that I'm not saved because I'm not going to his church.

And what I propose to do about this is to not go to any fellowship right now, but just to get as solid foundation in His Word. And I believe that by His power, through the Holy Spirit, He will let me understand His Word without having to have a human teacher. And then, after I get really a good knowledge, then I'll seek a true fellowship and a true church.

Could you comment on my proposed solution?

HC: All right. Let me see if I can make an observation. Your question really is, When it is so difficult to find a fellowship or an assembly where they are really true to the Word of God, shouldn't I just not attend for a while and try to study the Bible and grow in the Word of God, and then seek one?

The Bible does not teach that. The Bible teaches that we ought to assemble together with believers. Now this doesn't mean that we have to fellowship every night with other believers. It may be that we can only fellowship just on Sundays with other believers. The Bible doesn't set any timetable on this.

But you ought to find a group of believers. It may be a very small group. The Bible doesn't tell us how large it has to be. "If two or three are gathered in My Name, I am in the midst of them." And find the group of believers that is at least as close to truth as possible. They won't be a perfect group. There is no perfect group. And begin to fellowship with them.

Now the other thing you suggest is very salutary. Begin to study the Bible. And you're right. If you will diligently work in the scriptures, and become as acquainted as possible, God will lead you into truth. You can learn very very much without a teacher. Then when you do hear a teacher, you also will be equipped to know whether he is doing a good job of being in accord with the Bible, or whether he is not doing a good job.

Thirdly, I would suggest that you also begin to take on a program of being useful to the Lord. We are saved to serve. We are saved to be a witness. Now that program may be a very small program. Let me just throw out a couple of suggestions, and you can add to it all

kinds of other suggestions.

There may be some neighborhood children, and you want to begin to teach them. Invite them over for some crackers and Kool-Aid, and share something from the Word of God with them on a regular basis. It may mean that you can visit a nursing home. Aged people in nursing homes are so lonely and so hungry for visits. And just to visit with them and smile at them, and give them a little reassurance, praying for an opportunity to witness, is a grand way to be of some help.

And it may mean that in your work or at your school you might encourage a few others to come to some kind of a Bible study. There are many many things that you can do. It may mean that you would get hold of some good tracts and think of places where you might place these, or look for opportunities where you might give one out now and then. This can be a part of your ministry.

Now I do agree with you that we are living in a day when there are all kinds of gospels. And we read in II John 10 that if anyone brings another gospel, we are not to give them any greeting. And so if you belong to a congregation which you have become convinced is bringing another gospel, because they are going beyond the Word of God in looking for divine truth, then it's time to leave that congregation. It's time to find a congregation that is going to be more true to the Word of God.

And we're living in a day when there might have to be some shifting around, you see.

CALLER: What about the instruction that Paul gives that you should stay where you are after you have become born again?

HC: There is no statement in the Bible that you have to stay in a congregation where you first experienced salvation. There is nothing in the Bible that says that.

CALLER: Is he referring to the job that you have at the time?

HC: I think what you're referring to is when Paul says, "Be content in whatever state you are." But you're not content in whatever state you are if it is a state in which you are going contrary to God's Word. Let's suppose that you were an embezzler when you were saved. Well, you don't stay an embezzler. Okay, so by the same token, if you were saved in a congregation (and this frequently happens, incidentally) that later on you discover is really a congregation that is going contrary to the Word of God, even though they use the Bible a little bit and God used this to save you, then by no means should you stay in that congregation.

CALLER: I should use my conscience and my knowledge of the Word as a guide then?

HC: You should use your knowledge of the Word as a guide.

What If One Cannot Physically Attend a Church? (319B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: The question of the previous caller was about the authority of the church on earth, etc. The next question is: What about a person who is a shut-in, who has divorced himself from a church which he did not feel was proclaiming Christ, and has no ability to go out to a church and become a church member? How does one take Communion, which he feels is absolutely necessary? What is one's status at that point?

HC: That's a very good question. And I'm very grateful for this question, because it may clarify some of the things that I said earlier.

First of all, we are not saved by the church. Church membership is not a requirement for salvation. While it is the

church that is instrumental in sending out the Gospel, and the believers are the ones who support Gospel radio stations, and it is believers who band together to send out missionaries and to produce printed literature that can go out so that others might read about the Gospel, all of this is done by bodies of believers. The actual fact of salvation is a very personal relationship between an individual and God, where that individual has surrendered to God. He's confessed his sins. He's cried out to God for mercy. He's placed his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, if that person is saved and there is no church that he can belong to—if he's on a desert island, or if he's a shut-in, he's a soldier on the battle field, or whatever—then he can't belong to a church. And that does not impair his salvation in any sense whatsoever. God has people all over the world who become saved, let's say, through short-wave radio, who have no church of any kind in their community or in their tribe, or wherever they may be. They simply hear the Word, they respond to the Word. God does His work of saving grace in their lives, and they are children of God. If later on they are able to join a church, then they should. But if there is no church, if there are no other believers around to fellowship with, then their salvation is still not impaired in any way.

And so it is in your case, if you're a shut-in. Your salvation is not impaired in any way. Now the Bible nowhere says how often we are to partake Holy Communion. If you're a shut-in, or if you're on the battlefield, or if you're on a desert island, and there is no church, then you don't partake of Communion. It's not going to impair your salvation in any way.

If you're able to partake of Communion, if there is a church that you can join which is faithful to the Word, and the pastor and elders will come and have a Communion service with you in your home, wonderful. That's a little bit extra blessing. But it's certainly not a requirement for your life. I would suggest in your case that you pray that God perhaps might show you a way in which you could become identified with a body of believers.

CALLER: I did that twice, at your suggestion, about three years ago. One required a church membership. I was in its parish, but I could not go along with its doctrine, which was based on tradition. The other was a church that was very receptive, and its denominational affiliation certainly was excellent. It preached the Word of God. But in this particular congregation the pastor had gone off into the charismatic movement, and I frankly said, "No, thank you." And after these two attempts, I felt that the door was really slammed in my face.

HC: Well, it could be, you know, that God is teaching you the same thing that He taught the apostle Paul: "My grace is sufficient." Now you're a shut-in. God has provided some very definite limitations in your ability to get around. And it could be that God wants you to learn that His grace is sufficient.

On the other hand, God may be teaching you patience, and He wants you to try it again and again. There may be other congregations that you could test out. A lot of times, you know, God puts testing programs in our life just to encourage us to be patient, just to encourage us to endure in the face of some obstacles of some kind.

If there is not a congregation in your community, and there are many small communities where this is true, if there is not a congregation that is true to the Word of God, then the body of believers may be no larger than a family, or two families that begin to come together. And they may begin to have a church. In your own case, if you're a single individual,

you may just have to live alone and endure faithfully under this kind of a situation.

Of course marvelously, marvelously, because of radio you can fellowship through the radio with other people. You don't feel nearly as much alone as if you were without this blessing.

May God continue to give you much wisdom.

CALLER: Thank you.

HC: Thank you. Good night.

FIDELITY OF WITNESS

Can We Discern Hypocrites in the Church? (114B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: We know that Christ, when He was on the earth, could discern true believers from liars or hypocrites. Should we as Christians, with the Holy Spirit and God's Word, be able to distinguish hypocrites from true believers? I think that's a very important question. What do you do when there are people who are hypocrites and are using God's Word as a shield for their own self-righteousness? And I hate to say it, but I've encountered many people that I know aren't really saved, yet they believe they are, and are using God's Word as a tool of deception. And many people are doing what Paul warns against in Galatians 1, and that's believing in a false gospel, a false doctrine.

HC: The question that has been raised is this matter: Inasmuch as Christ could, as eternal God, know when a person was really born again, can we as Christians, under the discerning power of the Holy Spirit, discern whether a person we're looking at is truly a born again believer? The answer, of course, is no. We cannot do that. We cannot look upon a man's heart.

Any man who is living like a Christian, who confesses Christ, we assume that he is a born again believer. Only God knows for sure what's in his heart. Only God knows whether he really has surrendered his will to Christ. Now the Bible does say, "By their fruits ye shall know them." And one way that we can suspect that someone may not be right with God is going to relate to what they do with the Bible.

The Bible says that if you add to the words of this book, He will add to you the plagues written therein. And so one of the first questions we have to wonder is, "What are we going to do with the Scriptures? Are they alone the divine Word of God, or are we ready to accept truth from any other kind of source, whatever it may be?"

Now what do we do when we know somebody is coming with another gospel, or when we know somebody is hypocritical, or whatever? The answer is that we can pray for them. If they come at us with another gospel, we don't want to have conversation with them. The Bible teaches in the Epistle of Second John, in verse 10, if someone comes with another doctrine, we are to give them no greeting. The only purveyors, the only witnesses who are the true witnesses, should be those who are bringing the true Gospel. But certainly we can pray for those who think they are saved, and yet they are not saved.

Judgment Begins at the House of God (150B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I want to ask a question about the Judgment Day. Is it true that the church will be judged first?

HC: The question is raised: At Judgment Day will the church be judged first? The Bible does say in I Peter 4, that "Judgment begins with the household of

God." And in Jeremiah 25, where God is judging, it speaks about judgment coming upon Judah and Israel, and all of this, and then afterwards upon Babylon also.

And so there are a number of passages that imply that judgment will begin with the church. But I think that we are seeing this already. I think God has in view something a little different than Judgment Day itself. Let's look at what happened in the Old Testament.

Now we have in the Old Testament some very sinful nations. We have a nation like Babylon, which is unrelated to God. It's just a grievously sinful nation. And then we also have at the same time a nation called Israel, or Judah, which is presumably God's people. Now which nation was first destroyed? Which nation was first conquered? It wasn't Babylon. It was Judah. God used Babylon to come against Judah until it was completely destroyed. The temple was leveled, and it ceased to be a nation at all.

Now about fifty or sixty years later the Medes and the Persians came, and they conquered Babylon. And finally, during the days of Alexander the Great, Babylon was utterly destroyed, so it never again became a nation. But you see, of the two nations Judah was destroyed first. Now Judah is a figure of the church, and Babylon is a figure of the kingdom of Satan, or the nations of the world.

Now as we approach the end, we're going to find that God's judgment begins to be poured out against the church. Now we're not talking about Judgment Day itself yet. We're going to see that because of increasing apostasy in the church, finally the Gospel will be silenced. This is spoken of in Revelation 20 as Gog and Magog, the nations from the four corners of the earth, coming against the camp of the saints, or the Beloved City.

It is spoken of in Revelation 11 as the two witnesses that are finally killed, the two witnesses being the representation of the church as it brings the Gospel throughout the New Testament period. The Gospel is silenced.

We read it in Daniel 8, where it speaks about the "continual" being taken away, the "continual" referring undoubtedly to the candlestick that always burned in the temple, representing the light of the Gospel. And it is taken away, for a period of 2300 evenings and mornings.

And this must happen before Judgment Day comes on Babylon, or upon the nations of the world. The church must be judged as an organization. Now the born again believers don't lose their salvation. They aren't killed. Some of them may be, if there is persecution, and there always is some persecution going on in the world. But as an organization it will be silenced. The unsaved in the church, they don't face Judgment Day yet. They will still face that as part of Babylon, at the end of time. But nevertheless, the church as a viable, as a useful organism of God, is neutralized, even as Judah was neutralized, as the temple was destroyed in the days of Judah, back in 587 BC.

And after that Babylon, or the kingdom of Satan, is judged. And that includes all of the unsaved of the world. They come into judgment and are cast into hell. And that's at the end of time.

CALLER: The Christian will judge the world?

HC: Yes. The question is raised: Doesn't it say that the Christians will judge the world? Indeed we will. I don't understand all the implications of this, but in I Corinthians 6:3 it says that we will judge. And in Revelation 2 it also speaks of those who conquer will rule the nations with a rod of iron, which is a figure, again, relating to Judgment Day.

Now we are in our resurrected bodies at that moment. If we have died, we have been resurrected and caught up in the air to be with Christ. If we were living at that time, we have been changed

instantaneously into our resurrected bodies and caught up in the air to be with Christ. And Christ has come as the Judge.

Now the first thing He has done is that He has completed our salvation by giving us our resurrected bodies. But now the work of judging begins. And I don't know how this is going to be. This is the end of time. We're on the threshold of eternity. But all the unsaved have been resurrected simultaneously with the resurrection of the believers, and they stand for judgment. And we will be active in the judging process. But how this will be, I'm not really sure.

CALLER: Would it be like a court, do you think?

HC: I have no idea how it will be, because we'll be outside of time then. We'll be in our resurrected bodies. Christ will be in His glory. We know that the unbelievers must give an account of everything they've ever done. Now remember, God is the Creator of mankind; God is the one who is conducting this whole program. And how this will all be done, I have no idea because I can't understand an infinite God. And I certainly cannot understand eternity. We're outside of time then. We're on the threshold of eternity.

CALLER: If I said that Christ will judge the church, and the Christians will judge the unsaved of the world, would you say you really don't know?

HC: I don't think you could say that, or put it quite that way. Christ is the Judge of the world. But you see, already, when we were saved, we are seated with Him in heavenly places, we read in Ephesians 2:6. We're already reigning. Now we're reigning in the sense that it's Christ's task, by going to the cross, to provide salvation for those whom He planned to save from before the foundations of the earth. And as people are being saved, Satan's rule is being reigned over. We plunder the house of Satan as we bring the Gospel. And in that sense we are reigning.

But Christ's work is more than just that Satan's house will be plundered of its victims. He reigns over Satan in that sense, but also in the sense that He is going to judge him and cast him into hell. Now even as we were partakers in the task of bringing the Gospel, and in that sense reigning with Christ, even though it is Christ who actually did the saving, so perhaps in some measure, it will be Christ who is judging, and we will be involved as a vehicle of some kind in the judging process.

CALLER: When we speak about our transfigured bodies, they don't have blood in them? What does it mean, transfigured?

HC: The question relates to: What about our resurrected or our transfigured bodies? Now in I Corinthians 15, in the whole chapter God deals with the question of the resurrection of our bodies. And He comes to this very question in verse 35: "But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do we come?'" And now God says, "You foolish man. What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as He has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body."

In other words, God is saying. Look at a grain of wheat. You put it in the ground. It looks like a dead little thing. And it springs forth as a beautiful plant, that really bears hardly any relationship to that seed which was put in the ground. Now by the same token, we can't speculate at all about the kind of body that will be raised. We only know that we are buried like that grain of wheat, and we are raised with a glorious eternal body that God will give us. And probably it will bear no more resemblance to the body that went into the grave than

that plant bears to the seed that was put in the ground.

CALLER: That makes me more curious.

HC: Yes. It makes us more curious, but it also makes us marvel at the grace of God, marvel at the grace of God, that this is for me. This is the future that God has planned for me. We often become very ecstatic when we think of some joy that is going to come to us in our lifetime, some honor that might be conferred upon us, or some vacation, or whatever it may be. We really rejoice in anticipation. But this kind of a thing, in relationship to this earthly scene, is like nothing at all as compared with the marvelous future God has for us in eternity, in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

And it's so close, you see. We're actually one breath away from eternity actually. We don't know when God will take us. And certainly we're drawing very close to the end of time itself. And so really, for the born again believer, the future is totally in front of us.

CALLER: May the Lord bless you, and thank you.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Diviners, Mediums and False Prophets (151B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Brother Camping, I need to ask you a question. What is the New Testament position on divination?

HC: The New Testament position on divination is found in the Old Testament, simply because the New Testament insists that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. That's a New Testament verse. And in the Old Testament, it says in Deuteronomy 18 that one who divines is an abomination to God.

More than that, those who divine, who try to foretell the future, apart from what they read in the Bible, are believing that they are receiving a message from God. And in Revelation 22:18 God says, "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein." In other words, it's impossible to actually receive information from God apart from the Bible, once the Bible was completed.

Therefore we can readily begin to see that anyone who claims to divine the future, to be able to know the future, apart from the Bible, is not being used of God. He is being used of some other source.

CALLER: Four weeks ago I met a pastor, a real pastor. And he told a group of us, Brother Camping, these words: "I am a trance medium. I can leave my body at will and visit other places. I have contact with the other side. My grandmother came to me and visited me, and we talked. And she promised me that I would get a car. And sure enough, the next morning I got the very car that my grandmother told me I would." Would you comment on that?

HC: Yes. Just because, first of all, someone is a pastor does not mean that he is of God. Jesus speaks, for example, in Matthew 24:24 of "false prophets and false christ, who will come with signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." There are plenty of pastors around who are not of God. The only people who are of God are those who hold only to the Bible as the Word of God.

Now there is of course an occult world, composed of Satan and his evil spirits, the fallen angels. And Satan does give individuals insights into the future. Now he's not always right, because God can circumvent Satan. But apparently Satan does have some access or some way of looking into the future. And he is able to convey that information to individuals.

But any kind of occult activity is listening to Satan rather than listening to God. And so we are to have nothing at all to do with that.

CALLER: All right. The final thing is, he said, well, he really has a going church. And he said, "I prayed for a new organ, and God spoke in an audible voice and said, 'Yes.'" And he got it, Brother Camping. He said, "I prayed for a new Steinway piano, and God answered 'Yes' audibly." And he got it. And the last thing he asked God for was a telephone. They didn't have a telephone, and the people said they couldn't afford it. And he asked God for a telephone and now he has three. And he said, "Brethren, if you don't believe it, you can come in the church and look at them. They're there." And many people will testify that he has actually stood up in his congregation and told them what was going to happen, and it happened. He has blessings, and a lot of people follow him.

HC: It may be that these things are happening, but that doesn't mean he is of God. Let me read to you from Deuteronomy 13, where God speaks about a very similar condition. Before I read this, let me emphasize that when we hold something to be the Word of God, and we want to be obedient to it, we are worshipping the God who has given that particular document. In other words, if I look at the Bible and I say, "That's the Word of God and I want to be obedient to it," effectively I am worshipping the God who has given it.

By the same token, if I receive a vision or hear a voice, or whatever, and I am convinced that it is from God, and I want to be obedient to what I saw in that vision, then I am worshipping the God who has given me this vision.

Now in Deuteronomy 13 God warns thusly, beginning in verse 1: "If a prophet arises among you." Okay, now "a prophet arises among you" means that it's someone of your own people. And he claims to declare God's Word. That's what a prophet is. "If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams [notice the immediate focus there is on someone who holds to dreams] and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass [notice how legitimate he is], and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods which you have not known [in other words, let us listen to the voice of other sources of divine truth than the Bible, if you really want to put it in the language of today] and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and cleave to Him."

You see, God in these days is allowing this to happen, and through this God is testing congregations. Are they going to listen to the Bible, or are they going to listen to that which purports to be divine truth from other sources?

CALLER: Amen! Well, Brother Camping, are there prophets today?

HC: Yes. Every born again believer is a prophet. Now in the widest application a prophet is someone who declares God's Word. And whenever we witness to someone concerning the Word of God, we are acting in a prophetic capacity. Now a lot of times we think of a prophet as someone who can foretell the future. Now of course we can to some degree.

When we witness to someone and we tell him, "Judgment Day is coming," we are foretelling the future, aren't we, because that is a future event. It hasn't happened as yet. But we have received our information from the Bible.

CALLER: Amen. What is a trance medium? I've never found it in the dictionary.

HC: Well, I don't exactly know the meaning of any of those words because I have no interest in becoming involved in that kind of an activity. But from your description, he claims that he is able to speak with the dead. Now obviously he cannot speak with the dead, that is, dead people. Dead people go down to a place of silence, the Bible says. But he can talk to those who are spiritually dead angels, those who have rebelled against God and have become the helpers of Satan. And they will mimic dead people. They will deceive such individuals into thinking that they are speaking to dead loved ones. And in this way these individuals are bound more tightly than ever by Satan.

CALLER: What shall I do for this brother? He's serious. What is a Christian's responsibility, other than to pray for him?

HC: All you can do is pray for him, and pray that God might give you an opportunity to open the Word to him. But he is convinced that he belongs to God, that God is doing this work through him. And my guess is that he will not listen to you at all. He'll simply say, "Well, you don't understand." And so remember, his sin is not against you. His sin is against God. Because you love your fellow man, you can pray for him. And it is only God who can make a difference in his life. There's nothing that you really can do, except to pray for him.

What is the True Gospel? (343B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: With all the religions and doctrines there are in this world today what do you think is the true Gospel?

HC: The question that is raised is, what is the true Gospel? The Bible indicates that it alone and in its entirety is the divine Word of God. This is particularly underlined in Revelation 22:18 and 19. There God declares that if anyone adds to the words of this book, He will add to him the plagues written herein. Or if anyone takes away from the words of this book, He will take away from him his share in the Tree of Life.

Effectively God is saying there that the Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. It is the Gospel. It is the articulated message of salvation that God wants mankind to hear. Now when we examine any sect or cult or gospel or religion, we can examine it in the light of this information.

There are two kinds that we're going to find. There are many that say, "Yes, the Bible is the Word of God, and we're ready to be obedient to it. But we also believe that there are other sources of divine truth. There is another book here that we look upon as being inspired. There is the possibility that God is still speaking today in revelations, or visions, or whatever." "This too is a source of divine truth." Therefore, that particular gospel, or religion, or whatever, regardless of how it may use the language of the Bible, or speak confidently of salvation, by definition is not the Gospel of the Bible. It has an authority that is more than the Bible, because the Bible is their authority, and also other utterances, that come by visions, or in other books, or from the church, or whatever have authority. It therefore is not the true Gospel.

By the same token, there are those groups that say, "Yes, we believe the Bible is the Word of God. It is our authority." But in practice they deny that certain parts of the Bible are relevant for them today. There are churches, for example, who deny the historicity of the first 11 chapters of Genesis. They look upon this simply as some kind of a parabolic statement, without any substance in history. That then

becomes another gospel, because they are denying that Genesis is what it really is.

There are those who deny that the Old Testament has any relevance at all. They say it's for the Jews, it's not for us today. Then you begin to walk in the direction of another gospel.

There are those who pick and choose from the Bible. They read certain verses that seem to teach that the Holy Spirit is not a person at all, but only a force or an energy of some kind. And they simply set aside and disregard those verses that specifically address themselves to the question that the Holy Spirit is indeed a person, a person of the Godhead. And by this denial of these passages we begin to see another gospel rather than the true Gospel.

The easiest way to evaluate any gospel at all is by seeing what they do with the Bible. If they do not accept the Bible alone and in its entirety as the divine Word, then by definition you have another gospel. And when you continue to search out the doctrines that are going to be forthcoming from this other gospel, you'll find that more and more of their teachings deviate from what the Bible really teaches.

Joking About Godly Matters (375C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I was watching TV one night, a program which I no longer watch. But I wondered if there was something that we can do about this. It's called "All's Fair," I believe. And the man in the program was a joke writer, and he said that President Carter would use his jokes if he would accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. Now to me that was very offensive. I think it's a terrible thing to say about the Lord. Why do they have to put things like that on the program?

HC: Let me ask you this: Have you ever heard someone who claims to be a Christian make a joke about something in the Bible, or something about the church?

CALLER: Yes, I suppose I have.

HC: Yes. This happens very, very frequently. Even pastors will do this. I've done this in the past. Every time I ever do this, however, if I speak flippantly in any sense of the Bible, or of the church, or of this denomination or that denomination (and it's a real temptation to do that, because that's what you've become familiar with), I realize that this is a grievous sin before God, because these are holy things. The Bible is very holy, and in no way ought it to be the environment of a joke. We have the whole world to joke about. We can joke about cows or flowers or clouds, or whatever. But when we start talking about God, or start talking about anything in the Word of God, or about His body, the church, then that must not be joked about.

The reason I say this, or broaden this question, is that it's easy to look at the secular world and say, "Why do they joke about holy things?" because we become offended when we see this on a TV program, or wherever. But actually, we in the church very frequently are more guilty than they. And more than that, we ought to know better.

So I really think that the place to begin to correct this is right with me — that is, in our own life, make sure that never will we joke about holy things, and encourage those that we come in contact with also. That is a "No-No." And then I think that God will take care of the others.

GENERAL CHURCH ISSUES

Some Comments on Evangelists

(009C)

CALLER: I was wondering if you could give me your idea of evangelists. I was raised a Catholic, until about two years ago, when I became a Christian and started going to a Baptist church. They're really straight on the Bible, but we've had several evangelists come to the church, and it seemed like, as we were going through the week, that it was just making a mockery of Christ. It was like he was selling Him to the audience, you know, putting Him up for whoever will, and I was just wondering what your idea of this type of evangelism is.

HC: First of all, the office of an evangelist is biblical. Ephesians 4:11 reads: "And His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." An evangelist is commonly thought of as a person who is concerned with the Gospel message. He is not teaching. He does not stay in one place teaching the congregation into the deeper truths. He is not a pastor in that he is working in a congregation, attending to all the pastoral needs of the congregation. He comes into a situation to present the Gospel and then goes on to somewhere else to present the Gospel.

Now everyone who calls himself an evangelist is not necessarily doing a good job as an evangelist. An evangelist is faced with some real temptations, just as pastors and teachers are. An evangelist, for example, may without realizing it come to a point where he really believes that he is a failure unless he can see so many people saved. Like notches on the gun of a killer, he will want to have so many scalps of those who have been saved. And so he will use very many devices, and whatever, to get people to make some kind of a commitment for Christ. This can become very hollow and very superficial.

We must realize that salvation is by God, not by an evangelist. An evangelist is a witness of the Gospel, but by no means is he the one who is getting people saved. God does the saving. Or, sometimes an evangelist in his desire to get the crowds to come, or to get real interest in his work, may have to resort to a certain amount of showmanship, a certain amount of joke-telling and story-telling, and what have you, to keep his whole line interesting. And this again can very frequently empty the Gospel of its power. The presentation of the Gospel is serious business. It's a matter of heaven and hell, of life and death, of time and eternity. There is a tremendous amount at stake when the Gospel is being presented.

Some evangelists do a very competent job, and of course some do not. The best that you can do is try to learn what you can from any evangelist who comes in your church and forgive him for what is done very poorly. Every evangelist, like every pastor, like every prophet, has feet of clay. No one is going to do a perfect job.

But I have to agree with our caller that sometimes when someone comes, somewhat as an expert, you know, you bring someone in from the outside to have a series of meetings, and subconsciously we regard him as somewhat of an expert. Because he has been brought in, we expect something special, something extra great. And then when we get what does come we can get very disappointed, and particularly if it's in the area where the Bible is approached very superficially, or where it really becomes somewhat of a show-biz kind of a thing. We can really feel that we have not received what we have expected. And it takes very much patience and self-control in that kind of a situation.

What is the Relationship Between the Church and Heaven? (192D)

CALLER: Do you think that the church and the Kingdom of Heaven are

synonymous terms? Or what is the relationship between the church and the Kingdom of Heaven? I do believe in an eternal Heaven, but in these last times is the church a type of a manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven, to be used as a witness to those who don't understand the Kingdom of Heaven?

HC: A question was raised, which is a very contemporary question, What is the relationship in the Bible of the church to the Kingdom of Heaven? First of all, what is the church?

Well, the Bible indicates that the church is the body of believers. When did it really come into existence? Well, it came into existence from the very beginning of time. People are surprised, you know, when you call the Old Testament believers a church. But the Bible itself does this.

We read, for example, in Acts 7, where the deacon Stephen, a man well learned in the Scriptures, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says, in verse 38: "This is he who was in the congregation" [or in the church; it is the same word *ekklesia* that is found throughout the New Testament, that is translated church], "This is he who was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with Our Father." You see, the Old Testament congregation was a church. And throughout the Old Testament you find the word congregation or assembly. It was the body of believers, which consisted primarily of Israelites, but it was augmented by the proselytes, like Rahab the Harlot, or Ruth the Moabitess. It was the church.

In the New Testament the church was vastly increased, so that it included primarily people from every nation in the world, with Israelites, blood descendants of Abraham, having a much smaller part, percentage-wise. But it's still the same church. It's headed up by Christ. He is the one who said, "I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The church was very small in the Old Testament, but it was Christ's intention to build it, so that it would become a great and glorious body, consisting of believers from every nation.

Now what's the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of Christ? Actually, the Kingdom that we enter into when we are saved is the Kingdom of Christ. He is our King. He is our Head. That's why when Jesus came, He said, and John the Baptist also said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The King had arrived. And in order for the Kingdom of God to be effectuated, it was necessary for Christ to go to the cross.

There are those who say, "You know, the Jews rejected Christ as their King. And therefore God put into the works an alternative plan where He has the church age." Well, I often think, supposing that the Israelites had accepted Jesus as King. Where would they ever have gotten eternal life? Where would we receive eternal life? If they had accepted Christ as King, then there would have been no cross. And without a cross, there could not have been salvation.

The fact is, the Jews did want to accept Him as a political King. They were all rejoicing when He went into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, ready to accept Him as a political King. They misunderstood altogether, even as many people misunderstand today, that the Kingdom of God is not a political Kingdom. It is a spiritual Kingdom.

We read in Colossians 1:13: "We have been transferred from the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son." In John 3:3 it says, "We shall not see the Kingdom unless we are born again," and we "cannot enter that Kingdom unless we are born of water and the Spirit."

So the fact is, the church and the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of God, are one and the same, one and the same. The church has to do with the body of believers. The Kingdom of God has to do with the body of believers. The church is headed up by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God is headed up by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the fact that Christ only went to the cross in AD 33 does not mean that He wasn't the head of the Kingdom in the Old Testament. Christ is the Great "I AM," and the impact and the efficacy of the cross reached all the way back to Adam and Eve, even as it reaches all the way forward to us. There is only one Kingdom.

It's interesting, you know, that Israel was a figure of the church in a literal sense, and it was also called a kingdom. Jesus said in Matthew 8, "The sons of the kingdom will be cast out." Because we are a member of the church does not mean we are saved. We can be cast out, if we're not born again.

If we are a member of the church, corporately we're a member of the Kingdom of God. But that doesn't mean that we have eternal life, that we are personally related to the Kingdom of God, in the eternal sense. Only when we've been born again will we live forever in the Kingdom of God.

But if we are a member of the congregation, if we are a child of believing parents, then corporately we have entered the Kingdom. Corporately we have entered the church. But only when we personally have become saved do we have eternal life and will we remain forever in the church, or in the Kingdom of God.

Now once we catch this, we don't have to fuss with trying to find nuances and slight differences between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Christ. They're all one Kingdom, because Christ is God, and Heaven is only where God is. It is the citizenship that we receive, as Philippians 3 puts it: "Our commonwealth is in Heaven." That is the Kingdom that we belong to when we have become saved. And we belong to it eternally.

Well, thank you for that question.

The Validity of Church Authority (198C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I'm a new Christian, and I've got several problems that I'd like to ask about. I became saved, I guess, about nine months ago now. And I've had many many problems with regard to the organized church.

The problem is, Mr. Camping, that I realize that once I accepted Jesus Christ into my heart as my Savior, I was reborn and I was placed in Christ's church. He places people in His church Himself, the believers. But the Christian people who brought me to know Christ have really disillusioned me by the fact that, number one, they don't believe in organized churches. And I'd like to know just why. And we talked about it. And right now I just finished a Bible Study group at a church. And this Christian who brought me to the Lord says that the organized churches of today are trying to all get together into one unity. And he points out in the scriptures that this was ungodly. And I don't have the scriptures that he gave to me, but I'd just like to find out if there's truth in this or not. He says that Christmas is pagan and not Christian. And he said that God ordains ministers, that there's no need for ordained ministers, but that the Lord will take care of this. And I'm really confused.

HC: Actually, your question is facing this whole matter of the relationship of Christ to the church, and the church to

the believer. Now deep in the heart of man there is this rebellion against authority. And this carries right into the church. Man does not want anyone over him. He wants to feel absolutely free, This is rebellion against authority.

The child, for example, rebels against the parent. He doesn't want to be under the thumb of the parent. The student rebels against the teacher, and the citizen frequently rebels against the government that rules over him. Well, the same is true in the church. That is, in the Christian world there are those who say, "Well, I'm not going to be under the authority of the church."

Now the Bible teaches that we are to be under that kind of authority. If you read I Corinthians 5 and 6, you will find that the apostle Paul, who was one of the rulers in the church, speaks of excommunication of someone who was in the church and who was living in a sinful way.

We find in Matthew 18 that Christ saying that if someone sins against you, tell it to that person alone, and then in the presence of two or three, and then tell it to the church. And if he won't hear the church, then let the church deal with him.

In I Timothy 5 it speaks about the elders who rule well. The whole thrust of the Bible is that we are under the authority of the church. We are to join a congregation and be under the authority of those who rule in that congregation.

Now it is true that there are congregations and denominations that are trying to form a one-world organization. Unfortunately, in trying to do this, they have to find the lowest common denominator in regard to spiritual matters, and so they end up with a doctrinal position that is nothing at all. It can't be the rigid teachings of the Bible itself, because no two denominations are that close on these things. And so it is doomed to failure.

But the fact that there are denominations and congregations that want to form a one-world church of some kind does not negate the fact that God has set up congregations. You read Revelation 2 and 3. God speaks there of the church at Ephesus, the church of Smyrna, the church of Laodicea. And they're all congregations, you see, that people belong to. The Bible says that we're not to neglect the assembling together of the saints.

Now insofar as the ordination of those who rule, the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit told Timothy, "Don't be hasty in the laying on of hands." In other words, don't ordain men as elders or deacons in a hasty fashion. Make sure that they are properly qualified. And so a congregation appoints (or nominates or elects) those who are to rule over them, who have the highest possible spiritual qualifications. And these are outlined in I Timothy 3.

So anyone who teaches that we don't have to have a church, or we don't have to be under the authority of a church, is teaching contrary to the Bible.

CALLER: Okay, then what about this particular assembly? I'm not going to mention any names, because they don't have a name, evidently. But they gave me a tract, and it said that Christmas was pagan and not Christian. And this upset me for so long. Like I said, I've been a newborn babe in Christ for I guess about nine months now. And it really messed my Christmas up this year. It's really difficult for me. I can't understand.

HC: I would say this. The fact that they are teaching you error concerning the nature of the church means that you want to be very careful about anything that they teach you. They are not resting altogether on the Bible.

In connection with Christmas, you raised the question of the Biblical validity of Christmas. The Bible does not teach

anywhere that we are to celebrate Christmas. There is no command of this kind. The fact is, the Bible does not even reveal the date of Christ's birth. We really don't have any idea of the exact day that Christ was born.

But we do know in the Bible that when Christ was born, the angels celebrated His birth, appearing to the shepherds and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." We know that the shepherds recognized the birth of Christ by bringing the Baby Jesus homage, by coming to Him.

We know that the Magi came to Jesus with gold and frankincense and myrrh and rendered homage to Him, and recognized His birth in so doing. And so it certainly is not contrary to the Bible to have a day set aside on which we are going to recognize the birth of Christ. It is not called for in the Bible, nor is it prohibited in the Bible. It is not contrary to the Bible.

And I think that it's a wonderful thing that once a year we see such a high percentage of people pay homage to Christ, even though the majority of the people are unsaved. At that time of the year there is a call to look again at the Christ.

CALLER: Well, this is what I thought. Anything that glorifies Christ should be followed. But then, you know, when you keep getting slapped down about it, then you begin to wonder. And so if God's got a plan for my life, He must be telling me, because I'm so confused, that I've got to go somewhere else to get some answers.

HC: Frequently this is the case. We have to keep looking to find a body of believers that is closer to the truth.

CALLER: Right. Well, Mr. Camping, thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Thank you. Good night.

The Difference Between Religion and Christianity (371C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I'd just like to know, what really is religion as opposed to Christianity? And there are people who are of certain religions, but they're also Christians. If they're Christians and if they know personally the Lord Jesus Christ, why are they still in their religion, too?

HC: The question is raised, What is the difference between the fact that people are interested in religion, and that of the Christian Gospel?

You see, mankind was created by God in the image of God. He was created a religious being. He was created with a sense in his soul that he must worship God, that he must reckon with God. The very fact that pagans offer sacrifices, by throwing their babies into the River Ganges, or having burnt offerings, or whatever, indicates that they realize that there's a God of some kind that they have to deal with. The idea of God is inherent within the heart of man. All men are religious. Even those who claim to be atheists, by the very fact that they are protesting, "There is no God," they give evidence that they are able to think in terms of God, and they are loudly trying to convince themselves that it isn't really so that there is a God. But an animal doesn't argue about whether there is a God or not. An animal was not created religious.

Now the Christian religion, that is, the true Christian religion, is the Gospel whereby man can indeed become identified with God again. Because of our sins we are estranged from God. Because of our sins we are in rebellion against God, and eternally we will be cut off from God. Now man senses this, and therefore he has some kind of a religion whereby he thinks he can become right with God. But it's only through the

Christian Gospel, the Gospel that is bounded by the Bible alone and in its entirety, only by this Gospel can we know the true path, the only way of becoming right with God.

Jesus declared, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." He declared, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." He is the only way that we can have eternal life.

CALLER: I still don't understand why there are different teachings and different religions. And some are not found in the Bible. How can people still belong to that religion and still be a Christian? Or maybe they aren't Christians.

HC: They aren't Christians. You see, those who are true believers actually make up a very narrow segment of society. The Bible talks about a remnant chosen by grace. A remnant is just a tiny little part. The Bible says, "Broad is the way, and many there are thereon that leads to everlasting destruction. But narrow is the way and few there are that find it that leads unto everlasting life."

All kinds of gospels and religions prevail. And those who are adherents to these are confident they've found an answer. But it's an answer designed after their own minds. It is not an answer that is given to them from Heaven, from God Himself. The Bible is the only book that faithfully declares, in an infallible fashion, the means by which we can come to God. It is a revelation from God Himself, where God has indicated the design of His path of salvation. And it's through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the only path that has real life to it, that really will work.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you.

Comments on Today's Church Scene (383B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have just been listening to you for a few weeks, and I don't know your feelings about this new charismatic movement that's going through the country, but it's somewhat confusing to me sometimes. And I just wonder what you do think about it, and what you feel about the tongues movement. You do believe in people being healed by God, don't you?

HC: Absolutely I do. No one becomes well except God makes them well. God cares for this world. He supports this world by His power. He is watching over this world. But I do not believe that miracles are being done as Jesus did them when He healed the ten lepers, or when He raised Lazarus from the dead. That's a different matter altogether.

CALLER: Well, yes, I know what you mean, although I've had people tell me that they have seen miracles somewhat to that degree. For instance, my sister-in-law, who has osteomyelitis, had some elders pray for her. And her foot was black, and she said it turned to its normal color at the time that they prayed for her.

HC: Well, let me just say this. The place where we find truth is in the Bible. Our minds are very deceptive. We can't trust what our minds tell us, nor can we believe everything that we hear. There is a tendency on our part to sometimes see things more hopeful than they really are. There is a tendency to exaggerate occasionally. I'm not saying that your sister lied to you or anything like that. All I'm saying is that the way we find truth is not by some kind of evidence out there. It's by what the Bible declares. And the Bible declares that Christ did not go to the cross to give us physical healing. The Bible does say that God upholds this world by His power, and therefore He does heal, if it happens to be His will. Lots of times it isn't His will, and people die of disease.

But God cares for unsaved people, and He cares for saved people. He cares for those who have been prayed over, and

He cares for those who have not been prayed over. God is concerned about this world, and He does bring healing. But insofar as the miracles that Jesus did, they were very special in nature. They were instantaneous. He set aside the ordinary rules, the ordinary laws that govern the universe, so that instantaneously a man with a withered hand could have a whole hand.

Now that is not happening today. Instantaneously lepers could become well. And that's not happening today. Instantaneously Lazarus could come out of the grave. And that's not happening today.

Secondly, we're living in a day when we're very near the end of time. All of the Biblical information points to this. And Christ warned, when we get near the end of time, that the church would be overrun with those who come with signs and wonders. In Matthew 24:24 Jesus declared, "False prophets and false christ will arise, with signs and wonders, to lead astray if possible even the elect."

The fact is, when we study the Bible we find no reference to signs and wonders near the end of time relating to true Gospel activity. All of the references, and there are a number of them, which relate to signs and wonders taking place near the end of time, are all Satanic in origin. And that's very ominous. That's very traumatic to read about.

If you look at Matthew 24:24, or II Thessalonians 2:8-10, or Revelation 13 or Revelation 16, you'll find in all four of these places references to signs or miracles. And in every case it has nothing to do with the activity of Christ in bringing the Gospel.

CALLER: Well, this is what's so confusing to me. We came from a really fundamental church, and when we moved from Arizona to California we still received the newsletter from our old church. And our pastor, in the last several newsletters that we've gotten, has really denounced, for instance, the new charismatic movement.

HC: Incidentally, on this program I don't like to talk about any congregation or denomination or movement. We'll just talk about what the Bible declares.

CALLER: Oh, Well, it's just confusing to me because of the fact that I know so many wonderful Christian people in this, and if we call these things Satanic, how can these people claim to be Christians? How can we say that it's of Satan? That's what I'm wondering. For instance, healing, or speaking in tongues, or, I don't know all the other things that seem to be associated with this, although if you don't want to go into it it's all right. But it's very confusing to me.

HC: Let me see if I can help you. Remember earlier I said that we do not build doctrine by outside evidence. We build it by the Bible. Now you can look at many gospels and sects and cults, and so on, today. And you can find people who are lovely people, who are decent moral people, who are find citizens and who are very zealous for their cause. And if we would try to make a study of the gospel that they hold or the religion that they hold by their lives, by the good things they do, by their benevolent attitudes, and what have you, and their love for their fellow man, we would have to give their particular gospel or religion the very highest approval.

But you see, the test of the true Gospel is not in the lives of people we look at, because we can't look at a person's heart. Only God can look at a person's heart. The test of the true Gospel is, "What does the Bible say?"

Now the Bible indicates that it alone and in its entirety is the divine Word of God. In Revelation 22:18 & 19 we read, "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein. And if anyone takes away from

the words of this book, I will take away his share in the book of life," and so on. In other words, God is indicating that we are to look at the whole Bible as the Word of God, and we're not to look at anything else as the Word of God.

That means that any gospel, regardless of how beautiful it may seem, or the people who are involved in it may appear to be, any gospel which believes that the Bible is the divine Word of God, but which also believes that there is another book or another source of divine truth, such as visions or voices or tongues, or whatever, is by definition another gospel rather than the true Gospel, because those who hold to that kind of a gospel are saying that there are at least two sources of divine truth. There is the Bible, and there is this other source over here.

Or any gospel which declares that only part of the Bible is the divine Word, and that there are parts of the Bible that are not to be looked upon as the divine Word, would also by definition be another gospel.

Now this is the way we have to decide what is the true Gospel. Any denomination or gospel or congregation of belief that one holds has to be understood in the light of, "How do they relate to the Bible? Is it alone and in its entirety the divine Word?"

Now we're living in a day right near the end of time, when the church — the churches, the denominations, the groups of believers as they are found throughout the world — is becoming increasingly lax in maintaining the authority of the Bible. The church is not being true to its responsibility to remain faithful. Now it's still the church of Jesus Christ. It still has a mandate to bring the Gospel. It's still represented, to use Biblical language, by a candlestick in Heaven. But it is beginning to rewrite the rules. It's rewriting the rules on divorce and remarriage. It's rewriting the rules on population control, and rewriting the rules on who has authority in the church, who may preach, and so on. And the church is rewriting these rules.

It's rewriting the rules insofar as what the Bible consists of. It's countenancing books that are called paraphrases of the Bible, which are not the Bible at all. It no longer is nearly as interested in a deep and urgent study of the Word of God. The church is increasingly interested in social activity, in music activity. Now music is fine in itself. Social activity is fine in itself. But God says, in Hosea 4:6, "Because you have rejected knowledge, I will reject you from being a priest before Me." In other words, we are turning away from the Word of God as being the final authority.

Now as part of the judgment on the church, or as part of God's bringing His wrath upon the church because of its activities, the Bible indicates, and all of this was planned and prophesied in the Bible, there's nothing that's happening that's out of control, or beyond what we could expect, that as we approach the end of time the church will be assaulted by those who come with these other gospels, and particularly those who come with gospels that feature signs and wonders. They'll come with a gospel that looks so much like the true Gospel that even the true believers would be deceived if this was possible. It talks about this in Matthew 24:24: "False prophets and false christ will arise, with signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."

The elect are the true believers. Even they could be led astray if they were not held by Christ, because these who come as false prophets and false christ, in the Name of Christ, believing they are followers of Christ, come with a gospel that looks so much like the true gospel that even the elect would be deceived if possible.

And this is a judgment on the church, because the church is not remaining

faithful. And ultimately this will result in the silencing of the Gospel. The day will come, and it's fast approaching, when God will take away from the churches and congregations and denominations and groups of believers, as we have known them throughout the New Testament period, the credential or the right to be the custodian of the Gospel. The Gospel will be silenced. We're not to that point yet, but that time is coming.

Now because we live in this dynamic and interesting and also traumatic time, we have the experience of seeing the vision in the church. Let me illustrate this. Up until our generation, if we had lived, let's say, fifty years ago or one hundred years ago, or two hundred years ago, and we belonged to a congregation, the church members would have come into the fellowship of believers there, and ordinarily (there would have been a few exceptions, but ordinarily) they would have lived and died in that congregation. We would have believed they were children of God, or born again believers. And finally, when Mrs. Jones or Mr. Smith died, we would all be very happy in our sadness that our dear friend had gone home to be with the Lord, that finally he is rejoicing with Christ in Heaven. And this would have been a normal experience.

We, however, are living in a day when the church is being assaulted by these other gospels (and there are many of them), so that anyone at all in the congregation who is not a born again believer and according to everything we read in the Bible, there is no congregation, there is no denomination, there is no church, no group of believers at any time in history that consisted altogether of born again believers. Even the disciple band did not consist entirely of born again believers. The churches of Asia Minor, in Revelation 2 and 3, did not consist entirely of born again believers. And there is no church that consists entirely of born again believers.

Well, as these other gospels come, and they're very glorious gospels, you know. They appear so dynamic, they appear so significant. And certainly they talk about Christ and the blood of Christ, and all these things. As they come, anyone who is not a born again believer, anyone who has been desperately making like a Christian and as near as we can tell is a Christian, will be snared off into these other gospels.

And so this is where the trauma comes. This is where the division comes. This is where the strife in the congregation comes from. And this is what makes it very difficult to live today. This is a day when you cannot evaluate the gospel by the lives of people. You can only evaluate the gospel by the Bible. And you want to make sure that in your own life you remain true to the Bible, as being alone and in its entirety the divine Word of God.

CALLER: That's what I'm trying to do, but it seems so confusing to read all these things. But can I just ask you this? If this is not of God, why do they seem to be glorifying God in all that they do, and bringing others to Him? How could this be serving Satan, if they are bringing others to Christ and winning souls to Him? How could it be detrimental, or how could it be of Satan if this is the case?

HC: All right. Let's raise this question. And that's a very good question. How is it possible that a gospel, any gospel that is not the true Gospel, could really glorify Christ in a tremendous way, apparently, and really apparently bring many people to Christ? Is this possible? And the Bible says absolutely so.

In Matthew 7, beginning with verse 15, Jesus is talking about false prophets. And He says, "In that day (that is, at Judgment Day)," these false prophets will be so certain that they were followers of Christ that they will argue

with God at the judgment throne and say, "Lord, Lord." In other words, they were very familiar with saying, "the Lord Jesus" this and "Praise the Lord" that, and so on. "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name (in the Name of Christ)? Did we not do many mighty works in Your Name? Did we not cast out demons in Your Name?" In other words, "Weren't we against Satan in Your Name?" And what will the Lord say? "Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity I never knew you."

So don't underestimate Satan. Now we read in II Corinthians 11 that Satan comes as an angel of light. Most people quite frequently fail to realize the magnificent deceiver that Satan is. If someone comes to you and lies to you, and it's a flagrant outright lie, so that you can spot it in a minute, you say, "Oh, you liar." That person was not a very good liar, was he? He was a liar, but he was an amateur at the business.

But when Satan deceives, he is the master deceiver. He is the master con artist. When he deceives somebody, they have no idea that they have been deceived. They have no idea. He's so subtle, he's so clever. He comes as an angel of light, that is, a messenger of God, with the message of salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he just twists it enough, so that it's not the true Gospel. That's why Matthew 24:24 says that even the elect would be deceived, if that were possible. That's how clever Satan is.

And so don't you believe it for a moment that Satan won't glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course he will. He'd be glad to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, if in so doing he can gently lead someone away from the true Gospel.

CALLER: Well, it makes me so sorry for the ones that are being led into all this, but I guess the only solution is to just pray for them, and pray for their true salvation and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

HC: Well, this is a day when we want to be sure that we remain with the true Gospel. On this program I never hold up one congregation or one denomination, or one group of believers above another, because I believe there are true believers in most denominations. But this is the only thing we can hold up. There's only one thing we can hold up, and that is the Bible, the Bible. It alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. And if we'll only take that, and remember that, and keep going to the Bible for our authority. If we're going to decide what doctrine is true, check it out in the Bible. Don't check the evidence on the outside, because our minds are tricky. Our minds deceive us. And we're not sure whether we're being told the whole story. We can't read the heart of men, and so on. But we can read the Bible. And in the Bible God gives us the straight story, absolutely straight story. We can depend on what we read there.

And as long as we're reading the Bible and trusting it as the divine Word, Satan can never come at us with his deception. He doesn't speak in the Bible. God speaks in the Bible. The Bible is the voice of God. Every time we read the Bible we know this is God speaking to us. If I would receive a vision or something else, I would have no idea who was speaking to me, whether it was out of my mind, or whether I was hallucinating, or whether Satan himself was coming at me. I'd have no way of knowing, none whatsoever.

But when I read the Bible, I know that is God speaking to me.

CALLER: I sure appreciate your helping me. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Music in the Church (435A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like you to discuss eternal security, and the idea that you can fall from grace. And also, about the spirituality of music in the church. Some church music seems melancholy, and in some churches now we have a lot of rock music, religious rock. And one other point I'd like you to discuss would be, did God know that Adam was going to fall, that man was going to fall?

HC: All right. Let me ask you one question concerning your first question: eternal security. If someone asked you (if you believe you're saved), "What are you saved from?" how would you answer him?

CALLER: I'm saved from eternal damnation.

HC: You're saved from eternal damnation, good answer. Now why is it that you're saved from eternal damnation? In other words, what was going to bring you to eternal damnation in the first place?

CALLER: Because Christ died on the cross.

HC: Why did that save you from eternal damnation?

CALLER: I accepted Him into my heart.

HC: Why did the fact that you accepted Him into your heart save you from eternal damnation? In other words, what did Christ's dying on the cross, or the fact that you accepted Him, have to do with the fact that you're saved from eternal damnation? You notice there's a gap of some kind there, isn't there?

CALLER: I know that we have to follow in good works. In Ephesians 2:8-10 it talks about that.

HC: All right. We have to do good works after we're saved. But does that save us from eternal damnation?

CALLER: It says, "If you love Me you will keep My commandments."

HC: "If you love Me you will keep My commandments." Okay. So by keeping His commandments, does that insure that we will be saved from eternal damnation?

CALLER: Well, we're saved by His grace.

HC: We're saved by His grace. We're saved from eternal damnation by His grace. All right, but what does that mean, that we've been saved by His grace?

CALLER: Through faith.

HC: Through faith. What does that mean? You see, the missing ingredient in our discussion, I purposely asked you these questions to get you thinking, because once you understand salvation you'll automatically know the answer to the question of eternal security.

Those who believe we can fall from grace, that we can lose our salvation, do not, I'm afraid, understand what salvation really is. They don't really understand what happened that our salvation was accomplished.

Now let's start at the beginning. Here I stand. I'm a sinner. It's because of my sin that I must go to hell. Is that true?

CALLER: That's true, yes.

HC: "The wages of sin is death." That is the reason I'm condemned to hell. Now the only way that I can not go to hell is that something has to be done about the judgment of God that rightly ought to come against me because of my sins. Someone has to take care of that situation.

And that's what Christ did when He went to the cross. The Bible says He became sin for me. And He was found guilty for my sins, and God poured out His wrath on Him as payment for my sins. That is why when Christ went to the cross He made possible my salvation, or He made possible the fact that I will not suffer eternal damnation, because He suffered eternal damnation on my behalf, as my substitute. He became sin for me. He

took my guilt for all of my sins, and paid for my guilt. So therefore no guilt can be imputed to me any longer. Is that clear?

CALLER: Yes.

HC: Now what sin would I have to commit in order to lose my salvation? What sin would it be? When you stop to think of it, there is no sin, is there? Because Christ became sin for me. He took all of my sins, and paid for them. So there's no way that I could lose my salvation.

More than that, when I was saved God declared that I have eternal life. Now what does that mean? Is that just a figure of speech? I have eternal life, the seed or the possibility of eternal life exists within me? Or do I actually have eternal life? The Bible says I have eternal life.

The Bible also says I'm born again. The Bible also says I'm a new creature in Christ. Well, how is all of this? The Bible teaches that in my soul, or in my spirit, I have experienced the resurrection. I have received my resurrected soul. I've been raised with Him. Now it didn't happen in my body, but it happened in my soul.

At death what happens? In my body I can't go into Heaven, because I still have my sin-cursed body. But lo and behold, in my soul I do go into Heaven, don't I? Because my soul has already experienced eternal life. Now if I have eternal life, then I can't die. Otherwise my life would not be eternal. So from that vantage point I could never lose my salvation.

Or again, Jesus Himself said in John 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice and follow Me, and I have given them eternal life, and they shall never perish. And no one shall snatch them out of My hand." These are the promises, you see. And there are many other promises of a similar nature.

CALLER: In Revelation it talks about being blotted out of the Lamb's Book of Life.

HC: Not out of the Lamb's Book of Life, but it speaks about being blotted out of the Book of Life. At least in Psalm 68 it speaks of that.

You see, in Adam we all begin in the Book of Life. Because Adam was the head of the whole human race, in a real sense we were in his loins. And he began without sin, he began as an eternal being who would live forever with God. In the day that he sinned, of course, the seeds of death were sown in him, he experienced physical death, and he also was estranged spiritually from God, in spiritual death. And that became the lot of all mankind.

The Bible uses the figure that we are in the Book of Life, but if we die wicked, that is, unsaved, then we cannot remain in the Book of Life. We are included amongst those who are cast in to hell. Or it uses another figure, that we are enrolled in the Lamb's Book of Life, if we are saved.

CALLER: Okay. There is a man who has led an extremely Godly life. He has professed Christ openly in the church, been baptized in water. As far as those in the congregation, we see this man as a Godly man, as being saved, a born again Christian. And he leads a Godly life for several years. But then he backslides. (And it talks about backsliding in II Peter, I believe.) And then let's say now he's backslidden, and Christ comes back. At that point is that man saved?

HC: Now remember, when a man is saved he is born again. He's received his resurrected soul. Now there are all kinds of people in the church today (and I don't know who they are, but God knows them, we can't point the figure at anyone else, but God knows who they are, and the Bible speaks of these) who really believe they're saved. But actually they're not saved. They are really making like Christians. They're trying to do things that Christians do, and desperately they're trying to live a life that is pleasing to God so that God will look

with kindness upon them. But they have never personally broken before God, admitting their own sinful rottenness and cried out to God for mercy. They don't really know what it is to be born again. They don't really know what it is to trust altogether only on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. There are all kinds of people in the church today who are trusting in their good works in one sense or another. And if we do that in any sense at all, then we're not saved.

Now as near as we can tell, we think they're saved, because they look just like someone who is saved. As long as they continue to stay that way in the church, and if they died that way, we would have to assume that they went to Heaven. But frequently they don't continue that faithfully. The temptations of materialism or of pleasure or some other sin come along, and they fall away. And so then we have the evidence that they were never saved. They were never saved, no matter how holy they may have looked.

If they were truly born again, and they began to fall into sin, by the temptations of lust or materialism or pleasure, or whatever, they could not continue in that sin, because in their new soul, their resurrected soul, they would be violated. They would be so troubled, they would be so oppressed, they would be so abhorred by their sin as they got deeper and deeper into it, that finally they couldn't stand it. They would cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me. How could I go this way?"

If someone claims to be a believer and lives like a believer for many years, and now he falls into sin, and in the face of what the Bible says, in the face of what the elders of the church admonish him about, he continues in his sin and he excuses his sin, and alibis for his sin, the likelihood is that he's not born again at all. That's incongruous. That's an impossibility for him to live this way.

CALLER: Okay. So he was professing Christ, but he wasn't possessed by Christ.

HC: He was professing Christ, but he had never become born again.

CALLER: That makes sense.

HC: All right. Now your other two questions. Let me answer the last question first. Did God know that Adam was going to sin? Absolutely yes. We read in Ephesians 1:4 that we were chosen in Christ from before the foundations of the earth. We read in Revelation 13 that the Lamb of God was slain from the foundations of the earth.

The whole program of salvation was carefully developed and designed and outlined, down to its most minute detail, before God ever created the heavens and the earth. God has never been surprised by anything that has happened on this earth.

The other question that's been raised is concerning music. A lot of Christian music today is of the rock variety, or something between the rock variety and some other kind of contemporary music. Just how does all of this fit into the plan of God? Or how are we to relate to it?

The Bible teaches in Ephesians 5:18, "Don't be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit, addressing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Now the content of this language really is that it's talking about music that is related to God. And if it's related to God it's going to be related to His word. Putting it in another way, it's going to be holy music. It is going to be music that is set apart from the music of the world in a very distinctive way, because it is the music that is conveying the thoughts that relate man to a holy God, a just God. It's going to convey the love of God, and all of the other attributes that we find concerning God in the Bible.

A lot of the music of the world, you'll find, is like the painting that you see, where someone apparently splashes some different colors on the canvas. I was in an art studio a few weeks ago, and they had some paintings on display. One painting was for sale for \$1,500, and my 4-year-old grandson could have done just as well, I think. It was really a pain to behold. I thought it was a travesty on the whole art profession. Well, that's my personal feeling about it.

Actually, that painting, however, was indicating the confused and bewildered and mixed-up nature of the soul of the artist. And music is frequently the same way. A lot of the rock music, and a lot of even Christian music that we hear, is conveying the confusion that exists within the soul of the composer.

The music we ought to sing, however, is not music that's confused and messed up and mixed up. It ought to be music that identifies with the Bible, with the holiness of God, with the majesty of God, with the greatness of God, with the love of God, with the wonder of God. The most sublime, the most beautiful, the most marvelous music on the face of the earth ought to be the Christian music. It's the music that soothes the soul. It's not the music that gets us all upset inside and agitated, and so on. That's not Christian music. Gospel music ought to be majestic, it ought to be holy music, set apart from the music of the world in a very distinctive fashion.

Now of course because music very frequently has lyrics, there are voices that are singing, we have a double opportunity to make it great and grand music, because in the lyrics God can be praised. In the words that are offered the will of God can be articulated in a very beautiful way.

That's the goal of Christian music. And when we view a lot of the music that calls itself Christian, we have to say no, no, no. It will never make it.

Can a Priest or Minister Forgive Sin? (439B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. My friend gave me the verse John 20:23 as a reason that it's okay to confess your sins to a man or to a priest or to a minister. I was wondering if you could help me out, and give me verses that would clear this up.

HC: It is true that if we read John 20:23 and not read it in the context of the whole Bible, it seemingly is teaching that the church is responsible for the forgiving of sins. However, when we read the rest of the Bible, we find that it is only God who can forgive sins. A man can't forgive sins. It's only God who forgives sins. It is God who decides who is to be saved. God chose us from before the foundations of the earth, as we read in Ephesians 1:4.

In I John 1:9 it says, "If we confess our sins, He [that is, God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Man cannot forgive sins. Only God can, because God is the one who knows the heart, and God is the one who has made provision for our forgiveness.

But God has established upon earth the organized representation, official representation of His body and of His work on earth in the church. And it is the work of the church to be the custodian of the Gospel. The church is to bring that Gospel to the four corners of the earth. And it is the Gospel that is the key that unlocks the prison house of Satan. It is the Gospel that is the vehicle that God uses to bring forgiveness of sins. God the Holy Spirit takes that Gospel and applies it to the hearts of unbelievers, and they are forgiven.

Now actually, it's because the church was faithful in bringing the Gospel that there is forgiveness of sins. And the fact

is, the church in its official capacity welcomes these newcomers into the body of Christ. They of course entered spiritually into the body of Christ at the moment they were born again, and that's altogether God's work. But once they're saved, they join the church. And at that time they're baptized, to indicate that their sins have been forgiven, that they indeed are a member of the body of Christ.

Nowhere in the Bible does it teach that man can forgive sins. Only God can forgive sins. But the church, as it brings the Gospel, is acting on behalf of God to offer the keys that unlock the prison house and makes possible the forgiveness of sins.

Now you'll remember in the experience of Jesus, in Luke 8 or Luke 9 when Jesus was preaching in a house, there were four friends who had a friend who was crippled, or had the palsy. And they opened the roof and let him down into the house. And then you'll recall that Jesus forgave their sins. And the Jews there were astounded at this, and offended by this, because they correctly said, "Only God can forgive sins." And of course Jesus is God, and rightly He can forgive sins.

And then in that context Jesus said, "So that you might know that I have power to forgive sins." He healed the man also, indicating that He is the giver of life, not only physical life but also eternal life, which occurs when our sins are forgiven.

CALLER: The real drawback to that verse, John 20:23, is "As the Father has sent Me, I send you." It's almost like saying, "As the Father has sent Me, to save the world and to forgive sins, so I send you." It really sounds literal. I wish it didn't read that way. How do you take that verse? What does it really mean? Only that God has given to the church the right to be the custodian of the Gospel, the privilege of being the custodian of the Gospel. And it is through the Gospel that forgiveness of sins is provided.

We find the same truth in Matthew 16:18. Jesus is talking to the disciples, and He says in verse 18 of Matthew 16, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock [and the rock He's referring to is Christ Himself, because He is the rock] I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, that whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth . . ." And actually, in the real tense of the verb here it's really saying, "And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall have been bound in Heaven." It's already an accomplished fact in Heaven. "And whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall have been loosed in Heaven." What the church is witnessing is actually something that has already been accomplished by Christ or by God Himself.

Now if we separate Matthew 16:19 from the rest of the Bible, yes, we could get the idea that the church can forgive sins. But let's be very practical about this. Here is a man who is a sinner, as every human being is. And he stands before an official of the church, a pastor or an elder, or whoever we think has the authority to forgive sins. Now how can this elder or this pastor, or whatever else we want to call him, know absolutely that is man is one of God's elect? Can he know?

Of course he can't know. Only God knows who the elect are. So if this man is coming and saying, "I'm a sinner, and I repent of my sins, and will you forgive my sins?" how can this pastor know whether this man's sins are to be forgiven? Because only the sins of the elect are forgiven. Now if this man is really on the path to salvation, he will be coming very sincerely and very honestly, and really be seeking truth, and really be looking for the way of salvation.

But no pastor can really know that. We

assume that those who confess Christ are believers, but actually we can't really know the hearts of these people. And we know from the Bible that the church has got lots of people in it who are not saved, even though they may have all confessed Christ.

And so there's no basis even. First of all, man is in no position to forgive sins. Secondly, there's no basis upon which he could make a decision as to whether he can forgive the sins of this man, even if he had the power so to do. Only God knows what is in the heart of man. Only God knows whom He is going to save. Only God can work out this whole plan of salvation.

But because the church is intimately associated with the bringing of the Gospel and with the teaching of the Word and with the bringing in of those who are saved into the organized church, therefore God uses this language that "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted," and so on.

CALLER: Okay. That sounds real good. I really appreciate this. Do you know anything about the sacraments, certain sacraments that some churches believe they have to go through, for extra or additional grace, for mortal sin, or something like this?

HC: Are there certain sacraments you can go through in order to cover certain kinds of sin? This is not Biblical in any sense at all. The Bible teaches that Christ is our eternal High Priest, and He has offered Himself one time as the sacrifice. And therefore we can go to Him confessing our sins, and He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Anyone who's going to go to some individual and seek forgiveness of sins is doing so without any Biblical validation whatsoever. It's God's program that we go to Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And no matter how grievous our sins are, no matter how grievous they are, they will all be forgiven through the Lord Jesus Christ. There's no sacrament that we have to offer for the forgiveness of sins.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much. You've been of great help.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

On Disagreeing with a Bible Teacher (537A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. We just started a study in the Book of Revelation this evening in church. I talked to the pastor who is giving the study, and don't agree with him in some of the basics of what he's talking about. In that I don't agree with him, should I keep silent, or do I have an obligation to speak up and tell it as see it?

HC: The question is, if we are in a group of believers or a congregational set up and the pastor or the evangelist or the teacher, whoever he may be, makes observations that we feel are contrary to the Word of God, what are we to do?

Well, if it's in the congregational meeting, of course, where there isn't a forum there for asking questions or raising issues, then of course you must keep silent. When the pastor preaches a sermon, you are there worshipping, and that's all you can do. Afterwards, privately, you can go to your pastor and say, "Pastor, I'm troubled by some of the things I heard tonight. I'm troubled by this verse or that verse." And offer him the passages, and ask for an explanation, if he possibly can give it. "In the light of what you said in your sermon tonight, or in your teaching tonight, what do you do with this verse?"

Now on the other hand, if it is in the form of a seminar, where perhaps there will be a message given for a half hour or forty-five minutes, or whatever, and then

there will be a time of questions and answers afterwards, then by all means ask, since this is the nature of Bible study. And everyone who is a servant of God bringing the Word of God ought to be ready to give an answer from the Word of God. This ought to be a delight on their part, to face any and all scriptures. And by all means you should very tenderly and very respectfully of course raise the question, if that opportunity is afforded. "Teacher, or pastor, or professor (whatever you would address him), you know, you said so and so. Now what do you do with that particular teaching in the light of these verses here in the Bible? These seem to be contrary to what you have taught. How do you reconcile this?" And this is the way you can approach it.

I think that is better than simply standing up and saying, "Now Pastor, I disagree with you, because I read so and so." It would be better to raise the question, "What do you do with these verses?" And give him an opportunity to try to explain. And then if he does not explain, then I would again ask the question, "Pastor, I read this verse and it seems to me to say this, and the language is very plain. And I don't know what else in the Bible contradicts this. And somehow I'm troubled by what you are teaching tonight." But you want to be very tender and very patient and very respectful as you raise these issues.

CALLER: I see.

The "Holy Father" and the Antichrist (650A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a couple of questions, and I would like to make a comment or two. I would like to know, would it be considered blasphemy against God for a man to take the title of Holy Father?

HC: Would it be blasphemy against God to take the title of Holy Father? The Bible says, "Call no man your father." Now it is true that we have our earthly fathers. We have a father who is our blood father, and we call him "Father." And that's not contrary to the Word of God.

But if we look upon anybody in place of God, a father in place of God the Father, then of course it is blasphemy. Then it would be entirely contrary to the Word of God. In fact, if a man is a spiritual leader of a flock, it would be far safer and wiser to call him a pastor, which really means shepherd. He is the shepherd of the flock.

Now Christ of course is the Good Shepherd, but those who are pastors are under shepherds, guiding the flock.

CALLER: I'm sure you're familiar with II Thessalonians 2:3: "Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

Then I'll drop down to verse 9, "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." And I follow the newspapers quite a bit. And as the Lord raised up Pharaoh to show His power, that His mighty works might be declared throughout the earth, there is no doubt that the beasts written of in Revelation will appear in these prominent positions that men hold.

HC: Actually, when we study the Bible, we find that the man of sin here in II Thessalonians 2 (I'm very convinced of this) is no one else but Satan himself. And he is the beast that comes out of the sea, or the beast that comes out of the earth. It is Satan and his kingdom.

Now he is manifested in men of course. And we read in Matthew 24:24 about

"false prophets and false christs, who will arise with signs and wonders, that is, anyone at all who comes with a gospel other than the true Gospel is an emissary, ultimately, of Satan. He is being used of Satan to woo people away from the true Gospel. And if they're not saved, many will be wooed away from it. It doesn't necessarily mean that they have to be prominent in the world. A lot of people, when they think of the antichrist or the man of sin, think of some figure-head who is very very notable, in a very very high position. No, that's not required at all. Anyone at all who comes with any gospel other than the true Gospel is an Antichrist, is someone who is coming as Satan's emissary. And in II Thessalonians 2 God has His eye on Satan. He is the one who is ultimately worshipped in any gospel other than the true Gospel, even though they may think that they're worshipping Christ, because it's not the Gospel of the Bible, ultimately.

Therefore it is a false gospel, and they're worshipping Satan, even though they don't realize it. This I believe is what God has in view here.

CALLER: You're saying that the beast with the seven heads and the ten horns then would be Satan himself.

HC: Yes, or the kingdom of Satan as it's revealed throughout time, and will continue to be on the scene right up until the end of time, but will be particularly dominant during the final tribulation period, when Satan is loosed. And that's particularly the time of the ten horns.

CALLER: Okay then, the second beast who follows after him will, I believe, be a man - the one with the two horns. I've been doing a study on that. Each horn signifies a king. So this beast with the two horns would signify two people, and I believe they would be behind a very large congregation. And there are two in the world today, one that is based in the Middle East, and also there is one that is based in Rome. And these two horns would be these two kings of this beast, working signs and wonders.

HC: These men you're referring to aren't able to do signs and wonders. They just aren't able to do that. Whether they have the true Gospel or not is another question. But when God talks about this beast in Revelation 13, with two horns that speak like a dragon and yet look like a lamb, God is emphasizing that this is the rule of Satan as he comes as an angel of light. Remember II Corinthians 11, where God talks about Satan coming as an angel of light, and his ministers as ministers of righteousness. And he causes all to worship the dragon.

This is simply talking about Satan as he comes through other gospels. And they are legion today. Everywhere there are all kinds of gospels that are holding forth. And I define another gospel as any gospel that goes outside of the Bible looking for divine truth, or which refuses to look at the whole Bible as the Word of God. I believe there's only one true Gospel, and this circumscribed by the Bible. The Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. And any gospel that will not measure up to that definition is another gospel. And if it's another gospel than the true Gospel, it will be a false gospel. And these are found everywhere today.

CALLER: That's true, but in this one church that I'm talking about, with over 600 million people in their congregation, has doctrines in their church saying that this man is endowed with infallible abilities, which in fact would make him to be God, because only God is infallible.

HC: While there may be a church here or there that is obviously is not the true church, that does not mean that that church embraces all that the Bible is talking about. You see, the Bible is not concerned with just one denomination at any time in history. The Bible is concerned with the whole kingdom of

Satan, as it exists in the world. Now the kingdom of Satan runs the gamut all the way from Eastern religions to those gospels that are so close to the true Gospel that even the elect would be deceived, if that was possible. And there's every variety in between. And it finds its place in every country of the world, in every city of the world. Everywhere we find the kingdom of Satan holding forth, with one kind of a gospel or another.

By the same token, we find the true Gospel sprinkled throughout all the nations of the world. And it is not confined to one denomination. It can be found in many different denominations. But this is the conflict that God talks about in the Bible. God does not single out this particular denomination or that particular denomination, any more than He singles out nations. We don't find Russia mentioned in the Bible, or China mentioned in the Bible, we don't find the United States mentioned in the Bible. We do find some of the ancient nations, like Egypt and Israel, mentioned certainly. But the modern nations are not mentioned in the Bible at all. God is not concerned about modern nations as individual nations, any more than He's concerned about individual denominations, regardless of how large they may be or how powerful they may be. God is concerned about the dominion of Satan on the one hand, and the kingdom of Christ on the other. And Satan's dominion has its big names and its little names. It has its big denominations and its little congregations. It has its religions that bear no relationship to Christ, and it has those that are so close to the true Gospel that even the elect could be deceived. We find all of this as part of the kingdom of Satan.

However, in these last days God particularly warns that the major assault will come against the true church by those gospels that are so close to the true Gospel that they would even deceive the elect, if that were possible. The doctrines are so close, and the practices are so close. But the first thing we can recognize them by is that they have a real interest in signs and wonders, which the true church has no interest in.

CALLER: You just said that signs and wonders wouldn't be possible in these last days, but I know for a fact that there are people going around claiming to have these.

HC: No, I did not say that. I'm only saying that the man that you mentioned, for example, doesn't do signs and wonders. While he is looked upon by his people as a great religious leader, he doesn't do signs and wonders. But there are plenty of gospels around, plenty of them, that may not appear evil in the sight of many, but nevertheless they do feature signs and wonders. And these are found all through the world.

Thank you so much for calling and sharing your thoughts.

PRAYER

Does God Have a Timetable for Answering Prayers? (013D)

CALLER: Yes. I'd like to know if God has a timetable for answering prayers of born again Christians. And if so, if you can give me some Scripture to back it up.

HC: Does God have a timetable? We know that God is perfect in His wisdom, perfect in His program, perfect in His desires for our lives. To use an illustration, we may be praying for an unsaved husband, let's say, or an unsaved child. And insofar as we are concerned we are quite convinced that nothing could be more wonderful than to have that unsaved husband or unsaved child saved about five minutes from now, after we begin praying. We really think this is

just the most wonderful idea possible, and certainly nothing could be better than that. Now God may have in mind to save that husband or child, or whatever else that we are praying about, but God may have a lot of other plans that have to be worked out first.

For example, He may want that unsaved husband to be, first of all, a real testing program in the life of the wife, so that her faith will be strengthened, so that she will grow to a very high degree first. Or maybe He's got some other things that He wants to happen in that family's life before that husband is saved. God may take two years to answer that prayer, or He may take sixty years to answer that prayer. With God, the Bible teaches, a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as a day.

In other words, God does not keep time like we do. God is really outside of time. He is in eternity. The Scripture I quoted, incidentally, is II Peter 3, where the question in view is, "Why is God so slow about coming? Why doesn't He, with all the wickedness that's in the world, come in judgment and stop all of this wickedness?" And in II Peter 3:8 God says, "But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

In other words, in this context God is saying that He is very patient with unsaved men, because He doesn't want to come before everyone who is to be saved has been saved. And so God's timetable is unrelated to our timetable. We think it has to happen right now, especially when it seems so beneficial to everybody concerned. But God has got a much more wonderful plan in mind, frequently, and He is much wiser. He knows what He is going to do with this sad situation that troubles us so much, and how He's going to make that work for good. He promises, in Romans 8:28, that all things work out together for good for those that love Him, who are called according to His promise.

And so the Christian is asked to patiently wait upon the Lord, and the wonder of it all is that every time we become anxious about the question that we're coming to the Lord with, we can go to Him with it again, and again, and again, so that afresh we can rest in Him.

Do We Pray to the Father or to Jesus? (278D)

CALLER: Could you tell me how we pray? I was talking to one of my friends. I pray to my Father in Jesus' Name. She said she prays directly to Jesus. Could you help us out there?

HC: The question is raised: To whom should we pray?

Now in this area we have to be very very careful not to become wiser than God. We read the Bible, and we do find that there is a triune God. The word triune is not used, but the Bible speaks of God the Father, the Bible speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. In other words, He is eternal God in every sense of the word, and the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit, that He is God.

And so we might think, well, since the Lord Jesus Christ went to the cross on our behalf, we really ought to pray to Him. He is the most dear and precious to us. And many people pray this way.

But we must remember that God had laid out the rules, and these we are to follow. Remember when the disciples asked, "Teach us to pray," what did Jesus say? "Lord Jesus, who are in Heaven"? No, He didn't say that did He? He said, "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed by Thy Name."

Again, when we study the prayers that

are offered, we read, for example, of the apostle Paul, who constantly is talking about his prayers. In I Thessalonians 1 it is typical. We read in verse 2, "We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in Our Lord Jesus Christ."

In other words, God is insisting that we pray to the Father. Now this is a remarkable thing, you know, because in I Corinthians 11 we read that the head of Christ is God. The Father is the essence of God in the highest possible way that we could think of God. Not that the Lord Jesus Christ is any less. But it is God the Father who sent the Son. It is God the Father in whose Name Jesus came.

If you read the Gospel of John, through Chapters 5,6,7,8, you will see that again and again Christ referred to the Father, and that He comes on His authority, and that the Father is everything. And it is to Him that we are to pray. And we don't want to get holier than the Bible. We don't want to say, "I know, but Jesus is God, too. And why can't we pray to Him?" Well, let's just be obedient to what God has laid down.

Now it's true that the deacon Stephen, at the moment that he was martyred (we read about this in Acts 7), he had a vision, in verse 55 of Acts 7: "And he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into Heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' And then he prayed, in verse 59, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'"

And so this is a very special illustration, in which Stephen is actually looking into Heaven, a very unusual situation. But that's not typical. Throughout the New Testament we find that we are to pray to the Father.

Now Jesus said, "Whatever you ask, you ask in My Name." In other words, we go to the Father in the Name of Jesus. And "in the Name of Jesus" means to go on the authority of Jesus. Effectively, Jesus is saying, "You can talk to the Father, you can have open access into the throne room of Eternal God. What a magnificent blessing and opportunity this is. And it's all made possible on My authority, because I paid for your sins at the cross. I made it possible that you might become right with God. You have been covered by My righteousness. And therefore you can talk with the Father."

And so this is why we pray, "Our Father." And then we pray, "for Jesus' sake," or "in the Name of Jesus," which is indicating that we are doing so on the authority of Christ.

Now nowhere in the Bible does it say that we pray to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Eternal God, who is active in the world, evangelizing the world amongst other tasks. He fills us in order that we might be qualified to be an evangelist, to be a prophet. But we don't pray to the Holy Spirit, even though He is Eternal God in every sense of the word. We pray to the Father.

Praying in Jesus' Name (340B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I'm in a prayer group, and I didn't agree with the instructor, but we were asking him how to pray, and he said it was more important to pray in Jesus' name than it was to pray in His will. And I don't agree with that. And I just wanted you to talk a little bit about that.

HC: The question is raised, when we pray, are we to pray in Jesus' will or in Jesus' name? Let's analyze what the Bible says about this.

Actually, Christ said, "If you ask anything in My name, it will be given

unto you." Now what did He mean by that? It is by virtue of what Christ has done for us by going to the cross that we have access to the Father. It is on His authority that we can go to the Father. We do not go to the Father because of any merit in ourselves, because of any right that we have. We do not have an essential right to come before God, because in ourselves we ought to be sent to hell for our sins.

But on the authority that Christ has given us we dare come to the Father. In fact, we are told to come boldly to the throne of grace. We're told to pray without ceasing. So in every prayer we ought to be thinking, we are coming in the name of Christ or on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we also must pray in the will of Christ. We do not go to Christ asking God just to give us the desires of our heart, whatever they are, without any regard for God's will. Our will is tainted by sin. Our will is not altogether trustworthy. We don't have the big picture. God does.

Because we are saved, we trust implicitly in God. We know that He will always do what is best for us. We have the joy and the privilege of going to God and unburdening ourselves, telling Him all the desires of our heart. But having said all this, we also recognize that maybe we've asked for things that wouldn't be good for us at all, even though we think at the moment in our minds that they might be good. And so we want to make sure, "But Lord, your will be done. You know what is best. We would never want accidentally or incidentally to superimpose our will on your will. We rest with you."

So actually, it isn't one or the other. We ought to be praying in the will of Christ, and we ought to be praying in the name of Christ. In the name of Christ it is on His authority we dare to come to the Father. In the will of Christ it is that we are indicating our total trust in everything that God does.

CALLER: Thank you.

Interceding for a Troubled Friend (380B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Brother Camping, I have a friend who has a problem and I was wondering if you could give me some insight on it. Several years ago she became involved in fortune telling and had her fortune cast through Tarot cards. And since then she's been the victim of depressions and nightmarish type dreams. And just very recently she became a born again Christian, and since then she stopped taking the anti-depression type drugs that she was taking to counteract the depression. But when she stopped taking the drugs these manifestations have intensified. And I was wondering if you could give me any insight as to whether there is a Biblical reason for anything like this happening in this day and age and what I can do to help this person.

HC: One thing of course you can do is to pray that God will intervene in her life. The Bible teaches that God's perfect love casts our fear. This person, of course, has been living very close to Satan for a while, with her Tarot cards and the kinds of things that she got into. And so this really made a very severe impact upon her life.

Now if she is truly born again, if she is truly born again, now remember, to be born again means that we are hanging our whole life on the Lord Jesus Christ. It means that we've placed our whole trust in Him. It means that we don't fear hell or damnation. We know that Christ has paid for our sins. But neither do we fear Satan any longer.

CALLER: She knows this, and she wants to seek relief from this. I was

there, and another person who was a good friend of mine was there when she did come to know the Lord. And we truly believe that she is a born again person. And she needs relief from this thing that she's undergoing right now.

HC: The relief will come only as she trusts in the Lord. Remember what Philippians 4:6 & 7 says? "Don't be anxious," or "Be careful for nothing. Be anxious for nothing. But with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to the Lord, and the peace of God that passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." That's a faithful promise of God.

The anxiety will hit her again and again. Every time she becomes anxious, she should go to the Lord, "Oh God, have mercy on me. Take this fear out of my life. Help me to remember how I stand before Thee. What a wonderful thing has happened in my life, that I belong to Christ, that I am a child of His, that I have all of the promises of the Bible that He will leave me nor forsake me, that even though I go through the valley of the shadow of death, He will be with me, that nothing can happen to me outside of His control and keeping."

She should feed on the Word of God. Just read the Psalms. Read Psalm 23 over and over and over again, making this really a part of her life, that her trust is in Christ. Right now she's at the sixty-four dollar question: Is this matter of being a Christian only good for people who don't experience anything serious in their lives?

You see, it's very easy to be confident, I'm a believer when all is going well, when there is no particular stress that we are facing. But if we're really a child of God, if we're really born again, it should stand the test when we're undergoing severe trauma or severe testing. This is what God is really helping her to see, "Is my trust really in God, or am I only paying lip service to this?"

If my trust really is in God, if I really believe that God means what He says, that He will not leave us nor forsake us, that He will give His angels charge over me, that I have no fear of Satan at all, then what am I fearful about? Then what am I fearful about?

CALLER: Well, she expressed the opinion that it was possible that she was suffering for the salvation of some other, or something like this.

HC: I don't know of that in the Bible.

CALLER: Well, neither do I. And I tried to point her to Ephesians 6:10-18, where we take on the armor of God, and verses like this, where she can, through reading the Word of God and filling her mind with the Word of God, come closer and closer into unity with Him, and by this alleviate her fear. I've tried to point out to her that in her mind is where this battle is taking place. This is the means which Satan uses to attack us, through the medium of our minds.

HC: Satan will not attack through her mind, if she belongs to Christ. Satan has no hold on her of any kind. Satan can't touch her. The whole question is, where does she stand in relationship to Christ? It is her old nature that has been identified with her past life, which has been seared and hurt by her past life, that is not willing to trust.

But in her new soul, where she is born again, there ought to be this confidence in Christ. Now it can be demonstrated, in the face of the experience she's going through right now. She must recognize, "Okay. In my old body there is this fear that keeps creeping up on me. But I'm to crucify the flesh and its desires, its lusts. I'm to put it down. I'm not to listen to that. Oh God, have mercy on me when I begin to feel fearful. Forgive this sin. Forgive this sin, because ultimately it is the fact that I'm not trusting in Christ the way I ought to. Oh Lord, strengthen me

in my trust. Help me in my unbelief."

This is the cry of the believer. And keep going back to the Lord, and thank Him for His blessings. And then the moment that anxiety begins to develop, go back to the Lord, "Oh Lord, forgive me. Now I'm beginning to sin all over again. I'm not trusting the way I ought to. Oh Lord, forgive me. Strengthen me in my trust. And encourage me to turn away from this kind of fear."

This fear develops because we take our eyes off Christ. Fear develops because we're not really sure whether God is going to care for us all the way.

CALLER: I tried to explain to her that perhaps this was a testing of her faith, and that she should turn to the Lord for release from this, and just absolutely put her trust in God.

HC: But to put feet under that is very difficult, isn't it?

CALLER: Right. Absolutely.

HC: It's one thing to hypothetically say, "Yes, this is what you ought to do," and it's another thing, when you've lived close to fear for a long time, to let go. But you see, this is characteristic of any besetting sin.

A person who by nature is addicted to alcohol, and there are certain people who very easily become involved in alcohol. They become drunkards. It doesn't mean that in five seconds after they become saved they'll never have any desire for alcohol again. This may trouble for a little while.

The same is true of any besetting sin. If a person has a vicious temper, that is always there. And they're really delighted in just letting it fly when things went badly. They don't, in five seconds, get victory over that. But if they recognize this is rebellion against God, then there can be victory. There will be some failures, but there will come victory.

The same is true of someone who has a lustful desire to desire, or is subject to evil desire, a sexual desire that is wrong. All of these sins that are deeply besetting sins, we have difficulty getting victory over. Now the path is always the same. We must repent. We must turn away from it. The path of turning away from fear is not an easy path. But if we'll deliberately concentrate on those passages in the Bible that indicate that God cares for us if we'll feast on these verses and remind ourselves of this, and cry out to God for forgiveness, when we do become anxious, then we're going to begin to get victory over that sin, too.

CALLER: One other thing. Would it be efficacious at all for myself and perhaps three or four other Christians to gather together to pray for this person in this specific regard? Is there any Biblical basis for that?

HC: The Bible teaches, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." It however does not mean necessarily that you have to gather with others to pray. The fact is, Christ insists that prayer ought to be done in our inner closet, where nobody knows what we're praying. It's wonderful when we can encourage others to pray with us. That's why we have Prayer Time on Family Radio. We don't do this, however, to assault the throne of God, like getting as many signatures as possible to Congress, to sway their decision one way or another. We do this only because this is the Christian fellowship that we have one with another. We pray for one another.

However, if one person is praying, or two persons or twenty persons, the question is, what is going on in my heart? Am I really bringing this to God, as an earnest desire, and letting His will be done?

CALLER: Well, do you think it would be good for me to pray with this person herself?

HC: It could be, it could be. There's no

formula for this, you see. There is nothing that's indicated. If you did pray with her, this may be helpful to her. But her trust cannot be in you. Her trust has got to be in Christ. It has to be in Christ.

And she has to look at herself very honestly, "Is my trust really in Christ, or am I really just paying lip service to this? Am I just intellectually trusting Christ? Am I in fact not really trusting Him with my whole heart?" That's the big question.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much, Brother Camping.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Silent Prayer (393B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Harold Camping, I'd like to ask a couple of questions. First of all, is there anything in the scriptures about silent prayer? And the second question is, can Satan read our minds?

HC: The first question is, is there anything in the scriptures about silent prayer? First of all, the Bible does talk about . . .

CALLER: I was thinking about Joshua 1:8: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, and thou shalt meditate therein day and night." That's the gist of the verse.

HC: Joshua 1:8: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

We have the same idea in Psalm 119, where God indicates, for example, in verse 97, "O, how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day." And the Bible also gives other verses in Psalm 119 which . . .

CALLER: Also relate to meditation. Now I wanted to know if all these verses that talk about meditation indicate that there is such a thing as silent prayer.

HC: The Bible indicates, for example, "Pray without ceasing." Now if God means what He says, that we are to pray without ceasing, it means we have to be able to pray in every kind of a situation. Certainly, therefore, God anticipates that we will be praying within our hearts. There's a passage someplace that indicates that God knows what we will ask before we even ask it. God knows our secret thoughts.

CALLER: Then do all of these verses collectively indicate that a Christian can pray to God in the mind?

HC: Yes. I really believe that with all my heart, that our thoughts are just as, for example, here's an excellent proof text. In Psalm 19:14: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." This clearly indicates that God knows exactly what we are meditating on within our heart. And in our meditation, if we're praying to Him, God knows this just as readily as if we were praying out loud.

Now the second question is, does Satan know our thoughts? The Bible indicates that when we are born again, we have been transferred from the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is Colossians 1, I think verse 13. Now that means that no longer are we under the rule or control of Satan. He no longer has anything on us. We are a citizen of Christ's Kingdom. Christ is our Lord. He is our King. Satan bears no relationship to us. Therefore I am quite convinced that Satan has no idea what's going on in my heart or in my mind.

CALLER: I see. Then you don't think Satan can read our minds.

HC: I don't think he can for a moment.

CALLER: I see. Thank you, Brother Camping.

HC: Now on the other hand, this brings to mind this matter of ESP. You know, there are these people who have the ability to read your thoughts. Now if I would present myself to such a person as a born again individual, and said, "Can you read my thoughts?" at that point I think that (and I believe that all of this kind of action, such as ESP and occult activity is Satanic), I think that's the reason that it will work. There is this spirit world. And I think that when I present myself this way, "Read my thoughts", I am effectively placing myself in his hand to some degree. And perhaps he can read my thoughts.

CALLER: By us being yielded, you mean?

HC: Yes, by yielding to him I'm really opening myself to him, to Satan, to use me. Actually, the Bible teaches that we are to turn away from Satan, that we are to trust only in the Lord Jesus Christ. We should not have any part in any kind of occult activity of this nature.

CALLER: Right. I believe that, too. Thank you, Brother Camping. I want to say in closing how much my wife and I enjoy your program and your faithfulness to the Word and to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

HC: Thank you so much for calling. Good night.

Praying for the Dead (537B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Brother Camping. I would like to know some scripture references and your comments concerning praying for the dead. And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: The question has to do with the question, does the Bible have anything at all to say about praying for the dead?

Actually, the Bible indicates in Hebrews 9, "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment." Let me find that reference, so I'll give it to you precisely. In Hebrews 9:27 it says, "As it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment."

In other words, God is saying that once we have died the next event in our life is Judgment Day, if we're unsaved. Of course we'll talk about the saved person in a moment. For mankind in general, for the human race in general, God has decreed that "the wages of sin is death." The death that He has in view is eternal damnation. And once we die we will go down to a place of silence. We read this in Psalm 115:17 or verse 18: "The dead do not praise God, nor do any that go down into silence."

And then we read in John 5:28 & 29, "The hour cometh when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth, some to the resurrection of everlasting life and some to the resurrection of everlasting damnation." That is Judgment Day for those who are faced with everlasting damnation. Their sins have not been paid for, and there is no point in praying for them. There's no way, after they die, that there can be any change in their situation. There's no possibility of their being saved if they died unsaved. They are destined for hell. They are destined to stand for judgment, and because they have sinned and have no covering for their sins by the blood of Christ, they will end up in hell. There is absolutely no point in praying for someone who has died unsaved.

Now let's see, if our friend is saved, are we to pray for him? Well, the Bible says in II Corinthians 5:8, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." If a loved one dies who is saved, he leaves his body behind, but in his soul existence, which is as real an existence as his body's existence, he goes to live and reign with Christ in Heaven. And again there's no point in praying for him. He has come into the highest felicity. He has come into the brightness of Christ's

glory, and he is living and reigning with Christ in Heaven. So there's nothing that we can do to change his situation either. He is home with the Lord. This is the ideal place for him to be.

And so therefore there is no point in praying for the dead at all, none whatsoever. We can't change a thing. We can plead with God after a person has died, "Oh Lord, deal kindly with this departed brother. Could it be that he will have an abundant entrance into Thy kingdom." We can pray all of these things, but it doesn't mean a thing, because the moment of death seals the destination of that person, whether he was ... if he died a saved man, he went to Heaven; if he died an unsaved man, he went into Hades, a place of silence, to await the resurrection of the last day, when he will stand for judgment and then be removed into hell.

Some Guidelines Concerning Prayer (566A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question on prayer. My husband and I own some property in another state, a house. And we've been trying to sell it for over a year, and I've been faithfully praying every night and every day about it, and waiting for the Lord's answer. And my husband was talking with another Christian last week, and this particular Christian (my husband had shared the burden with him) said, "Let's pray about it right now," and they did. And this Christian asked the Lord if we would sell our house in a month. And my question is, is this proper, to put a time limit on the Lord? Or should we ask Him to give us an answer in a month, or is that something that shouldn't be done?

And another question I have is, could you give me some guidelines as to how I should pray about something that hasn't been answered for a year? I know prayer is just a really important subject, and even the disciples had problems with it because they asked Jesus how to pray. And so these are my two questions.

HC: Yes. The question is, how are we to pray? Are we to set up time frameworks in what we're asking God about?

You know, we have to remember what prayer is, and we have to remember to whom we are praying. We're not praying to someone that we're making bargains with. We're not setting up conditions. We're not dictating to God in any sense whatsoever. Let's always keep this in mind.

Secondly, let's always keep in mind that God is sovereign, God knows exactly what is best in every situation. And we want to make certain that God's will be done.

All right. Specifically, you own a house in another state. You'd like to see it sold, you're asking a certain price for it. Obviously at some price it could be sold. But you have determined probably what you feel is the fair market value, and that is the price you would like to receive. And so you are praying the Lord that it might be sold at approximately that price.

Well now, first of all, how do you know that it's God's will that you are to receive that price? How do you know that it's God's will that you are to be free of this house, if it's some kind of a burden, or you need the money, or whatever? How do you know that God wants you to be free of that? Maybe God want's that house to be kind of a testing program in your life for the next several months. And if you pray, "Oh Lord, we're praying now by faith that this house will be sold in the next month," how can we dictate to God that way? Maybe it isn't God's will that it be sold in the next month, and we certainly aren't going to set up conditions. We don't want our will ever to be superimposed upon God's will.

And so we might pray, "Oh Lord, it is our desire that this house might be sold in the next month at fair market value." But then we better hasten to add in our heart, and maybe out loud also, "But oh Lord, you are sovereign in these matters, you know what is best for us. It may be that you have a different program altogether. You may want us to struggle with this matter for several more months so that we can learn patience, so that we can learn to trust in Thee a little bit more. Or maybe you have a better thing coming along. Maybe there's something on the horizon that we don't know about where it would be beneficial that we still owned the house two months hence. We don't know about these things. All we know is that we've put it up for sale, and we've tried to put a reasonable price on it, and there is no buyer for it. And oh Lord, we wait upon Thee in this matter. And if it is your will that something else ought to be done, then incline our hearts that way." But under no circumstance do we want to dictate to God.

You know, prayer is that marvelous privilege we have of unloading ourselves to God. You know, the Bible says in Philippians 4:6, "Don't be anxious about anything." In the King James it says, "Be careful for nothing." It really means, don't be anxious about anything. Now you're anxious about that house. Will it be sold? We need the money, so on and so on and so on. And the Bible says, "Don't be anxious about anything. But in everything with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving."

In other words, we supplicate before God. We don't deserve the privilege of talking to Him. We come as a suppliant, someone who is undeserving altogether. We're really begging of God, could this be possible? And yet not our will, but Thine be done "with thanksgiving." We've got so much to be thankful for. After all whether that house is sold or not really doesn't make one bit of difference insofar as our eternal salvation is concerned. We're only strangers in this world, passing through. Whether we have a lot of money or a little money, or a little bit more or a little bit less, ultimately it's not really important because we can't take a penny with us. And we want to focus our eye on the fact that the all important thing is that we are saved. We thank God for that. We thank Him for the privilege of telling Him our desires. We thank Him for the fact that we know that His will is better than ours, and that we can rest in His will, knowing that whatever it is, it is going to be the best program.

And then what does God say? He gives us a promise. We come to Him with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, and "the peace of God that passeth understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." He doesn't say that He's going to solve our problems, does He? He doesn't say that He's going to immediately bring a solution to this matter that we are so earnestly seeking. He simply says that He will give us His peace. We will learn afresh to rest in Him, knowing that it's all going to turn out all right in the end, although maybe we've got a lot of patience to learn before it's all ended.

This is one of our major problems. We're so impatient. We think if we've waited for something for a year or two, or maybe three years or four years, that we've waited a long time and now, Lord, you'd better get with it. Somehow you're not doing very well on our behalf. But stop to think of it. How many of us, and how many of our friends were not saved until they were sixty years of age or older? And God of course knew that He was going to save this person, because it was God's program to save those whom He has chosen. And yet God patiently waited — one year, two years, three years, four years, five years, ten years, twenty years, thirty years, forty years, fifty years — and that person still did not surrender

his will to Christ. And then finally God has to put the pressure on him a little more, and He begins to open the eyes of that person. And at the age of sixty or seventy salvation comes. How patient God is! How patient God is!

And if God can wait these kind of years, then we can learn to have a little of that patience also.

Praying in Your Closet (900X)

CALLER: I have a question, when Jesus was talking about praying, He says, when you pray in your closet . . .

HC: Yes.

CALLER: Well, something like, when you're alone you should pray . . .

HC: Well, no, the setting is that there are those who display their holiness, their righteousness, on their sleeves so to speak. They want others to see "Look how righteous I am."

And this is even a temptation in our day. Someone is asked to pray, and they think about it, and try to think of flouncy phrases, beautiful statements, so that as they're praying out loudly and others hear them pray, they will be complimented "Oh, what a beautiful prayer that was" and . . . Well, that's about all the good that prayer did, was to get a compliment, because God is not interested in praying that's there to please man.

Prayer is communication with God. And in order to obviate and get rid of any idea of trying to please man, most of our praying—although there are times of public prayer, the Bible offers some suggestions on that—but ordinarily most of our praying is of very private matter, between me and the Lord.

As a matter of fact, the Bible says, "Pray without ceasing." That means, that any moment in any situation, we can go to the Throne of Grace and pray, and the only one we care about hearing that prayer, really, is God. It's not that we want others to hear it.

CALLER: Thank you.

RITUAL & LITURGICAL ISSUES

Fasting (013C)

CALLER: How does one fast?

HC: In the Bible there is no suggestion whatsoever as to how we fast. In the days of Nineveh, if you read Jonah 3, they fasted by not eating food or drinking water, and sitting in sackcloth and ashes, that is, to indicate total mourning for their sins. But nowhere in the Bible are we commanded to fast, and nowhere is there given any kind of description for fasting. If we want to fast, it's our personal privilege so to do, but it has to be something that's entirely between us and God.

And when I hear someone say, "Well, I fasted three days, or forty days," or whatever, I think, "Well, you've gotten whatever blessing there was in that the moment that you said that. Someone might have thought you were a pretty holy person, but that's about all it's worth."

The Role of Women in the Church Assembly (113D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question about women being silent. I found two places in the Bible where it talks about women prophetesses. I'm talking about Luke, where it talks about Anna. Because I'm studying for my ministry, and I'm a woman. And I'm trying to understand. In one part of the Bible it does speak of the fact that women should be silent. And then in another part it speaks of women being prophets. And I'm quite baffled.

HC: Well, let me see if I can help you a little bit. First of all, the Bible teaches that every born again believer, particularly beginning with Pentecost, is a prophet. We all are qualified by God, by being filled with the Holy Spirit from the moment we are saved, to be a witness. And so a woman can be a witness just as quickly as a man.

Now Anna was a prophetess in the Old Testament because she was on that side of the cross. She was not a priest, however. She was not one of the rulers in the synagogue. She was simply a prophetess. She had occasionally something to say that came from God, even as a woman or a child, or anyone at all who is a born again believer, can declare God's Word to his neighbor or to anyone who will listen.

Now that's fine, that's fine. A woman in the New Testament days today can be a witness. You can witness to your neighbors, you can teach a Sunday School of women, or teach a Sunday School of children. But when it comes to the assembly, when it comes to the congregation, the Bible says the woman is not to rule or have authority. That's where the line is drawn.

A woman may be a missionary, for example. And so she witnesses to the natives in the jungle village. But when the church is formed, when they become an organized body, she is not to be the preacher in that church. A man is going to have to come forth to be the preacher in that church. And she is not to rule in that church. She is still a missionary, just helping where she can and witnessing wherever she can.

CALLER: What my problem is, and I'm trying to understand it, is that you said when it came to the church itself, a woman could not have any authority. But I don't consider myself as ruling in the situation. I feel as though I'm ministering to the congregation, the same as though I were a doctor ministering to the sick or the ill.

HC: You see, your debate really cannot be with me. Your debate is with God. God has declared in I Corinthians 14:34 that the women are to be silent. God has declared in I Timothy 2:12: "I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men." Now God has laid these rules down. I did not write the rule book. God did.

And so you have to make your debate with God. Why does God do this? Well, I don't know why God does it. But God does what is perfect and what is right. The question we have to ask ourselves is: If I find it in the Bible, what is my posture going to be? Am I going to rationalize and try to find a way around it? And people do this all the time. They want to follow a particular line of action. They want to follow a particular practice. And so they struggle with the Word of God. And they look for a way around. They try to see if they can't read something more into the verse, or whatever.

Well, that's a hard way to live. It's a lot better if, when we read it in the Bible and there it is, we say, "Lord, I believe. Help Thou my unbelief. And now give me the faith, the trust, that I will walk that way also." Then we know that we're on very safe and solid ground, even though it may not agree with what we think may be the best.

We must remember that in our own actions we are tainted by sin. We are terribly influenced by the world in which we live. And so we can't trust our own thinking. We can't trust our own actions. We can't trust our own wisdom at all. It is so faulty. But when we follow God's rule book, when we do it God's way, we can rest assured that we know we're on a good and wonderful path. We can know that it's not going to lead us the wrong way.

CALLER: I'm aware of that. I'm not trying to get around it or to find an easy

way out, or something like that, because if I can clearly understand that it's definitely wrong for me to stand in the pulpit and to minister to the congregation, that's all right. I can understand it. Then I would step down. I don't feel as though I am in authority.

HC: What you're really, I'm afraid, trying to say is that you read this in the Bible, and in your old nature, and we all have an old nature. I can speak very candidly about this, because I have found things in my life where it's been exactly the same situation. In my old nature I don't like what I read. I'd love to find a different kind of an answer. And so the first thing I say to myself is, "Maybe I didn't read correctly. Maybe there is more to it than what appears on the surface. Maybe if I could do a very serious investigation into this problem, I could find an answer that is (now I'm going to speak very candidly) more acceptable to what I really want to find in the Bible."

Many times I've seen this happen in denominations, where there are those who want to change practices within the denomination to suit what they feel would be acceptable. And so at important turning points in the denominational history they legislate for study committees. It always amuses me. What is the purpose of this study committee? Is it really to investigate the Scriptures? Or is it to figure out how to write a document that is very learned and beautifully spelled out, which will allow those who want it to do their own thing, regardless of what the Bible says? Because normally, in many of these areas, the Bible is rather plain. But it takes some real careful deliberation and very careful language to draw up a paper that will permit us to get around the Word of God.

Now I've seen this happen again and again and again, in the church, and I've seen it in my own life from time to time, where I might tend to be guilty this way.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: Good night.

The Question of Tithing (130B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Brother Camping. I'd like to ask you a question about tithing to the church. I realize that it says to give a tenth to the church. If you're financially unable to do this, what happens? We give what we can, and it is kind of hard for us. But this is what we want to give, and we do give this. But I hear that if you give a tenth, the Lord will help from then on. But if we were to do this, financially it would be impossible for us to meet our monthly bills. I was wondering what you thought of this.

HC: The question that is raised is concerning tithing. What do we do when we have our bills to pay, and it takes almost everything that we earn in order to pay these bills. And if we would actually pay a tenth to the Lord, then we know that we would not have sufficient money for our bills.

Actually, there is a prior question that must be raised. Are we living beyond our means? How did we get ourselves into this situation, where we have all of these bills to pay? You see, the problem is that we live in a world which we like, and we like the products of this world. We like to own a home, and we like to have a home that is a decent home. We like to have a refrigerator. We like to have a television set. We like to have a certain kind of a car. We like this, and we like that. And we feel very comfortable with these things, because this is what everybody else is doing, this is what our fellow Christians are doing, and therefore we don't really give it a second thought. We like these things, and we very quickly use up all of our resources.

We go to the very extreme of our resources in achieving what we like.

And then suddenly it occurs to us. Wait a minute! Wait a minute! We've got to give to God. We ought to have something for Him. But unfortunately we've already committed ourselves up to the hilt. We're already in so deep that now we're struggling with the question, "If I pay to the Lord, then I can't pay my debts that I've contracted, and now what do I do?"

So really the first answer to the question is that we've got to back up and say, "Well now the first thing I've got to do is get my standard of living corrected. I'm living beyond my means. I've committed myself for too much." Now let me ask you. What would happen if you became ill and you weren't able to work. What would happen? Well, you might have to sell your TV set. The creditors would take it back. You might have to sell your house, because you couldn't make the payments. And so you'd have to go into a rental. You would make certain moves, wouldn't you? Of course you would. You'd have to, because you've become ill.

Because you were forced to make certain moves, you would make them. Now the honorable thing, and it's not an easy thing to do, of course, the right thing to do, if we're really going to be very candid about it, is to as quickly as possible get to a place where we can do it right. Namely, we've got to reduce our standard of living. We've got to give up some of these things that we've bought on time. We can't pay for them. We shouldn't have bought them. We ought to live in a lesser home, or we ought to live with an older car, or whatever it is. Now that would be the courageous and right thing to do, I feel very convinced. Not many of us would be willing to do it. I admit that. I'm part of the human race also. But I believe that would be the correct thing to do.

That is, to live in a way that would be God-honoring, in everything that we are doing. And if we did it that way, then we would also find that there is sufficient to give to the Lord.

Now the wonderful thing is that when we work out our life so that we are God-honoring in what we give to the Lord, we also experience blessings that we never anticipated. Now I'm not speaking right now of the idea that God is suddenly going to make us rich physically. I'm not talking about prosperity. That may come or may not come. God doesn't promise us physical prosperity. There are Christians who are in concentration camps who are enjoying fantastic blessings of the Lord.

But the blessings of God are, first of all, spiritual blessings. There is a peace in our heart, there's a security, there's a joy of obedience that we never knew could be there. We are secure in God, because we know that we are doing it God's way. We know that we have been sold out to Christ. We have committed ourselves to Him. And that joy, that peace is so marvelous as compared with the joy we thought we were getting because we were buying things, because we bought some more new clothes or because we bought a nicer car, or because we bought some new furniture. That kind of joy is just for the moment.

Have you ever had this experience, that you just desired and desired and desired that boat or that car or that new TV set or that hi-fi equipment, or that new carpet, or whatever it is. And once you owned it, and it became just a little bit older, just a little bit older, after you'd only owned it a short time, all of the joy you were anticipating you were going to have in owning this really didn't amount to much after all. You've almost forgotten about it. Okay, yes, we have the car, but you know, it's just a car. That kind of joy is not lasting.

But the joy of obedience, that is lasting. That is deep and secure. And that's the

kind of joy we ought to be looking for. If we get ourselves into a situation where we cannot give to the Lord as we should, the opening shot is to look at our whole financial situation, our whole commitment that we have made and say, "Look. We've overextended. We've gotten more bills than we can stand. We've got to back up and straighten this out as soon as we can." And then you're going to find that you have enough to do what you have to do in giving to the Lord.

Now God tells us that we are stewards of our time and of our energies and of our wherewithal. God purchased us by the price of His blood, and everything we own belongs to Him. And God has given us the responsibility and the privilege of using all of this, of using our lives to get on with the Gospel. No, not all of us are going to be missionaries and ministers. But we are all to be concerned, as a primary concern in our life, with the spreading of the Gospel. And when we contribute to the mission program of our church, when we contribute to mission organizations that are bringing the Gospel, we are actively obedient to God in the mandate He has given us to bring the Gospel.

And so we want to make sure that we don't get so intrigued by and fettered to this world that we are limited in our ability to get on with the major task of bringing the Gospel.

Is Casting the Lot for Today?

(147D)

CALLER: May I ask you a question and take my answer on the air?

HC: Surely.

CALLER: When the Book of Acts speaks of lots being drawn, when they chose Matthias to replace Judas, does this indicate that Christians today should use lots to make decisions? And if so, when and how?

HC: The question has been raised concerning the lots that were cast in selecting Matthias as a replacement for the apostle Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord. The lots were cast to determine God's will. Was it to be Joseph, or was it Matthias who was to be the replacement? And they cast lots to discover God's will, praying, "Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show us which one of these two Thou hast chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside. And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles."

Now is there ever a time when we are to cast lots? Yes, there can be a time. I think this has to be done very very judiciously. The casting of lots is a very sacred trust. It ought to be done only when we really are earnestly seeking God's will and praying for His will. It ought not to be done profanely in any way. Now perhaps it may be a situation where there are two alternatives, there are two opportunities to serve. We can't take both of these opportunities. We look at both of them, and weigh the pros and cons. And we find that they're equal in opportunity. And we really don't know what to do. In that particular instance it would be permissible, I think, based on what I read in Acts 1, to cast lots, to draw straws, but doing it in total dependence on the fact that through this you're asking God to guide.

I have seen this happen in the election of officers in a congregation, where a tie vote results between two men. And it is therefore impossible to know who should be chosen. And so the lot is cast in order to break the tie. Again, this is done prayerfully, and it really is recognized that in this way we are asking God to make choice. This would be permissible.

This ought not to be a frequent thing. This ought not to be a thing that is just done promiscuously. God gives us a mind. God helps us to think these things

out and weigh the evidence. And we are able to make judgment. There generally is one path that is more wise than another. Therefore, because it is more wise, it ought to be the path that we ought to follow.

If God closes the door on that path, then we know also that God has spoken in this way, that this is not to be in accordance with His will.

Understanding Communion (227B)

CALLER: Could you tell me about Communion? They used to say that it miraculously changed into the body and blood of Christ, which I know is ridiculous. But I just wondered, how are we to view it? Some people say that whenever you eat or drink, you should remember the sacrifice of Christ. I know that it's like a remembrance of Christ's death, but a lot of people just do it once a month, or something like that. You know, they set it up as a special time.

HC: Your question really has to do with the nature of the Communion service and the frequency of its occurrence. Now to get a little bit of a perspective, let's look at the Old Testament ceremonies that God commanded. They had the Passover. That was celebrated once a year. They had the Feast of Tabernacles. That was a once a year observance. They had various baptismal rights, like the priest had to wash his feet and hands before he could go about his priestly duties. There were quite a number of these ceremonies in the Old Testament.

Now in the New Testament, after the cross, all of this was fulfilled in Christ, but God did give us the sacraments. One was that of baptism. That is, the command was that there was to be water baptism. And that really carried the same essential meaning as Old Testament circumcision. It was a sign, an outward official declaration that we had become a member of the Kingdom of God, a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

But then you have the matter of Communion. Now it's interesting that Christ instituted the Communion service right after He ate the Passover, didn't He? In the upper room, He ate the Passover, and then He instituted the Lord's Supper. And so this puts the Lord's Supper and the Passover in a very interesting relationship to each other.

Now the Passover was remembering the angel that passed over the camp of Israel when they left the land of Egypt. The avenging angel did not kill anyone in the home if there was blood on the door posts. And this was pointing to Christ, who is our Passover – the fact that He would provide the blood whereby we would be saved from the avenging enemy.

Now the Lord's Table, the Communion service, is looking back on the shed blood of Christ. We read in 1 Corinthians 11: "This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me. In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

Therefore the Communion Supper is looking back on the cross, just as the Passover Supper was looking forward to the cross. Now therefore we begin to sense that probably we ought to partake of the Communion service not less frequently than at least once a year, because the Passover was celebrated once a year. The Bible is silent as to any rules concerning the frequency of its observance. There are churches that celebrate the Communion service once every three months. That would be very Biblical. Some celebrate it once a month. That's very Biblical. Some celebrate it weekly. That also, I suppose, could be

looked upon as Biblical, because the Bible is silent concerning its frequency.

However, in the light of the fact that it is so related to the Passover, I have a feeling (and this is only a feeling, it's not a Biblical admonition of any kind.) that it certainly would be proper and probably wise not to celebrate the Lord's Supper too frequently, lest it become very commonplace, and lest it lose its significance. But that's only a personal observation. It's not a Biblical declaration.

CALLER: I don't think too many little kids know what they're doing when they take Communion. I remember when I took Communion the first time after I was saved, it really meant something to me.

HC: You're making the observation that we ought to know what we're doing when we partake of Communion, and therefore little children ought not partake. And you are absolutely correct. The Bible says that if anyone does not discern the body, he is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and is bringing judgment upon himself.

Now the only person who can discern the body is someone who is born again, somebody who knows what it means to be saved. And therefore we ought to be really careful to know that we're born again before we partake of the Lord's Table.

CALLER: Thank you very much, and I won't take any more of your time.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

The Laying On of Hands (240C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I do have one question, please. The laying on of hands, where is it referred to, and is it permissible today?

HC: All right. The question that's raised is concerning the matter of laying on of hands. Is that permissible today, and where is it referred to in the Bible?

Let me see if I can help you. I think one of the earliest places that we read about laying on of hands is back in Genesis 48. And there we read where grandfather Jacob is going to bless his two grandsons, the sons of Joseph. And Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, are in front of Jacob. And he puts his right hand on Ephraim and his left hand on Manasseh. And then he pronounces a blessing upon them.

Now this matter of laying on of hands is picked up later on in the Bible. We find, for example, in Acts 13, when the apostles are sent forth, that we read in verse 3, "Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off."

And when we tie these passages together, and incidentally, in another place we read where the apostle Paul admonished Timothy, "Don't be hasty in laying your hands" on this one or that one. And the implication from all of this is that in the laying on of hands, symbolically it's a representation of imparting a blessing. The blessing that was on Jacob was imparted to Ephraim and Manasseh. The blessing that was on the church in Jerusalem was imparted to these first missionaries, as they went forth.

It is not mandated in the Bible, it is not called for in the Bible. It has no value in itself. But it can symbolize, at any rate, the idea of the impartation of blessing.

CALLER: Is it wrong to be using it in healing today?

HC: In the case of healing, we must remember that, and the question really is: Is it incorrect or wrong to lay hands in connection with healing? Now the Bible does teach that God cares for us. He is the Creator of the world, and He upholds it by His power, and we are to pray for one another. And in James 5 it does speak about anointing someone with oil if they are ill, although the context would

show, if we really developed that, that this anointing with oil was really a figure of bringing the Gospel to this one who was ill, and the healing that was looked for there was spiritual healing rather than physical healing.

Actually, it isn't God's purpose to guarantee healing for us, or to necessarily provide healing for us. He does heal. All healing comes from God. And ordinarily God does this because He is the Creator God, who cares for His universe. And if someone is ill, we have the privilege of going to the Lord to beseech the Lord on behalf of this one that is ill.

But insofar as laying hands on that person, I don't really know how this would symbolize anything particularly. I do believe that some of the apostles laid hands on those who were ill. I think that could be shown from the Bible, again with the idea of imparting blessing. But that miraculous healing of the Bible is something that is not typical for today.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

The Significance of Anointing with Oil (251B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I was wondering what the anointing with oil means. And also, I was wondering if you could tell me where the Ten Commandments are in the Bible.

HC: Let me answer your second question first, and then I'll look at your first question. Where are the Ten Commandments found? They are found in two places. You'll find them in Exodus 20 and in Deuteronomy 5.

The question is raised concerning the anointing of oil. We find in the Bible that anointing with oil was used to commission someone for a particular task in the Old Testament. We find that when a man was commissioned to be king, he was anointed with oil. Or if someone became a priest, his head was anointed with oil.

Now this practice of anointing with oil, while it was used in the Old Testament particularly for these two reasons, became a form of greeting in the New Testament days. We read in the Gospel of Luke, I believe it is, yes, in Luke 7, that Jesus is in the house of a Pharisee named Simon. And Simon is not giving Jesus a very warm greeting at all, because the Pharisees ordinarily were really at great odds with Jesus. And now there comes this woman into the house who is weeping, and she has an alabaster flask of ointment, and she wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and anointed His feet with the ointment. And then this Pharisee Simon remonstrates with her. And then Jesus says this to Simon in verse 44 of Luke 7, "Turning towards the woman He said, Simon, do you see this woman, I entered your house and you gave Me no water for My feet. But she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss. But from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil. But she has anointed My feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."

Now here we see three greetings, the washing of the feet, the kiss, and the anointing with oil. Now interestingly enough, there are statements in the Bible that indicate that we Christians are to practice these three greetings. Now watch out. We have to be very careful what we do with these. We read, for example, in a number of places, "Greet one another with a holy kiss." We read in John 13 where Christ washed the feet of the disciples, and He said, "I have given you an example. Do so one to another."

And we read in James 5, "If anyone is sick among you, let him call for the elders of the church and anoint his head with oil." And then it goes on to say, "The prayer of faith will save the sick one."

And so under certain circumstances we find references to all three of these practices. Now the question right now is asked about the anointing with oil, and so I won't get into the foot washing, although that has a very interesting and Biblical explanation as to what God means by that. But the anointing with oil really has to do with bringing the Gospel.

You see, in the Old Testament, when a man became king, he was anointed on the head with oil. When a priest was made priest, his head was anointed with oil. Now when we become saved, we become a priest. Oh yes, we do. The Bible says, "Ye are a holy priesthood." The Bible says in Revelation 1:8, "You are a kingdom of priests." We become a priest. That is, we have an office of intercession. And we also become a king. We become seated with Him in heavenly places. We reign with Him on earth. And when we leave this earth we go to live and reign with Christ in Heaven in our soul existence.

And so in order to be a priest, in order to be a king, we must have our head anointed with oil. Incidentally, this was already anticipated in Psalm 23. Do you remember? We read there in verse 5, "Thou prepares" a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil. My cup overflows." This is a figure speaking of the fact that I have become saved. I have become a priest, I have become a king in the service of God.

And so when God talks about anointing someone with oil, He is not talking about literal oil. He is talking about the fact that we are to bring the Gospel. We are to share the Gospel with that person, because in sharing the Gospel we are making provision for the possibility of his salvation. In the Old Testament it was actually a practice that was utilized in anointing a king or a priest. But the larger meaning is simply pointing to the fact that it is a command that we are to bring the Gospel. It was used in Jesus' day as a greeting, but it had far greater implications.

And actually, if we study out the washing of the feet, and I think the holy kiss (although I've never really done extensive work on the matter of the kiss), I think we would find that all three of these greetings relate to the matter of sharing the Gospel.

Communion and Forgiveness (257D)

CALLER: If you have hurt someone very, very deeply, and of course you repent after, and you beg the party to forgive you, and they will not, absolutely will not, can you go to Communion?

HC: In other words they will not accept your forgiveness?

CALLER: They will not. I've forgiven them for not forgiving me, I mean. But I still don't feel at ease because they will not forgive me. And I've sent a great sum of money, and everything, thinking maybe that would solve it. But nothing, they just spend the money and don't even acknowledge it, and won't acknowledge my pleading.

HC: Well, let me see if I can help you.

The question raised is a very practical question. The question is raised concerning the matter of forgiving somebody who will not forgive us, or accept our forgiveness.

Now the Bible says, in Matthew 6:14, "For if you forgive men their trespasses your Heavenly Father also will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Now what am I to do? I have sinned against someone, or they have sinned against me. At any rate, there is something that is between us that is not right. And now, because I want to be right with God, I don't want to stand this sin of a lack of forgiveness between me and God, this bitterness that I might feel in my soul toward this person, I go to this person and I say, "I forgive you. I forgive you, and would you please forgive me? Can't we be reconciled one with another?"

And you've gone to the Lord and confessed your sin and know that He has forgiven you for your sin. You've gone to your friend and patiently and tenderly tried to make reconciliation. But your friend is adamant. Your friend says, "No, I will not forgive you. You were too bad. You were too awful." They are treasuring, they are nourishing, they are feeding on this bitterness that is in their own soul. They love it too much. What are we to do?

Can we now go to Communion? Can we feel that we have straightened out this matter between ourselves and God? Well, yes indeed, we can. The Bible says in Romans 12:16, "Live in harmony with one another." And then in verse 17, "Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all."

Now that's all the further we can go. We want to be at peace with our neighbor, we have asked for forgiveness, we have confessed our sins to our neighbor and he refuses to be reconciled, then our neighbor has to answer to God for his action. We have done what God has asked us to do. We can know that we are right before God in this matter, and we need not struggle in our conscience anymore with it, even though we may be grieved in our hearts because we cannot be reconciled.

But this is all that we can do. As much as it depends upon us, we are trying to live peacefully with all. If our friend does not want to live peacefully, that is something outside of our control.

Preparing a Son or Daughter for Communion (325A)

CALLER: How does one prepare a child for Communion?

HC: The question that's raised is concerning how one can prepare a child for Communion. Actually, the Communion service, whereby we partake of the elements of the broken bread and the poured out cup, grape juice or wine, is to be reserved for those who know they are born again believers. The Bible says, "If anyone discerns not the body, then he will bring judgment upon himself." To discern the body means to have some knowledge of what salvation is, and to be particularly involved with God in that salvation.

Therefore most churches wisely restrict Communion to those who are just a little bit older. Young children are not included ordinarily, because they may not realize the import of Communion. They may appear to be saved, but they may not necessarily be saved, although of course a child can be saved just as an adult can be saved.

But once a person has some knowledge of what salvation is, and really knows that they are born again, that their sins have been forgiven, when they really know that they have repented of their sins and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, then they are prepared for Communion. Then they are to partake of Communion when it is offered.

Tithes and Offerings (345B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Brother Camping. I've got a question as far as tithing is

concerned. I understand that the first ten percent is considered a tithe, and anything thereafter is an offering. I'm confused about what exactly is the ten percent. Is it ten percent of one's gross earnings or his net earnings?

HC: The question is raised concerning tithing. Actually, in the Old Testament God did give a command to national Israel, as part of that economy, that they were to give one tenth of all of their produce, all that they earned, as a tithe unto the Lord. And this was used to support the tribe of Levi, from which the temple service came.

In the New Testament church, the body that is represented by congregations and denominations all over the world, God sets a far higher standard: He wants everything. Romans 12:1 puts it so beautifully, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice." God tells us that He has qualified us to be ambassadors of His to bring the Gospel. As custodians, as stewards of all that God gives us, we are to make as much of it as possible available to see that the Gospel goes out into the world.

So God does not tell us to give a tenth; He wants everything. Now we have other responsibilities. In I Timothy 4 God indicates that we have to care for our families, "He who does not care for his own is worse than an infidel." We have that responsibility.

But our task is to spend the money that God gives us as custodians, whether it's our salaries or whether it's an estate that we control, or a business, or whatever, so that as much of it as possible can be utilized in the Lord's service.

Most Christians find that a tithe is a good beginning point for giving. You don't have to argue whether it's a tenth of the net or a tenth of the gross. You can't bargain with God. The less you give, the less your blessings will be. The more you give, the more your blessings will be.

Remember the little woman, the very poor woman, who brought her two coins and who put them into the temple treasury? She didn't argue with herself, "I wonder if I ought to give a tenth of the net or a tenth of the gross." What did Jesus say of what she gave? "She gave her entire living." Now actually, the money that she gave was only a tiny fraction of a denarius. According to the Biblical evidence, a denarius was the normal salary of a working man. It was the normal daily earnings of someone who had a family to support. That was a denarius.

This woman, in her income, received only a tiny fraction of a denarius. In other words, she was a very impoverished woman. She was a very poor woman. On today's scale we could say that if the average income of a family in our land is (let's pull a figure out of the air) \$8,000, or \$9,000, she was a woman who earned maybe like \$800 or \$900 a year. She was very impoverished by any standards at all.

Now she could easily argue, "I am so poor, I am so poor. I have a hard enough time keeping soul and body together. How can I give anything to the Lord? Certainly the Lord doesn't expect anything from me." But what did this woman do? She took her whole living for that day, and she brought it and put it into the temple treasury. Now she was giving all that she could out of something that was a very little bit. It only meant that what she had left was even tinier than tiny.

It puts all of us to shame. It puts all of us to shame. There is none of us that have given quite that way. But notice, notice. She is the one who received the commendation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now does that give you some kind of an insight as to the nature of our giving?

Never never bargain with the Lord. God loves a cheerful giver. Read Luke 6,

where God declares, "Give and it shall be given to you, good measure, pressed down, running over." The language goes something like that. It is the language to indicate that, this is Luke 6:38: "Give and it shall be given unto you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete, withal it shall be measured to you again." If you're stingy in your giving to the Lord, then you're going to find that God is stingy in His blessings to you. If you are generous in your giving to the Lord, as this widow was with her two mites, then you're also going to find you have God's commendation.

Is it Displeasing to God to Hold a Rosary? (419A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: For a long period of time I carried a rosary with me, during a long, long illness. And I lost it at one point. And I came to the conclusion, perhaps that was a graven image. And I come to a point in my life where I strongly desire to hold this rosary. And the whole question is brought up again. Would this be displeasing to God? I guess that's what I'm asking.

HC: The question is raised: Is it displeasing to God to hold a rosary, or hold any other artifact in our hands, or to look upon it, in connection with religious worship?

Actually, the Bible teaches that God is Spirit. We worship Him in spirit and truth. We do not look at objects as being sacred or as being holy or as being helpful in our worship. We are to put our mind's eye on God, who is a Spirit. This is what faith is all about. We read about God in the Bible. We can't draw a mental image of God, because the Bible doesn't give us that kind of information. But in our mind's eye, nevertheless, we worship Him as God, the Great One who is unknown in form or substance. All we know is that He is God.

We see the evidence that He is God in the creation around us. We read about Him in the Bible that God has given us. And on the basis of this we worship Him as God. We are not to look at anything else.

There are two areas where God has specifically directed our attention, and only two areas. One is baptism in water. God has asked us to be baptized in water as an official outward evidence of the fact that we have become born again. Secondly, God says that occasionally we should partake of the Communion table – the bread and the wine or the bread and the grape juice – and in so doing remember that Christ's body was broken for our sins, and His blood was shed for our sins. This is the only outward kind of an artifact, or whatever, that God calls our attention to. Anything else would be superstitious. It would be in the area of something that would begin to go contrary to the Word of God.

CALLER: Yes, I looked upon this as some magical power. But it gave me great comfort, which I so desire right now. My question is if comfort is pleasing to God.

HC: The question is, is comfort pleasing to God? Of course comfort is pleasing to God. But when we seek our comfort from something else than God, if we think we're getting to God through something else, then we are displeasing to God. Jesus says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." The Bible says, "Don't be anxious about anything. But in everything with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. And the peace of God that passeth understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." God declares in Psalm 23, "The Lord is

my Shepherd. I shall not want. We go to Him, you see. We don't go to something that we think has some magical power. There are people in the secular world who carry a rabbit's foot, or a gold coin, or some other trinket, and they really superstitiously believe that that gives them good luck, or strength, or whatever. They have placed their confidence in this trinket.

Now we can do the same thing if we're not careful. That is a denial of God. God is the one from whom we derive our strength and our comfort and our security. We go to Him and only to Him for our strength.

I hope this will help you. And really put your mind's eye back on the Lord Jesus Christ. Read Psalm 23 very carefully.

CALLER: I've read it so many times.

HC: All right. Then read some of the other psalms again, "The Lord is my strength and my rock." Go through the psalms verse by verse. Now you may be sick of reading it because you may not like what you see there. When the Bible says, "The Lord is my Shepherd," and you can't see the Lord, you can't take hold of Him. The secular man can take hold of a rabbit's foot. He can see it. He can feel it in his pocket, and that gives him comfort. We all want to walk by sight. The Bible says that we do not walk by sight. We walk by faith. We are cautioned by the Bible to keep our eye on God, whom we cannot see with our eye.

We can keep our eye on Him by patiently reading the Bible. That is God's voice speaking to us. What you should do as you read the Bible is put yourself in this frame of mind. I'm going to open this Bible, and this is like I am sitting in the presence of Eternal God. And He has a message for me. He is going to speak directly to my heart. Every word that I read in the Bible is from the mouth of God, and it is for me.

Now because He is Infinite God, there's a lot in the Bible I won't understand. But I do know that it is still the voice of God. And what a joy, what a glorious privilege this is.

CALLER: I have read my Bible from cover to cover. I have read the New Testament at least 100 times, in its entirety. I read it constantly. I am cut off from the world because I'm a shut-in, and . . .

HC: All right. Now the question is, as you read it, are you abandoning yourself to it? As you read it, are you praying, "Oh God, oh Father, I want this Word to be part of me. I want to live according to this Word?"

CALLER: I read it with the attitude and with the constant prayer, "Show me what You would have to say to me."

HC: Now as you examine your will, as you look at yourself honestly, can you really say that your will is altogether surrendered to God, so that you want to do what God wants you to do?

CALLER: There are times when my nature does not want to, but the desire of my heart is always to do what He would wish me to do. My prayer is to know His will for my every thought, feeling, action and being.

HC: All right. Then when you get these desires, when you begin to think about some object that you would like to hold in your hand . . .

CALLER: Something for comfort.

HC: But God is your comfort. You see, when you say your will has been surrendered to Christ and that you want to be obedient to Him, and God says, "Come to Me. I am the one who will comfort you. I am the one who will give you strength", and yet you say, "No, no, I want something to hold in my hand," then you'll have to ask yourself the fair question, "Is my trust really in God? Do I really understand what it means to be

abandoned to Him? Or is my trust really some other place?"

And that's a good question to ask. Just look at yourself very honestly. Can I really say, when I look at myself honestly, that I trust God all the way? When He says to me, "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want," do I really understand that the Lord is my Shepherd, my Shepherd? He will care for me. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." That's God speaking to me. I'm the little lost lamb that He came to seek and to save. I'm His sheep now, and He is my Shepherd. And I know, because God is on the throne, because He upholds this world by His power, because He has given this revelation of Himself in the Word of God, I know that God is real. I know that even though I can't see Him, He's here with me. He promises me He will never leave me nor forsake me. Therefore I know He is with me. The Bible says that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore I know that He is with me. The Bible says that He gives His angels charge over me, to care for me. Therefore I know that He has surrounded me with His angels, to strengthen me and watch over me.

He has promised me that nothing, that all things work out together for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose, and I'm one who loves Him, who is called according to His purpose. Therefore I know that everything that happens in my life is going to be the very best for me because God has so declared it.

This is what faith is, you see. This is what faith is, when we abandon ourselves to Christ, when we hang out whole life on Him without being able to take hold of Him with a physical hand.

CALLER: I certainly trust God for my salvation and for my life after my death. But in the meantime, no, there is no trust that God will sustain or carry through. And I guess that's why I take a rosary.

HC: All right. Now you've come to the big question. What does it mean to believe that Jesus saves me if Jesus is not Lord of my life? You see, a lot of people have the idea, "I really believe that Jesus is my Savior, but I'm not sure that He is Lord of my life." Now that means that that person is not saved as yet.

If we are truly born again, then Jesus has become Lord of our life. Then it means that we do trust Him, moment by moment, day by day, for being the one to give us security and support, and supply us with every need, and so on. If we find that we cannot trust Him day by day for everything that is necessary, then the likelihood is that we don't quite understand what salvation is as yet.

Salvation is not coming to an intellectual agreement with God, where we read the fact that I'm a sinner, I'm under the wrath of God, Christ is the one who paid for the sins of sinners, and I accept all that. Therefore I am saved. That is not salvation.

CALLER: Then what is it?

HC: That would have to be called an intellectual kind of a faith, or an emotional faith. But salvation has to do with having to abandoning myself to Christ, where I have surrendered my whole personality, my whole being, to Him, where I have cast myself on Him altogether, so that my whole life depends upon Him.

CALLER: My every breath depends upon Him. But the tribulation and the affliction and the pain and the sorrow, I can in no way think that God gives that to me.

HC: The Bible says that He does. Isn't God who created you able to take all of this away from you in a moment of time? Of course He is. But if you are His child, if He has saved you, you are a son of God now. You are of royal blood. You are a co-heir with Christ. And if God leaves

you with your pain and your crippled condition, whatever it may be, it means that this is God's wonderful will for your life. He wants you to be the living epistle of the grace of God in this kind of a situation. Someone else will be the living epistle of the grace of God in a jail, someone else in a hospital, someone else in a concentration camp, someone else in a palace, someone else as a wife, someone else as a husband, someone else as a businessman, someone else dying of some dread disease, whatever. God places each one of us in this world to be the evidence, to be a living epistle of the grace of God in whatever condition God has placed us.

And this is where God has placed you. And now you can glorify God in your affliction. God's grace is sufficient for you as you continue in your affliction. God will sustain you. God will keep you. When the day comes when your work as an ambassador is done, God will take you home. It may come sooner, or it may come later.

But in the meanwhile, in your affliction and through your affliction you continue as the living epistle of the evidence of the grace of God. This is where you are to serve as an ambassador of God. Each one of us has a different set of circumstances through which we're going to be the evidence of the grace of God.

And we're on display. The Bible teaches that principalities and powers witness of the grace of God in our lives, in whatever lot we may be. Now Job is an outstanding example of this. Job was the evidence of the grace of God when all was well with him. But he was also the evidence of the grace of God when everything had been taken from him. God permitted Satan to take everything from him. Well, God ultimately was responsible, because God gave Satan permission to take all of this away from him, all of his children, all of his possessions, his health, so that he was in bitter, bitter, bitter pain and misery. And yet through it all the grace of God did shine. Job, in the midst of his heaviest suffering, could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Ultimately Job's blessings returned, full force. And ultimately yours will, and mine will, and for all of this, this will occur. After our time of suffering through tribulation in this world—and the Bible says, "In the world you will have tribulation," that's normative for the believer—after we have suffered a little while, then we're going to spend an eternity in heavenly bliss, without any suffering or sorrow. That is still coming. The best by all odds is still in front of us.

CALLER: As I said to you earlier, salvation for eternity and for eternal bliss is there, but how does one cope with what seems to be insurmountable in the present time?

HC: You cope with it by keeping your eye on Christ. One of our problems is this: we worry. We see the difficulty that is at present. We begin to think, "I have an incurable disease. I have a problem that I just don't know how I'm going to get around." And then we begin to worry, "It's going to be here next week, and next month. This problem is going to stay with me. How can I bear it?" And so we begin to get weighed down today with the worry of next week, of next month, of next year, until finally we're just burdened down to the ground. We're ground in the dust with this great big load of worry.

Now the Bible warns against this. The Bible says, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." In other words, if there's going to be something that's going to trouble us tomorrow, tomorrow is time enough to worry about it. Don't start worrying today. If there's going to be something next month that's going to trouble us, don't worry about it today. Next month is time enough to begin to

worry about it. That's a fundamental rule that God gives us.

Secondly, God says, "Don't be anxious about anything. But in everything, with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to the Lord." Now He doesn't say He's going to take your problem away. But He does say that He will give you the peace to endure that problem. He will give you the peace that passes understanding and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Now let's be very specific. Here is a person who is suffering an illness, let's say. And there's pain that goes with it, or a crippled condition. She can look back on the last twenty minutes and see that God has cared for her during the last twenty minutes, so that she's been able to endure this pain or this affliction. "Praise God. Praise God. I've been able to endure it. Now oh, Lord, will You strengthen me for the next twenty minutes, so that I can endure it for the next twenty minutes." And so twenty minutes later you look back and say, "Praise God. I've been able to endure it."

CALLER: I'll live with this for the rest of my life.

HC: All right. Now that's your problem. You said, "for the rest of my life." But you're not to think about the rest of your life. First of all, you don't know how long the rest of your life is. The rest of your life might be twenty-four hours.

CALLER: If God would take me, that would be merciful. But no, I have to go on living.

HC: Well, I know. But you see, if you begin to think about the rest of your life, and in your mind's eye you think about five years or ten years or twenty years, or whatever, and carry that weight of worry today, it's going to grind you down into the dust.

But if on the other hand you say, "I have this affliction that God has placed on me. And today I have to live with it, and God will strengthen me. I don't know about tomorrow. I don't know what God is going to do tomorrow. I have no idea whether I'll even be here tomorrow. God doesn't tell me anything about that."

CALLER: That would be great.

HC: But that's exactly the way we have to live. We live from moment to moment. We don't live thinking about tomorrow. We live for the moment. And so you have an affliction. The doctor tells you it's for the rest of your life. Okay. He's told you it's for the rest of your life. But he has no idea how long the rest of your life is. He has no idea whether God might make some changes in your life, because doctors don't know everything. All you know is that the doctor has told you that you have a particular illness that is today. Now tomorrow morning, you wake up and you find you still have the same illness, and now you pray God for strength for today, to endure this affliction today.

And at the end of the day you thank God that He has cared for you, that you have been able to endure it today. Now the next morning you wake up, and you start all over again. It's a brand new ball game every single morning. His mercies are renewed every morning.

The moment that you begin to think, "Oh my, I have this affliction today, and tomorrow I've got to suffer again," at that point you cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me. I'm sinning. I'm beginning to worry about tomorrow. And You've told me that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. I must not worry about tomorrow. Your grace will be sufficient tomorrow. I know that. And so I'm not going to think about tomorrow. I'm just going to think about today, that Thou art caring for me today. And I praise You for this today."

CALLER: What I can't understand is, I'm very angry with God that I must live, when so many times I was at death's

door. And why I had to keep on living is just beyond my comprehension.

HC: Let me make a suggestion to you. Suppose that you're not ready to die as you think you might be. Suppose God knows something about you that you don't know as yet. And God, in His mercy, is keeping you alive until you come to the point where you know that you have fully surrendered to Him. Wouldn't it be tragic, wouldn't it be tragic if you thought you were saved, and God took you out, and you were not saved, so that the next thing you knew you would be facing the judgment throne. Wouldn't that be awful?

But suppose that God, in His great mercy, continues to sustain you, so that through this you are coming face to face, more and more realistically, with the fact that "my life has not been surrendered to God the way it ought to be. How can I be angry with God? That's not faith. That is wanting to do my will. And if my will is paramount, I'm not ready to die. If my will has to be worked out, I'm not ready to die. I'm only ready to die when my will has been completely subordinated and submerged in God's will, so that I am ready to accept, without any question, His decision as to whether I'm to live or die, whether I'm to live with pain or live free from pain." When you come to that point, then you're ready to die.

But at that point you are also ready to live, because you have completely surrendered your life to Christ, and whatever happens is the very best then.

CALLER: You frighten me.

HC: Well, maybe I do. I would rather frighten you while you're alive than try to frighten you when you're dead. You see, a lot of people write me and they say, "Oh my, the way you talk sometimes. You frighten me. Why didn't you leave me alone?" And I answer in my mind, or if I'm able to write, and I frequently don't answer letters the way I should because I am very busy, but at least I think, "Isn't it far better to be frightened while I'm still alive, and I can look at myself honestly, than to take chances on dying unsaved and end up in hell? What a terrible thing that would be."

Now the evidence of being saved, let me repeat it again, the evidence of being saved is to have become completely abandoned to God, realizing that I am altogether in His hand. He can do with me whatever He wants to do. He can bring pain into my life, He can take all my worldly possessions away. He can send persecution against me. He can do anything He wants to me, because I belong to Him, and He is my God, and He does everything perfectly. I have my own ideas about what I think would be good for me, but my ideas are tainted by my own sins. I don't trust my ideas. But I do trust in God. And if it's His good pleasure to take my health away, praise the Lord. If it's His good pleasure to take my family away, praise God. If it's His good pleasure to take all my possessions away, praise God.

All I know is that He is my Lord and Savior. He paid for my sins. He has given me eternal life. I can just rest in Him, regardless of what is to come. And I know, because He is the infinite God who has created the universe and who upholds it by His power, He knows everything about me; there's nothing that escapes His attention. And therefore, I'm in tremendously fine hands.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

See: APPENDIX 4

Hebrews 10:26 Explained and Sunday Worship (206B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Would you explain Hebrews 10:26? When was worship for Christians changed to Sunday, and are we wrong in worshipping on Sunday? Should we really be worshipping on Saturday? And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you very much. Good night.

The first question that has been raised is concerning this verse in Hebrews 10:26, where we read, "For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin, but a fearful prospect of judgment and the fury of fire, which will consume the adversaries." Is this talking about the possibility of losing our salvation, if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth?

Well, let's assume that someone has been saved. Let's first of all ask the question, what has he been saved from? What has he been saved from? From his misery? From his loneliness? From himself, somehow? No. The Bible teaches that before we're saved we're under the wrath of God. We're sinners, and God's wrath abides on us. We're destined for hell.

And Christ came as the sin-bearer. He took my sins, all of my sins, and paid for those sins. Therefore I am saved from the wrath of God. I'm saved from the consequences of my sins. I stand before God as if I am completely righteous.

And so could I find a sin now that I could commit that would make me lose my salvation, if I've actually been covered by Christ's blood, if I'm actually born again? Well, no, because Christ became sin for me. He covered that sin, too. There is no possible way that I could lose my salvation. Every one of my sins has been paid for.

So we know that when we read Hebrews 10:26 it's not talking about a born again believer. A born again believer cannot come under God's judgment. He has passed from death into life. He does not come into judgment, as we read in the Gospel of John. He has eternal life. So it has to be talking about something else.

Now the Bible sometimes uses the word know in the sense of being saved. But at other times the Bible uses the word know in the sense of just having an intellectual knowledge, being acquainted with truth. Now there are all kinds of people in the church today, in the various congregations where they are found, who know that Jesus Christ is the Savior. They know that they are sinners, they know that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, born of a virgin. They know that Jesus is God. They know that He went to the cross in order to die for sinners. They know all of these things. But they have never become born again. Jesus told Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." In other words, you must be the personal recipient of this salvation. You must be personally surrendered to Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Otherwise all of this knowledge won't avail anything. Now what happens, if someone has a knowledge of the truth, of salvation, but has not become born again? Eventually one of two things will probably happen. He will finally be arrested by God and broken down by God to the point where he will begin to cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me." And so today there are many people in the church who have heard the Gospel for years and years and years, who finally become born again. Praise God for His patience and longsuffering with such.

But on the other hand, unfortunately, there are many in the church today who know the way of salvation, but eventually they don't like it anymore, this trying to make like a Christian. And so either they go running after another gospel that looks more exciting than the true Gospel, which is grievous sin. Or they leave the church altogether, or religion altogether, and simply begin to

live like the world. And they in either case are sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth. And walking in that direction brings them to a point where there is no salvation, because salvation is not "out there." Salvation is where this truth was that they had been hearing, where the true Gospel is proclaimed. That is where they're going to find salvation. They're not going to find it when they leave the true Gospel. And as long as they walk in that direction, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. All that is in front of them is hell.

Now wonderfully, even after a man has rejected the Gospel in this fashion and has begun to run after other gospels, or has turned his back altogether against any kind of a gospel, God can still save. And even in that extremity the possibility of salvation exists. So we should not stop praying for these who walk in this way.

Now with regard to the second question about the Sabbath, let me try to briefly outline the Bible's teaching on this. In the Old Testament God did declare in the fourth table of the Decalogue or the Ten Commandments that we are to remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy, because God in six days created the heavens and the earth, and He rested the seventh day.

Now if that was the only command we had in the Bible and the only information in the Bible concerning that command, then today we should be observing the seventh day Sabbath, because God so commands. But the Biblical rule is that we interpret scripture by scripture. We can't stop there. We've got to ask ourselves, is there anything else in the Bible that relates to the question of the seventh day Sabbath?

And as we continue to study the Bible, we discover that this seventh day Sabbath became a part of the ceremonial law. God used it as a figure of Christ Himself. We read that He gave the sabbaths in order that the Israelites might know that it was God who sanctifies them. And so we're not surprised to read in Leviticus 23, where God outlines the various feast days, the various festivals, ceremonial festivals that were to be observed by Israel, that the first feast day that's named is the observance of the seventh day Sabbath. And it goes on with the observance of the Passover. And then it goes on into the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and so on.

Now when Christ came, the Bible teaches that all of these ceremonial laws were completed in Christ, and we're not to observe them any longer. Any man today who would want to observe the Passover would be going contrary to the Word of God. He would indicate that he doesn't trust Christ as his Savior, that Christ has not actually come. If any man would be circumcised today for religious purposes, again he would be trying to walk in the shoes of Old Testament Israel. He would be negating the truth of the Bible, that Christ has come and completed that particular ceremonial law.

Now by the same token, when we come to the seventh day Sabbath, we want to make sure that we are not observing that accidentally, or incidentally. And so the church, already in the Bible days, began to observe the first day of the week. We find this in Acts 20:7. The church at Troas gathered together on the first day of the week, to break bread. And on that occasion Paul preached to them. We find in I Corinthians 16:1 & 2 that Paul admonished the church of Corinth to lay aside on the first day of the week that which they were going to give, so there would be no gathering when he came. And of course whenever we give to the Lord, that's part of our spiritual worship, and it's on the day that we worship.

And so the early church began to observe the first day as a day set aside for spiritual nourishment, refueling of the spiritual fires, a day when there was no

obligation to work. It's easy to see why they selected the first day. On the first day Christ rose from the grave. And so every Sunday in a certain sense is a commemorative service concerning the resurrection of Christ.

It was on the first day that the Holy Spirit was poured out. As a matter of fact, it was on the first day that God began to create the heavens and the earth, when He said, "Let there be light." And it is the church that has been mandated by God to go out into all the world and shed the light of the Gospel. And so it's altogether fitting and proper that the church worships on the first day.

We are altogether in accord with the law of God when we worship on the first day of the week.

Why Is Sunday Our Day of Worship? (321C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: The question is this. I have a friend in a denomination that I won't name, but they believe that once saved, always saved, as I do. And I'm sure they are Christians as well as I'm a Christian. But they asked me why we held Sunday as a holy day. And I checked the New Testament, and I really can't justify it. The only reason I could give was that Christ rose on a Sunday, and that Pentecost was on a Sunday, and the disciples met on a Sunday. Therefore I said we worshipped on Sunday in honor of Christ, His resurrection from the dead. She said that Christ Himself never once mentioned about keeping Sunday or the first day of the week as the holy day or the Sabbath day. And in fact, when He was on earth, He rested on the Sabbath, which was Saturday. And even Mary and the others who went to the tomb came on Sunday because Saturday was the Sabbath, the day of rest. And I have no answer for that really. I'll hang up, and I'd like to have you comment on that, if you would.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you for calling.

The question raised is concerning why the church, and I speak of all kinds of congregations and denominations, worship on Sunday rather than on Saturday. Let me see if I can answer this very briefly.

First of all, the Bible does not say anywhere, "Thou shalt worship on the first day of the week." The Bible doesn't say that. But the Bible does indicate very clearly that the seventh day Sabbath of the Old Testament became a part of the ceremonial law. It was one of the feast days. Read Leviticus 23, where God outlines the various feast days, and you'll find that it is the first feast day that is mentioned.

The Sabbath of the Old Testament was a type of Christ Himself, even as the Passover service was a figure of Christ Himself. And of course when Christ went to the cross, the ceremonial laws were completed. And therefore we are not to continue to observe any of the ceremonial laws.

Now the Lord Jesus, while He lived, observed all of the ceremonial laws. He observed the Passover, He was circumcised, He worshipped on the Sabbath day all through His lifetime, because He lived on the Old Testament side of the cross. After Christ went to the cross, we find in Acts 20:7 that the Jews began to worship on the first day, the Christians rather, the New Testament Christians. And they gathered together at Troas to break bread on the first day.

Secondly, we find in I Corinthians 16:1 & 2 that God through the apostle Paul commands the church at Corinth to lay aside on the first day, so that there would be no gathering when he came. Now when we bring our offerings, we generally do it at a worship service. And here the first day is mentioned. And of

course you can see why God singled out the first day. It is the day that Christ rose from the grave. It is the day that the Holy Spirit was poured out. And incidentally, it's also the day when God began His creation.

Then in Colossians 2:16 & 17 we read, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day or a feast day, or of the new moon or of the Sabbath [now the Sabbath ordinarily was the seventh day Sabbath], which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." The Sabbath here is put in exactly the same place as the Old Testament laws on the foods, the Old Testament laws on the feast days, the observance of the new moon, there were certain sacrifices that had to be offered on that particular day. The Sabbath is put in the same place, because that was all part of the ceremonial law.

Now there are some who believe that they want to worship on Saturday, and that's their privilege. But I think the church historically has been altogether correct, already beginning in the days of the Apostles, in beginning to worship on the first day.

Sunday is Our Day of Worship (539A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Good evening, Brother Camping. I have a question that is rather upsetting me quite a bit, so I was going to ask you to try to get me out of it. In Genesis 2:2 & 3 God said He rested on the seventh day, and He sanctified it, and He blessed it. Now I'm a Christian, I'm a child of God. And it does concern and upset me sometimes, and I wonder if I'm worshipping on the right day. Was the day changed, and why do some people worship on Saturday and others on Sunday?

HC: All right. I'll try to answer that question for you. The question is, in view of the fact that God rested from His labors on the seventh day, in view of the fact that in the Ten Commandments God commands us to work six days and rest the seventh day, shouldn't we be worshipping on Saturday? And there are a few who say, yes, indeed, we ought to be worshipping on Saturday. There has been no change in this commandment.

However, when we study everything that the Bible has to say about the question, then we come up with some different conclusions. You see, the Bible is its own interpreter, and we can't just take a statement as it stands and say now, this is it and anybody ought to be able to read it, it's as plain as the big nose on my face, so what else is new? We have to examine anything and everything the Bible might offer that might relate to that particular question.

Now we find, for example, that in the account of the Ten Commandments as it's given in Exodus 20, God gives as a reason for honoring the seventh day the fact that God in six days made the heaven and the earth, the sea and all that in them is. That ties back to Genesis 2. But amazingly and significantly certainly, in Deuteronomy 5, where God a second time gives the Law, we find that God does not give this as the reason for observing the Sabbath Day. He says in verse 15 of Deuteronomy 5, "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm. Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath Day." Well, that's an entirely different reason, isn't it?

Actually, when we look at the going out of Israel from Egypt, we find that that was a picture of us leaving bondage to sin and going into the blessedness which is the Lord Jesus Christ. You'll remember that they went out of the land of Egypt at the time the Passover was instituted. The land of Egypt is called the house of

bondage. It's a figure of the sin that we're into when we are unsaved. And to leave Egypt, spiritually speaking, means that we have left the bondage of sin and have entered into the freedom of being with the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Israelites did when they went into the wilderness. They were no longer slaves of Egypt.

And that is pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ, even as the Passover, which was instituted at the time they went out of Egypt points to the Lord Jesus Christ, so therefore God is indicating that the seventh day is pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the fact that we are saved in Him. Now this is reinforced for example, in Ezekiel 20, where God says in verse 12: "Moreover, also I gave them My Sabbath, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." In other words, the Sabbath, the seventh day

Sabbath, as well as the other Sabbaths that God gave, were signs or ceremonial laws that pointed to the fact that Christ would be the Redeemer. In Leviticus 23, when God is outlining the various feast days, we're not surprised to find that the first feast day that is emphasized is the seventh day Sabbath. And then from there He goes to the other feast days.

Therefore we're beginning to see that while the Fourth Commandment is part of the moral law, that we are to have one day set aside when we are not to work, one day out of the seven, nevertheless it has very distinct ceremonial implications. And so to make sure that we don't miss this point, in Colossians 2, in the New Testament, God declares in verse 16, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of an holy day..." This language is totally related to the ceremonial laws that were given in the Old Testament. "...or of the new moon or of the Sabbath, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ."

Now if all the other feast days – the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Passover – if all of these feast days had been completed in Christ and we're not to observe them any longer, then certainly it means that we are not to observe the seventh day Sabbath of the Old Testament any longer. It would be a refutation, it would be a negation of the fact that Christ has gone to the cross to pay for our sins.

Now the New Testament church was faced with this problem. They lived, first of all, on the Old Testament side of the cross, and then Christ went to the cross. While on the Old Testament side we find that Jesus went to the temple on the Sabbath day and the Jews all worshipped on the seventh day Sabbath, that was proper. That was ordained by God. But now what is the New Testament Christian to do? We find of course that the apostle Paul, when he's bringing the Gospel, visits the synagogues. That's where the Jews are. These are the ones who have the first knowledge of the Word of God. And so he goes there in order to preach to them.

But what about the church? When does it begin to meet? We're not surprised that in Acts 20:7 we find that the church at Troas is meeting together on the first day of the week. And it was at that time they broke bread. It was at that time that Paul preached to them until midnight.

We also find in I Corinthians 16:1 that God makes reference to the first day of the week, that we are to lay aside what we plan to give to the Lord on the first day of the week, "that there might not be a gathering when I shall come." Now we bring our offerings to the Lord when we worship. And here again the offering to the Lord is related to the first day of the week.

Now we can see why the New Testament church began to observe the moral implications of the Fourth Commandment by worshipping on the first day of the week. In so doing they set

up the same rhythm that had been established in the moral law, six days of work and one day that is set aside when they are not to work. Secondly, by worshipping on the first day instead of the seventh day, they did not come under the ceremonial implications of the Fourth Commandment of the Ten Commandments. And thirdly, of course, the first day of the week was given special significance by God, because it was on the first day that Christ rose from the grave. It was on the first day that the Holy Spirit was poured out. It was on the first day that God began His creation.

And so beginning already before the Bible was completed, we find the New Testament church beginning to worship on the first day of the week. Now if you'd like to see this in greater detail, I have written a paper on the Sabbath question. And if you would write me at Family Radio, Oakland, CA. 94621, I would be very happy to send you a copy of this paper, if this would be of any help to you.

CHAPTER 7 – CREATION ISSUES

CREATION SCIENCE

What Type of Animal Was Leviathan in Job 41 (093B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I want to thank you for this program. It's the first time I've ever called, but I appreciate listening to it.

We have a neighbor that's very concerned because the Bible never speaks anything about prehistoric animals. And I mentioned this to a fellow I work with, and he said he was listening one time when you gave a scripture describing the skin, etc., of dinosaurs. And I was just wondering if you would mind taking a few minutes to give me some of those verses.

HC: Yes. There is a passage in the Bible that describes a very fearsome beast which cannot be a beast that lives on the earth today. And that is described in Job 41, the whole chapter of Job 41. As it's described, it reminds you of the dragons that you read about in mythology. Now those myths, of course, are myths, but they still have their roots in some kind of truth way back when. And we find, of course, the fossilized bones of very huge animals that once roamed the earth.

Now when the Flood came, 7000 years ago, the world was destroyed, and all of these prehistoric (the word prehistoric really means those that lived before the invention of writing, before any written history could be recorded) animals, that lived before the Flood, would have been destroyed, although Noah was commanded to put 2 of every kind into the ark. So you can be sure that there were a couple of baby dinosaurs and a couple of baby this and baby that on the ark.

But the weather conditions were much colder after the Flood. The fact that the ice covered a large part of some of the continents was because of the Flood. And so the worldwide temperature was much lower. And so the environment was not conducive to large scale development of these large animals again.

But it seems that as long as 3000 years after the Flood, when Job was written, because the Book of Job was written around 1800 BC, whereas the Flood occurred in 4990 BC, there could have still been living some of these large animals, that had survived the Flood by coming into the Ark, and who again multiplied to some degree.

And so you have this vivid description of an animal in Job 41. It says, for example,

in verse 7: "Can you fill a skin with harpoons, or his head with fishing spears? Lay hands on him. Think of the battle. You will not do it again."

Or in verse 10: "No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up. Who then is he that can stand before Me?" And then verse 12: "I will not keep silence concerning his limbs or his mighty strength or his goodly frame. Who can strip off his outer garments? Who can penetrate his double coat of mail? Who can open the doors of his face, round about his teeth, his terror? His back is made of rows of shield shut up closely, as with a seal. One is so near to another that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another. They clasp each other and cannot be separated. His sneezings flash forth light, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn."

And then it goes on in verse 23: "The folds of his flesh cleave together, firmly cast upon him, and immovable, as hard as the stone, hard as the nether millstone. When he raises himself up, the mighty are afraid at the crashing. They are beside themselves. Though the sword reaches him, it does not avail, nor the spear, the dart or the javelin. He counts iron as straw and bronze as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee. For him sling stones are turned to stubble. Clubs are counted as stubble. He laughs at the rattle of javelins. His underparts are like sharp potsherd. He spreads himself like a threshing sledge on mire. He makes the deep boil like a pot. He makes the sea like a pot of ointment. Behind him he leaves a shining wake. One would think the deep to be hoary. Upon earth there is not his like, a creature without fear. He beholds everything that is high. He is king over all the sons of pride."

Now this is actually a figure of Satan himself. From the context we would gather that. But nevertheless it is a literal animal that seems to have been living in that day.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Is Adam and Eve Fact or Fiction? (099B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. I'm taking a class, and the other day we were discussing the Genesis story. And our teacher said that Adam and Eve represent all of mankind, because the name Adam means man, and Eve means woman. So Adam and Eve weren't really two people, and they were like everybody.

And he also said that the Genesis story is just an attempt to explain how sin came into the world, but he said it's not really a true story. And he also went on to say that the Bible isn't an historical book and that Genesis isn't a scientific book, but it does have science in it. And while the Bible isn't an historical book, it does have history in it.

Now I don't believe any of this that he said, but I've tried to contradict him in class, but I just seem to run out of things to say. And I get the feeling that if I keep talking, other students will feel like I'm trying to show off. Do you understand what I mean?

HC: I understand. You see, first of all, we accept the Bible as the Word of God by faith. And you have learned to do this. You have learned to entrust your life to what you read in the Word of God. And so when you hear anyone make disparaging remarks about the Bible, as if it isn't everything that it purports to be, you feel very offended. You feel like you have to defend it.

But you must realize that those who are making these statements do not have their spiritual eyes open. They have not accepted the Bible by faith. And so I would suggest this to you, that you

might try this topic. And I don't think for a moment that you're going to get anywhere with it. But you might try it anyway, just to see what happens.

And if you do stand up in class, be sure that you do it very humbly and very tenderly, because it is so easy to get a feeling, because you may know the Lord and you sense that most of the rest of the class does not, of superiority. "Look. I'm a child of God, and you're still slaves of Satan," so to speak. And even though you're not thinking it out loud, that may be very deep in your consciousness, particularly when you sense that they are so blind in their unbelief.

But just bear this in mind. If you know the Lord, it is only because of God's grace, His unmerited favor toward you. And except for His grace, you would be just as blind as anybody else. But very patiently, and very humbly, and very tenderly, you might ask your teacher, "Well now, is the Bible the infallible Word of God?" If he says it is not, that is, if he does not think the Bible is trustworthy all the way through, then ask him, "Well, how can I know what part of it I can trust and what part of it I cannot trust?"

Now this is leading into the fact that if I have to be the judge as to what is trustworthy and what is not trustworthy, then I am the authority over the Bible, and as a matter of fact, none of the Bible is worth reading, because I simply am not a qualified judge. And it means that the whole Bible is suspect. I could be selecting the wrong verses to trust and throwing out the other verses. It just makes the whole Bible a shambles.

Now if, on the other hand, he says, "Yes, I believe the Bible is infallible, the Bible is the divine Word of God," then ask him, "What is your biblical authority to say that the Genesis account is not historical, that it is not true, because you have to have biblical authority if you believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God."

For example, I can read the account in Luke 16 of the rich man and Lazarus that Jesus talked about. And I can read everything that is there, and I can decide that that is not an historical event, that that is a parable that Jesus is teaching. Why can I decide that? Because when I read everything that He says here in this account, I realize that it does not follow the historical pattern that ought to be in accordance with the rest of the Bible.

For example, it says there that the rich man died and went to Hades, and there he plead with Abraham to send Lazarus to take a drop of water and put it on his tongue. That would indicate that he went to Hades, and he had a body there. Secondly, it would imply that he was already in torment even though Judgment Day had not come, because in that same context it says that he said to Abraham, "Send Lazarus from the grave to go to my five brothers who are not saved." So that would have to be on this side of Judgment Day.

Now I know from the rest of the Bible that when an unsaved man dies, he goes into the grave and his body returns to the dust. His body does not go into Hades. His body goes into the grave and returns to the dust to await the judgment of the Last Day.

Secondly, I know that when he dies, an unsaved man, his soul goes down into silence, and torment does not begin until after the Last Day, when he is resurrected to be judged, at which time he will be cast into hell.

And so, for these as well as a number of other reasons of a similar nature, I know that the account in Luke 16 is not an account of an actual historical event. But rather it is a story that Jesus told to act as a parable, to teach some wonderful spiritual truth, even as He told parables like the kingdom of heaven is like a man who went forth to sow. And he sowed the seed on good soil, and on rocky soil, and

so on. And that is simply a story He was telling. It was not an actual historical event.

But when we get to the Book of Genesis, and we read, step by step, all that we find in Genesis, and then search the Scriptures to see if there's anything in the Bible that might suggest to us that what we read about Adam and Eve was simply a story, a parable, and that it actually was not history, we cannot find anything at all like that.

For example, in the New Testament we find in I Corinthians 15 where God says, "As in Adam all died," referring to historical Adam.

CALLER: Well, my teacher said that Paul was the first person to misunderstand it, and that really Adam wasn't a man. What do you think about this belief that Adam, meaning man, represented all men.

HC: Well, the word Adam is the word man. And in a certain sense we were all in the loins of Adam. We read in Genesis 3: "The man called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living." Certainly they were the progenitors of the whole human race.

But when your teacher made this statement, "Paul was the first to misunderstand," immediately he confessed that he does not believe the Bible is the Word of God. He is saying, "These are the writings of Paul, and Paul was mistaken." In other words, he is saying that the Bible is simply a book. It is not the Word of God to him. And then, of course, if this is the case, he's going to come up with all kinds of doctrines contrary to the Word of God, because he doesn't believe in the authority of the Word of God.

And so don't be surprised at what you're going to hear. Don't be amazed at the ideas that will be set forth. But they will not be biblical.

CALLER: Then should I as a Christian try to keep saying what I believe?

HC: The Bible says, "Don't cast your pearls before swine." And what God means by this is that the Gospel is a great and wonderful pearl. And the unsaved of the world are sometimes illustrated in the Bible under the figure of swine or dogs, which were the most unclean beasts to the Jews of Jesus' day, and they're set forth this way in the Bible.

And when we offer the Gospel, if they will not listen, if they mock, if they ridicule, we simply keep silence. We're under no mandate from God to keep plugging away. When the Judaizers came while Paul was preaching the Gospel, and they harassed him and made life miserable for him, he simply left them and went on to the next city. When the Jews would not listen to him, he said, as we read in Acts 28, "Okay, if you Jews will not listen to me, I'll go to the Gentiles. They will listen."

And so in this class, you'll get to the point where you say, "No one listens to me. I'll keep silent."

CALLER: When he says these things, it really bothers me so much, because I know they're not true. But nobody in the class is really that interested.

HC: They're not interested. Now if he expressed interest, if someone in the class expressed interest, wonderful. Then you've got an open door to witness.

CALLER: Thank you very much, Mr. Camping. Good night.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Science Versus Christianity (114C)

CALLER: Let's say, hypothetically, you were in charge of a Science Department. What do you consider is truth in Science, and what function should Science play in the world in the remaining days?

HC: What is the function of Science?

CALLER: Yes. There seems to be a conflict today between Science and Christianity. And there really shouldn't be, in my opinion. And I was just wondering, what function should Science have? What is truth in Science?

HC: The question has to do with, "What is truth in Science, and what is the function of Science?" Let me see if I can develop this question for just a moment.

Actually, Science is the study of the world around us. God of course has created this world in a very complex and intricate way. Man investigates this world and can use the results of this investigation to do one of two things: he can use it for his own selfish interests, and ultimately they will become destructive, or he can use the developments of this world as produced by Science to further enhance his relationship with God.

When we, for example, buy a radio station and dedicate it to bringing the Gospel, we are using the products of Science in order to enhance and do a more efficient job of bringing the Gospel. When we study the universe and see the brilliance of stars out there, we can glorify God for what a magnificent God He is.

Science does serve a useful function, therefore, in helping us to live more and more to the glory of God.

Unfortunately, of course, most people are unsaved. And most people turn the whole business all around. They begin to worship the scientist. They begin to look upon the scientist as their savior, as the one who can find a way out of man's predicament. They begin to worship this creation. They see in this creation and the products that come out of this creation, out of the ground, their security. And so they begin to worship the scientist and the ground from which he derives his things.

This of course is an abomination to God. This is putting the whole thing backwards. And so the very thing that ought to bring glory to God actually is going to bring the wrath of God upon man.

The Origins of Race (178E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I was wondering where the different races of mankind came from, and if there's any way you could show from Scripture where they came from. It would be very much appreciated, and I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. Good night.

The question is raised: Where did the races come from? Does the Bible give us any clues? We know this from the Bible, that Adam and Eve, our first parents, were created about 13,000 years ago, in the year 11013 BC. At least that's the date I come to when I work out the genealogy and chronology in Genesis 5 and Genesis 10. The world then continued for 6023 years, until the year 4990 BC and multiplied rather slowly. It doesn't speak during this period of various nations. It simply indicates that mankind developed. And I personally believe that it didn't develop into a huge number of people. It might have grown to be a million people or thereabouts.

And then, in the year, 4990 BC, because of the wickedness of the people of that time, God destroyed the world by the flood, which killed off everything with the breath of life, with the exception of those men and animals and birds which were in the ark with Noah and his family. And you can read about this devastating flood in Genesis 6 and Genesis 7 and Genesis 8.

Then, in Genesis 10, we read what is sometimes called the Table of the Nations. On the ark, back there in 4990

BC, which is incidentally about 7000 years ago, there were four men and four women. There was Noah and his wife, there was Noah's son Shem and his wife, Noah's son Ham and his wife, and Noah's son Japheth and his wife. And these were all the children that Noah ever received, according to the Bible.

Now therefore Shem, Ham and Japheth became the progenitors of the whole human race as we know it today. Now in verse 2 of Genesis 10, we read of the sons of Japheth, Gomer (and the character of that word seems to suggest Germany, maybe), Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras, the sons of Gomer, Ashkenaz, Riphath and Togarmah, the sons of Javan, Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim.

Now some of these words sound a little bit familiar. Tarshish was a city, eventually, that was located up in the northern area of Palestine, along the seacoast. Kittim refers probably to Cyprus. In other words, that's an island out in the Mediterranean Sea, moving out toward the Roman Empire, you see. And so it says, "From these the coastland peoples spread. These are the sons of Japheth in their lands, these with their own languages, by their families and in their nations."

And so the best we can do is to suggest that the European nations, essentially, came from the line of Japheth. We don't have any more information than that. "Then the sons of Ham; Cush, Egypt, Phut and Canaan. The sons of Cush; Seba, Havilah, Sabath, Raamah and Sabtecha, the sons of Raamah; Sheba and Dedan. Cush became the father of Nimrod. He was the first on the earth to be a mighty man. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore it is said, Like Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord." And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech and Accad, all of them in the land of Shinar. Out of that land he went into Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah: that is the great city. Egypt became the father of Ludim and Anamim, Lehabim and Naphtuhim, and Pathrusim, Casluhim." You know, I didn't learn these words early enough. If I had lived about five or six thousand years ago, I could probably pronounce these.

But when we study the sons of Ham, we find that the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Ninevites, Egypt, are all under the lineage of Ham. They all come from him. But again, we don't get any more information concerning how the nations were finally formed. God doesn't give us any insights as to why there are different skin colors, or precisely where the Chinese came from, or whatever. We can only get this general idea, particularly from the sons of Ham, from whom we get some very specific ideas.

And then Shem, we read about him that he became the father of "Ellam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram. And the children of Aram; Uz, Hul, Gether and Mash." And so on. And the one fact we do get from the sons of Shem is that Abraham, who became the beginning of the nation of Israel, came from Shem.

Now we do know this, that while the Flood occurred in 4990 BC, and Shem, Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, became the progenitors of the human race, about 3100 BC, God confused the languages. The people, as they multiplied, began to congregate in the plains of Sumar, or the plains of Shinar, or the fertile crescent in the area of Assyria and Babylon. And except for nomads that had gone off into various parts of the continent that existed in that day, most of the people were very gregarious, and they stayed together in the fertile crescent, in the area of Babylon.

And so around the year 3100 God confused the languages, and also separated the continents, so that it was

divided into the continents that we have today. Perhaps at the time that He confused the languages He also may have begun a change in skin color. But that's pure speculation. All we know is that beginning around 3100 BC, we have the different nations developing in earnest, so that they were kept apart by vast bodies of water, and also they were kept apart by differences in language.

Well, there's just a thumbnail sketch of what the Bible teaches about the table of nations.

Evolution and the Age of the Earth (222A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Could you help me? I would like to teach in Sunday School about evolution versus the Bible. Could you give me some pointers on that?

HC: Your question is, How can you give a few points on the problem of evolution versus the Bible?

First of all, the Bible is very emphatic that God created the heavens and the earth. It you look, for example, at Exodus 20, here we find a very straightforward statement in verse 11: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day." Now that's a flat statement that is not contradicted anywhere else in the Bible.

Moreover, this is what Genesis I teaches, that on Day One He created this, and Day Two He created that, and so on. So, to begin with, the Bible indicates very clearly that God created the universe.

Secondly, when you look at creation, you can immediately see that a Creator was required. Now you look around your room. And you see a lamp, you see a rug on the floor, you see things on the walls, you see doors and doorknobs, and all kinds of things. How many of these things came into existence without some kind of a mind thinking it out and making those objects? Well, not a thing, was there? Not one thing. Anything that you see in your room was made by someone. There's no possibility that any of those objects, your chairs or your furniture, or the lamp, or the light fixture, none of these things could ever have come to pass in billions of years without somebody making them.

Now the same is true when you look at the part that man did not make. You look at a plant. Could that have come into existence by blind chance or billions of years, anymore than your chair could have come into existence? Somebody had to make it. It had to be a Creator. And when we look at the things that man makes, they really aren't complex at all. That chair is really a fairly simple object. Even though you or I may not be able to make it, nevertheless, compared, let's say, to all of the mysterious and wonderful ways that your fingernail is made, or then you can start talking about your finger, and then your arm, and then your whole body, such a complex and mysterious and wonderful object, that could never have come to pass by chance, anymore than that chair could have.

So the world itself cries out that there must be a Creator. There must be a Creator, just like your room cries out and says that somebody must have made these things. They did not come to pass by accident.

Now you can look at evolution from another vantage point. The idea of evolution is that somewhere back when, lower objects, through blind chance, became higher objects, until finally life came into existence. And finally the fish became birds, and birds became animals, and animals became monkeys, and monkeys became man, and so on, whatever path that the evolutionist wants to go.

Now if that was possible, then it would also be possible for you to take a lot of little pieces of metal, and wood, and anything else that you could lay your hands on, and you could put them in a box. And then you could start shaking that box. And if you shook that box long enough, according to the theory of evolution, eventually a beautiful typewriter would come out, or maybe a wristwatch, or maybe something else would come out that was useful, because this is the theory of evolution, that by blind chance certain molecules got into right relationship with other molecules, and pretty soon things began to develop that were worthwhile.

Well, of course, on the face of it that's utterly ridiculous, isn't it? That's utterly ridiculous. Fact is, evolution is one of the most impossible theories that one could ever imagine. It is so absolutely impossible to think that that newborn baby somehow has evolved from something else. That's utterly impossible to contemplate. But because men's minds are blinded, and because they absolutely intuitively don't want to admit that there is a God, because if there is a God, it means there's a Judgment Day. And if there's a Judgment Day, it means they've got to answer for their sins. And so they are convinced that there must not be a Creator. There has to be evolution.

And yet they accept the theory of evolution by blind faith, because there's no evidence of it anywhere. There is no evidence. Everything in the creation cries out that there's a Creator, there's a Creator, there's a Creator. Everywhere you look, the evidence is there that there's a Creator. And yet they cling tenaciously to the idea of evolution by the blindest kind of faith, and the most tenacious faith, without realizing how blind they really are.

Another reason the evolutionist clings to what he clings to is that the idea of evolution is that the world has been around for millions and millions of years. And if this is really so, then the world ought to continue for another several million or billion years. And therefore, if there was the slightest possibility that there was a Judgment Day, it's so far down the trail that we don't really have to worry about it. And so the theory of evolution is very attractive from that standpoint.

The theory of evolution holds the idea that that which is less complex becomes more complex. Or, to put it in another way, that which is less useful can gradually become more useful, because everything began from an amoeba and worked up through the ranks, until finally we have man as the highest expression of the evolutionary process.

Now the fact is, the scientific law itself indicates that exactly the reverse is so, that that which is more complex will gradually deteriorate into that which is less. That which is more useful will deteriorate into that which is less useful. And we can illustrate this very easily. If you have a brand new shining car, and you put it out in a vacant field, according to the evolutionary idea (and this almost sounds like a caricature, and really it is). But nevertheless it illustrates the point.), if you left that car long enough, let's say a few hundred thousand years, pretty soon that car would become a more useful object. It would become even more shiny and bright and wonderful than when it was first put out in that field. Now we know that just exactly the reverse is true.

If you put that car out in that field and then come back ten years later, it will have rusted, it will have begun to deteriorate all over. And if you came back a thousand years later, the odds are that the whole thing would have been completely returned to the dust of the earth.

So, you see, the theory of evolution is exactly contrary to the laws of science

themselves. The theory of evolution is not scientific in any sense. It is not practical, it is not logical. But it is a requirement for unsaved man, who desperately is trying to kid himself that there is no judgment upon his sins, because the theory of evolution is based on a universe that does not have a God.

And therefore, if there is not God, there need not be hell. There need not be a Judgment Day.

CALLER: Just one more question. How old is the earth then?

HC: According to the Bible, the earth is 13,000 years old. As I have tried to work out the chronology of Genesis 5 and Genesis 10, I believe that creation occurred in the year 11,013 BC and the Flood occurred in the year 4990 BC.

Now incidentally the oceans themselves, completely apart from what the Bible says, give very mute testimony to the fact that the earth is very young. In the oceans we of course have minerals, or elements, ions of elements actually would be a proper term to use, which are a product of the continental masses. As the rains fall on the continents, there is erosion, isn't there? And the dirt and the rock flecks, and so on, are swept eventually into the streams. And from the streams they finally find their entrance into the ocean.

Now if scientists could measure the amount of silicon (which is one of the elements that's very common throughout the world) flowing in these ocean streams into the ocean every year, and make an estimate of how many tons of silicon went in, and then if they could estimate the amount of silicon that actually was in suspension in ocean water, then they could obtain a figure as to how long it took for this silicon to come into the ocean water.

Now according to the theory of scientists who are talking about the age of the earth, the earth is four and a half billion years old, and our present oceans are at least 150,000,000 years old. And so you would think that therefore elements have been flowing into ocean water for a long, long, long time. Well, I actually went to the Earth Science Library at the University of California at Berkeley, where there are many, many excellent books written by scientists, who know nothing about the Bible and have no relationship to the Bible. These are simply scientific books on ocean water.

And it is indeed true that scientists have measured and estimated the amount of the various elements that are going into ocean solution every year. And they have also measured the amount of these same elements, or ions of elements, that are in ocean solution. And to their amazement, at least eighteen of the elements that are in ocean solution are in such short supply that they would have been furnished by less than 1,000 years of continental weathering. Now this is exactly what one would expect if the earth, after all, was only very young. And you have some very hard droughts, and so you have differential erosion, and so some of these elements would be going into ocean solution very slowly, whereas others would go more rapidly.

Then I thought, "Well, maybe the ocean water is saturated, super-saturated by all of these elements, and they've all been going out as sediment on the floor of the ocean." But scientists, again, have written that nowhere in the world is any ocean water super-saturated. That is, nowhere is there a place in ocean water, on an average basis, where conditions prevail that heavy precipitation would occur, because the ocean water cannot contain any more elements.

But then I thought, "Maybe in spite of the fact that there is not a supersaturated situation, maybe elements could go out of ocean solution by some unknown process, and maybe the sediments on the floor of the ocean would have something to say about this." But, again, the

scientists have been doing a lot of work studying the ocean floor. And they are frankly amazed that vast areas of the ocean floor are almost bare of sediments, which is exactly what we would expect with a very young earth that's only 10 or 15,000 years of age, and where the erosion has only been occurring for this length of time.

Now scientists, of course, are puzzled about this. And they now have concocted the idea that the floor of the ocean is like a great plate, that is slowly on sliding under the continental masses. And as it slides under the continental masses, the sediments are cleaned from it. Now that's straight speculation. There's no measurement that they've ever made of the floor movement. It is straight guess work because, again, they will not accept the Biblical statement that the earth is very young.

But, you see, in this ocean water, the oceans are dramatically proving to us that the earth is, after all, very young, on the order of 10 or 15,000 years. And the Biblical statement, I believe, shows us that the world is only 13,000 years of age.

CALLER: Thank you so much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

The Age of the Earth (230D)

CALLER: My question is, is there any difference between the age of the earth as determined by geometric method and as determined by the Bible?

HC: The question that was raised is: Does the age of the earth as found in the Bible correspond in any sense with the age of the earth spoken of by the archaeologists and the geologists and paleontologists, the secular scientists?

No, there is no relationship at all. You see, the secular scientists, and unfortunately some Christian scientists, also, look at the evidence that they find concerning what might relate to the age of the earth, but they have to make guesses as to how to understand this evidence. And these guesses are called assumptions.

Now the conclusions that they derive by examining the evidence in the light of the guesses or assumptions obviously cannot be any more accurate than the guesses or assumptions themselves. And therefore their conclusions are quite erroneous. Now they look at a rock, and they examine the content of that rock. They know exactly how much of certain radiometric minerals are in it, and how many isotopes of something else are in it, and they can measure this very accurately.

But then they make assumptions. They assume, for example, that all things have continued, without any catastrophic change, since the very beginning. And they assume other things of a like nature. And then they finally decide that this rock is 200 million years old, or whatever their conclusion may be.

Now their assumptions, of course, are only guesses. And in fact we know that some of their guesses are outright incorrect, because the Bible teaches that all things did not continue the same since the beginning. The Bible teaches that there was a flood in Noah's day, that absolutely changed the surface of the earth. And this must be taken into account, if we're going to look at any evidence that we find today.

Now the Bible teaches, I believe, that the earth is something like 13,000 years old. Scientists talk about an earth that is four and a half billion years old. Quite a difference, isn't it? The amazing thing, however (and not really amazing at all), is that when we look at the evidence carefully, we can find from the evidence that the scientists produce plenty of indication that the world is not millions and millions of years old, but rather that it is more like ten or fifteen thousand years old. And at another time we might

go into some of that evidence.

What Happened to the Dinosaurs? (325D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a child in the second grade, and in school they're studying about dinosaurs. And she was reading some of the answers to me, and it says that they lived 200 million years ago. Now I have heard someone say that you wrote a book called "Adam When" and you believe that our earth is really not as old as scientists believe. Now I have two questions. Can you tell me how old you think our earth is, and where did these dinosaurs go? I mean, if Noah was to bring two of every animal onto the ark, what happened to the dinosaurs?

HC: The question is, How old is the earth? I believe the earth is about 13,000 years old. I believe that God created the heavens and the earth, Adam and Eve and the dinosaurs and all the other animals, in the year 11,013 BC, according to Biblical reckoning.

Now according to the fossil record, the archaeological record, the early earth was much warmer than it is today. They have found many fossils of broad-leaved plants, fossil fuels (oil and so on) in the earth, which come from heavy vegetation that existed early on the earth. The evidence is that during the first several thousand years of the earth's existence it was warmer than it was subsequent to the flood.

Then, in the year 4990 BC, the flood occurred (6023 years after creation). Noah was commanded by God to put two of every kind, as well as seven of the clean animals, into the ark. And this would have included a couple of dinosaurs, certainly. They didn't have to be full grown dinosaurs. They could have been baby dinosaurs. After all, the purpose was simply to continue the species.

After the flood, however, the earth became much colder. This would have introduced the Ice Age. The fact is, immediately after the flood, according to the theological evidence, the continents were about 30% covered by ice. Today they're still about 10% covered by ice. So the world was quite a bit colder. So the climate was not conducive to the maintenance of these large animals that were heavy vegetable eaters.

However, in the Bible itself we find language that seems to speak of this kind of a huge creature living all the way until about 1800 BC. The book of Job was written about that time, about 1800 BC, and if you read Job 41, it is speaking of some kind of a fierce animal, a very fierce animal. You might find in the margin of your Bible that it speaks of a crocodile, but that is simply somebody's speculation. The word crocodile is not found here.

And when you read the language here, you will find that it is really talking about some kind of an animal that lived, and it sounds like a huge dragon of some kind. It could very well have been a dinosaur or some related creature that still continued to live up until 1800 BC.

At any rate, as a whole kind of animal, it did become extinct, probably to a large degree as a result of the colder temperatures that followed the flood.

Now in the fossil records, which are bones of animals in the rocks, in the sandstone, that is, rocks that have been put down by water deposition, we find imprints of leaves and even footprints of animals in clay. The reason that we find them is because of the cataclysmic nature of the flood. Today fossils are not being formed. When an animal dies, gradually the skeleton of that animal withers away and returns to the dust. And it would take a huge landslide to cover that animal, and other conditions

prevailing, to produce a fossil. And that ordinarily does not happen.

But we find all kinds of animals that have been fossilized, and sea creatures and leaves and plants, because of the instantaneous, cataclysmic nature of the flood. Now it's significant that in some of the fossil beds, here in the United States, they have found the footprints of a dinosaur in the same stream bed, in the same clay strata, with the footprint of man, indicating that man and dinosaurs lived simultaneously, which of course is exactly what the Bible teaches.

CALLER: How come they never bring that up, though, when they're teaching science?

HC: Because the scientists ordinarily have decided on evolution, and they have developed their timetable for evolution. And because they have a blind faith in evolution, therefore they don't want to face these other questions. There are all kinds of embarrassing questions they could face which they do not face. They simply call that an anomaly or a puzzle that doesn't fit the pattern. But they just don't want to face this. They are locked into their evolution theories.

CALLER: Would that then go along with their finds of heads that they say are millions of years old, and they try to trace this back to then? Was this a human being from the flood time? Would that be it? Or is it an ape?

HC: You see, this introduces another very interesting fact. The Liekes, scientists who are working in Africa, frequently have their findings written up in the National Geographic Magazine. And it wasn't so many years ago that they believed that the oldest human, as we know him today, was about several hundred thousand years old. They found other fragments of skulls, or fragments of other bones. (Ordinarily they don't find a whole skeleton. All they find is some fragments, and they try to reconstruct from that.) But in an examination of these fragments they concluded that there was some kind of a man-like animal that lived as long as maybe two million years ago.

But in recent years they have found fragments of skulls, and parts of skeletons, in Africa, that date by their method to as far back as two and a half or three million years. And yet they have all the evidence of being a normal human being. And of course this is a great puzzle to these scientists. We of course who believe in the Bible say, no, that's no problem at all. First of all, their timetable is all awry. It's all wrong. While they decide that the skull is three million years old, we know that that's an impossibility, because the Bible won't permit it, and neither will the scientific evidence permit it.

If we look at the character of the oceans, and so on, it can be proven very readily, just from the scientific evidence, that this world couldn't be more than 15,000 years old, or thereabouts.

But nevertheless, on their own timetable, they find this. And we say, No, that's not a problem. The human beings have been here as long as the animals have. Now they may have found skulls and pieces of bone of apes, or monkeys, or even other animals that lived before the flood and have since become extinct. But anything at all that looks like a human is a human. Mankind began as a full-blown human being, in Adam and Eve. The fact is, Adam and Eve were more perfect humans than any of us are. We are the product of the degeneration of the human race because of sin. We have our twisted spines and our sloped shoulders, and our whatever it may be, our weaknesses in our bodies and skeletons, and so on, as a result of the curse of sin upon the earth. And Adam and Eve began as perfect humans.

CALLER: One other question. I was reading this book—and this really

started me—it said that Christ was crucified in the nude. Is that true?

HC: That is true. The Bible says that they took His garments from Him. Now you must remember that Christ had become a curse for us. To endure hell for our sins is to be under the curse of God. It is a terrible thing. It is to be cut off by God. And it is to have all of our sins exposed before God. When Christ was stripped of His garments, that was really a figure of the fact that He had become sin for us. He stood exposed before God, with all of our sins. He had become a curse for us. It is the language of the Bible to indicate the awfulness of the price that Christ paid for our sins.

Someone says, "He was crucified in the nude," as if, "Horrors! He was naked. Couldn't somebody throw a blanket around Him?" No, no. That isn't the point at all. The fact that His garments were stripped from Him indicated He had come under the curse of God. He was the off-scouring. He was the refuse. He had been abandoned by God. He was naked before God. It's to indicate the terrible, terrible thing that Christ had to undergo in order that He might be our Savior.

CALLER: It makes you just want to sit down and cry that they would do that to our God.

HC: But this was required in order that we might be saved. This is the evidence of God's love. Had Christ not done this... remember, they did not crucify Christ. But Christ willingly came to be crucified. Christ was born to be crucified. Christ came to be crucified. Christ came to Jerusalem and made certain that they would crucify Him. It was His purpose to be crucified. This was the only way that He could become our Savior. This had to be, because of God's love for us.

Creation Versus Evolution (348A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Good evening. Perhaps you could help me a little bit with a kind of perplexing problem I've encountered. I go to a local college, and I'm taking a geology course. And in the course of studies there have been a number of people who have come into the class and preached on their evolutionary theories. And the textbooks of course promote the theory that the earth is some four and a half billion years old.

It's very hard to refute these claims, because the staff or faculty has the general opinion that they know everything that has happened from the beginning of time, almost on a personal level. They feel very confident in their belief. Could you possibly give me any kind of background to help me in these studies, so that at least in my own mind I could have your view of the age of the earth. And how can I prove this out for my own well being?

HC: The question is raised, "How can I know that the earth is not four and a half billion years old? How can I know something that is more trustworthy than what is being offered by scientists today?"

First of all, any secular scientist (and unfortunately, a few Christian scientists, that is, scientists who are Christians, who have come to the conclusion that there is such a thing as theistic evolution) effectively denies the Biblical account of the Flood of Noah's day. You read the language of Genesis 6, 7 and 8. Read it very carefully, very slowly. That language leaves no possibility except that at one time in the earth's existence this earth was destroyed by water, so that there was tremendous mountain building afterwards, and so on. The fact is, read Psalm 104 in the light of Genesis 6, and there it says, in Psalm 104, that the valleys were deepened and the mountains were raised up, and so on, to

indicate that there was a place for the water that came upon the earth.

Now these secular scientists do not acknowledge that such a drastic thing happened. They operate from the vantage point that everything has been uniform, that change has occurred without that kind of a cataclysmic event. The Flood alone, therefore, negates all of their presuppositions.

You must also remember that when they look at evidence, they measure, for example, the amount of Carbon 14 in carbon, and they measure the amount of Carbon 12, and then they make certain assumptions as to what this means. Well, carbon is a little more exact, because it's more recent in history. The half life of carbon is only 5,730 years, or thereabouts. But let's talk about argon, or uranium — some of this radiometric dating. They measure the various elements that are in a rock, and then they make certain conclusions, or make certain assumptions concerning what has happened in the past. And on the basis of these assumptions they arrive at their conclusions.

Well obviously, their conclusions can't be any more accurate than their assumption. And so while they may be very confident of what they're stating, we know from the beginning that their assumptions are erroneous. Their assumption that there's never been a flood, their assumption that all things have begun from an evolutionary beginning, these are wrong assumptions, right from the very beginning.

More than that, from the Bible we have the clear statement in Genesis 1 and Exodus 20, and elsewhere, that God created the heavens and the earth in six days. God spoke, and it was so. This immediately negates everything that the secular scientist is saying, because he denies that God can bring these things into existence just by speaking.

We have a powerful dramatization of this creative act at the wedding of Cana of Galilee, as it's recorded in John 4. There were these six large stone jars filled with water, which is H₂O, hydrogen and oxygen. And instantaneously Jesus turned it into wine. Now wine also has the element carbon in it. Therefore it was a creative act.

We see it when He multiplied the loaves and the fish. This was an act of creation. Only God could do this. And if He could do it in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, certainly He could do it when He created the heavens and the earth.

Moreover, if you've studied Carbon 14 at all, have you noticed that at some point they've indicated that the rate of formation of new Carbon 14 (and it's formed by the act of cosmic rays coming into our atmosphere) all over the world is at a higher rate than the overall rate of disintegration of Carbon 14. The rate of disintegration actually is about seventy-five percent of the rate of formation.

Now actually, if this world were hundreds of thousands of years old, even as short a life-span as 100,000 years, and if Carbon 14 had been being formed at a uniform rate for the last 100,000 years, eventually you would get equilibrium, so that the rate of decay all over the world would equal the rate of formation. So scientists puzzle over the fact that the rate of decay is only about seventy-five percent of the rate of formation. It's the kind of a phenomenon that we would expect if the beginning of the formation of Carbon 14 was a very recent phenomenon, that is, if the sun had been created only very recently.

Let me illustrate this way. Let's say the rate of formation of new Carbon 14 was one hundred pounds per year. That's a ridiculous figure, but just for the sake of argument, it was hundred pounds per year. Well, the first year, that means at the end of a year there would be hundred pounds of Carbon 14 in the whole earth that could begin to disintegrate. The

next year another hundred pounds would have been formed. So now you have two hundred pounds that disintegrate. So the rate of decay would be at a higher, there would be more pounds disintegrating every year.

Let's say that one pound disintegrated every year out of every hundred pounds that existed. Well, the first year one pound would disintegrate, the second year two hundred pounds now have been formed. There would be two pounds disintegrating. The third year another hundred pounds was formed, and so there would be three pounds disintegrating, until finally you'd get equilibrium. So the amount going in would equal the amount going out. And that's what you would expect if the world was hundreds of thousands of years old.

The fact is, however, a lot lesser amount is being formed. That is, a lot lesser amount is being disintegrated than that which is being formed, indicating that the beginning of the formation of Carbon 14 was fairly recent. And I think it can be shown that it identifies with the longevity that the Bible talks about, namely, about 13,000 years.

Now these are just a few things. Or again, if you look at the oceans. Now you might talk to your geology teacher same time about the oceans. In geology you learn about the continental masses, you learn about the scaling of rock because of ice action, you learn about the disintegration of rock because of the action of wind and of rain, and how these sediments flow into the rivers and then into the ocean.

Now you would expect that if the earth had been around for a long time, let's say even as short a period as 1 million years, there ought to be some kind of an equilibrium between the oceans and the continental masses. That is, we ought to find the same percentages of elements in the oceans and in the sediments on the ocean floor as we find in the continental masses, because through a million years, through this kind of erosion that takes place, the various elements as they appear percentage-wise in the continental masses would also appear in the ocean water.

Actually, there are all kinds of books written by scientists who know nothing about the Bible, and they have measured rather carefully the percentages of the various elements in the continental masses, and they have measured the various elements in solution in ocean water, as well as on the ocean floor, and there's no relationship between the two. That would also indicate that the oceans are very young.

More than that, you would expect that if you knew how much of any element flowed into ocean solution each year from all of the continental masses, then if you could measure the same amount in ocean solution, you would be able to tell how old that ocean really is. In other words, let's say there was a pound of silicone that actually eroded each year from all of the continental masses all over the earth, and eventually ended up in the ocean in ocean solution. And that was occurring at the rate of about one pound per year, again a ridiculous figure, but only for the sake of this illustration. And now you went into the ocean, and you took samples of ocean water and found that after calculating all of the amount of silicone in the ocean solution you found that there were a million pounds of silicone in ocean solution, or on the ocean floor, that would indicate that probably the earth then is a million years old, because it would take about a million years, at an erosion rate of a pound per year, to arrive at a million pounds in ocean solution.

Well, scientists have actually done this. They've measured the elements in ocean solution. Lo and behold, they were flabbergasted to find that eighteen of the elements in ocean solution have a

residency of less than 1,000 years. That is, they are in such short supply in ocean solution that they would have been provided by less than 1,000 years continental weathering. Now that's an astounding fact, if indeed these oceans had been millions of years old.

The fact is, silicone, in measuring the amount of silicone in ocean solution, they find that it is found in ocean solution in an amount that would have been provided by about 8,000 years of continental weathering. Well, that's very close to the figure that the Bible shows to be the age of the earth. The Bible shows the age of the earth to be 13,000 years, I believe. And so that figure isn't far off at all.

Of course you might ask, "Well then, maybe you only find silicone in short supply in ocean solution because it's all on the ocean floor." But they've done a lot of work on the ocean floor in recent years. And again they find that most of the ocean floor is almost bare of sediment. Vast areas are almost bare of sediment.

To get around this, scientists have concocted the idea that the ocean floors are great plates that slip under the continental masses, cleaning themselves. And that's the reason that we have the ocean floor almost bare of sediment. Well, that's purely a theory. There's no evidence that this is happening. In fact, there's lots of evidence that this is not happening. If this were occurring, you would think there would be a vast pile-up of sediments along all of the continental areas. And this just isn't the case. There are deeper sediments along same of the continental shelves, but not along all of them.

If scientists would look at all the evidence they have in view, and dismiss their evolutionary theories, which is actually the ideology that goads them on, and would get rid of their inhibition insofar as recognizing a Creator God, then they could look at their evidence with open eyes, and they'd have to conclude that the world is 10 or 15,000 years old.

CALLER: The theory of plate-tectonics seems to permeate the entire course, since this is a recent discovery, and seems to, scientifically, as they see it, provide the answer as to why the continents have shifted and the poles have shifted. They promulgate this theory that they have found the reason for their theories are the magnetic lines in rock, which they have taken core samples from in the earth, showing that at one time in history the rocks were pointed in another direction than what the poles are now. Since they don't feel that the poles shifted, they feel, I suppose, that the plates have shifted.

It's very hard to talk to a professor who holds this theory, naturally.

HC: All you have to ask him is, where is the proof of this? Now the magnetic bands, that is no proof. Those magnetic bands could have been caused from lots of things. In the flood of Noah's day, when the bowels of the earth were opening up, and the volcanoes were acting, and the magna was flowing from the earth, and the waters from heaven were enveloping the earth, there would have been all kinds of erratic motions of the earth, possibly, which could have caused a shifting in the magnetic bands, backwards and forwards.

They simply are in theory relating the magnetic bands to plate-tectonics. Now the interesting thing is that thirty years ago, or thereabouts, the idea of plate-tectonics was virtually unknown altogether. But you see, as some of these other questions have surfaced, they've got to find an answer. And rather than go to the Bible, they concoct another theory. And it's purely a theory.

They have found, for example, that there was at one time one huge continent. And they propose that over the last 150

million years this continent has broken up, and now we have the North and South American continents, and so on. Well, they're correct, of course, that there was one huge continent at one time. The Bible indicates this.

But there's no evidence that they have been able to bring forth that there is movement between the continents today. With all of their ability to measure the speed of light and all kinds of other things, they have not been able to measure any perceptible movement between the continents, which is what you would expect if this theory of plate-tectonics held, or if this theory that the continents are drifting apart at the rate of several centimeters a year, so that over the last 150 million years we have what we have today, held. The Bible simply says that in the days of Peleg (and according to the Biblical record, it was about 5,000 years ago) the earth was divided. The Bible is very matter of fact that there was one continent, and the earth was divided.

But it doesn't suggest for a moment that this is a very slow moving kind of thing.

CALLER: Then it is cataclysmic, according to the Bible, I'm just curious as to what evidence is shown in that respect, something to approach this man with. I don't want to really contest his viewpoint, other than from a scientifically based type of proposition. They do have kind of a way of reducing a student to look like a blithering idiot, especially if it has anything to do with a belief in God. So that's why I'm trying to approach him in this way.

HC: Well, of course you cannot convince your college professor that he is wrong. He is blinded in his faith. His faith is in a "no God" creator, that is, that there is no Creator God. His faith is in his evolutionary theories. He builds everything around this. He is altogether blind in this.

The best I would suggest is that you do some research on the matter of oceans. I wrote a book called "Adam When," which you might get at your Christian bookstore, which lays out this thing. And I think in one of the chapters I went into this whole matter of the ocean situation. And read that very carefully. And then pose some of those questions to him, and see what he wants to do with them.

CALLER: Excellent. I appreciate your time, and I will make one last comment. One other class I'm taking is Psychology. I called about a week ago, and I wanted to know about psychic people, whether to avoid them or not. And it just happens, as a follow-up to that, that the college has gone ahead and recruited the services of a local psychic person, who is going to be speaking at the college, and it's a required part of the curriculum, that everyone attend this. And of course a psychic will be giving demonstrations of the occult upon members of the audience. And I thought that you might like to know the trend that the school system is going in. And of course if you don't attend they make you out to look like a religious nut. So I'm sure you're familiar with that.

HC: You see, at that point you have to make a decision. Am I going to allow myself to be maligned, to be slandered, to be called a religious nut, and stand for Christ nevertheless? Or am I going to try to be accepted by all and deny Christ?

As Christians we're going to suffer affliction. As Christians we are going to be maligned. We are going to be misunderstood. We, however, must remember, ultimately we answer to God, not to man. And it's before Him that we stand or fall. And we want to be sure that we stand faithful before God.

CALLER: Okay. I didn't think it would ever come to this in the school system, but it's quite a shock. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

The Descendancy of Black People in Gen 10:6 (418A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I would like to know if black people are descended from Ham, one of the sons of Noah.

HC: Yes, that is correct. The residents of Africa, of North Africa, of Babylon, of the land of Canaan, are the descendants of Ham.

CALLER: Okay. In my Bible, the Living Bible illustrated, there is a footnote that Ham was not the ancestor of the Negro as once erroneously supposed. Now from the information that you have just supplied me, I would like to get this out of the Bible.

HC: Well, the book that you're referring to is not the Bible. You can depend upon that.

CALLER: The book, "The Way," is not considered the Bible?

HC: That is not the Bible. That is a paraphrase of some kind, and it is not the Bible. Now we read in Genesis 10, in verse 6, "The sons of Ham, Cush and Mizraim and Phut and Canaan, the sons of Cush; Seba and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtecha, and the sons of Raamah; Sheba and Dedan." Then it goes on and talks about Cush, that he begat Nimrod, and so on.

Now Cush is related to Ethiopia, which of course is in Africa. As near as we can tell, the inhabitants of Africa and North Africa, which would be Egypt and right up into the fertile crescent, Mesopotamia, where Babel and Erech were, and the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, which later on became the land of Israel, were all the descendants of Ham. Now that doesn't mean that the sons of Japheth or the sons of Shem did not also come into these lands. Nor does it mean anything bad that certain peoples are the descendants of Ham. There is nothing negative in the Bible concerning this particularly. It simply means that Ham was one of the three sons of Noah, and certain nations came from Ham and certain nations came from Japheth and certain nations came from Shem. I'm not even certain how all this devised.

CALLER: Okay. Then I am to assume that "The Way" is not the Bible.

HC: Anything that calls itself a paraphrase of the Bible is not the Bible at all. It is simply the work of men who are trying to develop some kind of a commentary on the Bible, but it must never be considered to be the Bible.

CALLER: Fantastic. Thank you very much. Good night.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Some Questions on Creation (418B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: Hello. I wonder if the Bible says anything about how long the time was between the creation of Adam and Eve and the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. And also, how do you determine the age of the earth? Also, I would like you to comment on Carbon 14 dating. I don't understand that. And I'm also interested in the New Heaven and the New Earth. The Bible says that this earth is going to melt away, and there will be a New Heaven and a New Earth. Is this going to be a literal earth. And if so, what would be the nature of it?

HC: All right. The first question had to do with how long were Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before they fell into sin? The Bible doesn't tell us how long it was, but we do know that Adam was 130 years old, I believe, when he begat Seth. We read this in Genesis 5:3: "And Adam lived 130 years and begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image, and called his name Seth."

Now before Seth was born, according to the Biblical record, we have these events that did transpire. Adam and Eve were created in the Garden of Eden, they fell into sin, and they were driven out of the Garden. Eve conceived and bore Cain. She conceived again and bore Abel. These two sons grew up to manhood. Cain eventually killed Abel, and then after this Seth was born. That means that all of these events took place with a span of 130 years.

Therefore I would estimate that Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden a comparatively short period of time. It may be as short a period of time as a few months, certainly not more than a few years. That's all we can do. We can only speculate. We can't really know for certain.

The second question that was raised is concerning the dating or the chronology of mankind. There was a man named Usher several hundred years ago who worked out a chronology based on what he thought was the Biblical data, and he came up with a date of 4004 BC for the creation of Adam. However, in inspecting his chronological plan, he was not true to the Bible. For example, he figured that the nation of Israel was 215 years in Egypt. Well, the Bible is very straightforward and clear in saying that they were 430 years in Egypt. So his dating program is contrary to the Bible. Secondly, it is contrary to science altogether. Written history goes back in unbroken fashion at least to 3000 BC, or approximately to 3000 BC. According to Usher's chronology, the Flood occurred around 2300 BC. And certainly if the historical record since the invention of writing went back to 3000 BC, it would have recorded this flood. Usher's chronology was neither Biblical, nor did it match the scientific data.

In studying the Bible, however, I have found that the Genesis account of Genesis 5 and Genesis 10 or 11 is really a calendar. When it talks about Noah, for example, it says that in the 600th year, the second month, the 27th day of Noah's life the Flood came (or whatever the date was). At least the calendar was tied to the age of Noah. Now that was a big clue as to how God kept the calendars. We keep our calendar the same way. We say the year 1977 AD, Anno Domini, the Year of Our Lord. We tie it to the birth date of Jesus. Presumably He was born 1900 and some years ago. In Exodus 6 we find certain information concerning the death ages of the descendants of Levi. We find that Levi died at the age of 133, or something like that. He had a descendant who died at the age of 137 and who in turn had a descendant who died at the age of 133, who in turn was the father of Aaron. And we know from the Biblical record that Aaron left the land of Egypt at the age of 83, according to the Bible.

When we assume that these four men—Levi, Kohath, Amram and Aaron—in their own time were the calendar reference patriarchs, even as Noah was in his day, then Kohath would have been born the year Levi died, Amram would have been born the year Kohath died, and Aaron would have been born the year Amram died. When we make these assumptions, we find that indeed the timetable works out exactly with the other information the Bible offers, namely, that the nation of Israel was in Egypt for 430 years.

What I'm trying to say is that God has built within the framework of the Biblical record the evidence that God indeed kept the timetable of mankind in a certain bloodline, in the nation of Israel it was in the tribe of Levi, by making each man that came on the scene a calendar reference patriarch during his lifespan. In the year that he died someone else in his bloodline, who was born the year that he died, became the next calendar reference patriarch.

To make a long story short, following this premise, and working back through the information wherever we can dig it out in the Bible, I have come to the conclusion, and I believe that this is accurate, that Adam and Eve were created in the year 11,013 BC. The Flood took place in the year 4990 BC. Abraham was called out of Haran in the year 2092 BC. The division of the continents occurred about 3100 BC, and so on. And in studying the scientific evidence I find no contradiction of any kind.

Now the question is raised, then what about the radioactive dating, where scientists look at rocks and measure the various chemicals within the rocks, the isotopes, and they conclude that this rock is two million years old, or whatever? We must remember that the evidence scientists look at is true and trustworthy, of course. They can physically measure exactly how much of this is in the rock or how much of that. That is accurate.

But when the scientist is going to decide how old that rock is, based on this evidence, he must make certain assumptions. One grand assumption that all scientists make in this kind of dating is that this earth has continued, substantially without change, from its beginning. They disregard altogether, for example, the Flood of Noah's day. They absolutely pay no attention to the fact that at one time this world was altogether deluged by water so that the very face of the earth was changed altogether, and all of mankind was destroyed. This is indicative of the fallacious assumptions that scientists make.

Now obviously, if their assumptions are incorrect, the conclusions that will derive from their assumptions will be as incorrect as their assumptions. Therefore we're not surprised that they come up with conclusions that are altogether contrary to the Bible.

When we actually read the Bible, however, and start out with the Biblical premises, and now look at the evidence that the scientists find, we find their evidence is altogether in agreement with the Bible. As an illustration, the question is sometimes raised concerning radial carbon dating. Now there is an isotope of carbon that is formed that has a half-life of 5730 years, I believe. And it is formed in the first place by the activity of cosmic rays bombarding the atmosphere. And these in turn are formed by the sun and the light-bearers. Now if the earth were, say, 100,000 years old, or a million years old (pick any large number of this nature), then there should exist a state of equilibrium insofar as carbon 14 is concerned. That is, there ought to be as much new carbon 14 being formed each moment of time or each year of time as there is being decayed into carbon 12. There ought to be a state of equilibrium.

The fact is, however, scientists are amazed to find that this state of equilibrium does not exist. It's what they are looking for, but it does not exist. They find that the amount of carbon that decaying is only about 75% of that which is being formed, exactly the condition that would prevail if this earth were only 10 or 15,000 years of age. In other words, beginning with the year 1, when the sun was created, at the time of the creation of Adam and Eve, if at that time the formation of carbon 14 began, and continued for 10 or 15,000 years, by now we would have that condition where we would have about 75% of carbon 14 actually decaying as compared with the amount that is being formed, new carbon that is being formed.

I give this very roughly and very generally only to indicate that the very anomaly or questions that the scientist raises (and he calls them anomalies or questions, because they do not agree with his assumptions and his conclusions) do show us that the Bible is correct. The Bible does supply the

answers as to why these unforeseen problems arise in the scientific evidence. Now the last question that was raised is: What does the Bible say about the New Heaven and the New Earth? We don't have a lot of information. II Peter 3 describes it as a place where righteousness dwells. Revelation 21:1 says that the seas are no more. Isaiah 65 or 66 indicates it is a place of great bliss, even as we find in Revelation 21 and 22. There's no suffering or sorrow.

We know there is no sun. Jesus Christ is the Sun; He is the Light. There is no temple. Jesus Christ is the Temple. There is no sorrow, there is no affliction, there is no sin. It, of course, is a world, a universe, that is altogether different from this universe because it is populated by different kinds of beings. This universe, this earth, is populated by men with flesh and blood and bones. We are very material in existence. Our dimensions are length and width and height. It's a beautiful creation because it was created by God, that is, this creation. But this creation is altogether designed for physical man as we now exist, along with the animals and the birds and the fish, and so on.

The new creation, however, is created for people who have their resurrected spiritual bodies. And the Bible says that flesh and blood shall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore there's a whole new set of dimensions. I don't know what these are, because my mind can't go beyond the three dimensions of length, width and height, that is, that which I can taste or feel or touch.

But nevertheless it has to be designed to accommodate people who are resurrected spiritual bodies. Secondly, it will be the place where God Himself dwells with us in all of His sovereign majesty and infinite glory. This earth could not go on dwelling here in His glory. We would all be consumed, the Bible says. We couldn't stand His presence. In order for us to be in His eternal presence forevermore, in the New Heaven and the New Earth, it has to be a different kind of a creation.

We can depend upon this, that God is not limited in His ability to produce something beautiful. We can see fantastic beauty and wonder in the wings of a butterfly. We can see it in a rainbow. We can see it in a rose. We can see it in the eyes of a newborn baby. We can see it in a mother's smile. We can see it in the song of a meadowlark. We can see it in a leaf. We can see it in a thousand different ways, the matchless, matchless ability of God to create that which is wonderful and beautiful and marvelous.

But this world does not contain the limit. It is not the final framework in which God can demonstrate His ability to create that which is marvelous and beautiful and wonderful, and so on, to behold. You can depend upon it that the New Heaven and the New Earth will be again as beautiful in its own way, and maybe even more beautiful, than this present earth, because it is God who creates it. It is going to be simply wonderful beyond words to describe. There are no human words that can really describe it, because it is outside of time. It's outside of our dimensional system. It's in the presence of God's glory. Therefore there is no possible way that we can really describe the New Heavens and the New Earth, any more than we can really describe what we will be when we have our spiritual bodies. All we know is that, to use a phrase that the Bible uses, we'll know that it is glorious, glorious, glorious.

But let me underscore this. The only people who will be in that New Heaven and New Earth will be those who have become born again, those who have responded to the Gospel, those who have looked upon themselves honestly as sinners under the wrath of God, who have cried out to God for mercy and

have thrown themselves on the mercies of God, hanging their whole life on Him as their Lord and Savior. Only saved people will enter the New Heaven and the New Earth. The Bible says outside (and outside is hell) is where mankind will be who are unsaved. They will be enduring the wrath of God in an eternity of hell. And that is where you will go if you are unsaved.

If you are not saved tonight, you are taking the greatest chance known to man. Now you may be unsaved because you really realize that to become saved means you've got to turn from your sins. It means that you've got to surrender your will to God. And for the time being you want to have the pleasures of this world. You feel that this is too great a sacrifice to make at this time. Maybe later on you are willing to give up your sins and cast your lot with Christ. Now this is really playing Russian Roulette with a vengeance, because you have absolutely no assurance that you're going to live until tomorrow morning. You are not guaranteed one more breath. What you're really saying is, as Esau of old, "Give me my mess of pottage right now, my joy right now. And I'll take my chances with eternity."

Now the trade is a fantastically bad bargain. That bowl of soup that you're having now, the pleasures that you're deriving right now, you're going to risk paying for by an eternity in hell, for these few pleasures. Now that is a very big payment to make for a few pleasures. You're taking an awful chance, hoping that you will live to enjoy these pleasures and still be able in time to come to Christ. And you have no assurance that you're going to have that time. The Bible says, "How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?" The Bible says, "Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation." Don't wait. Don't walk that tightrope, taking that chance. Take your eyes off that bowl of pottage, the pleasures of this moment. It really is unimportant. Put your eyes on Heaven, and think how wonderful that is, and begin to desire Heaven with all your heart.

And as you begin to desire Heaven and eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ, an eternity where there will be no suffering or sorrow, then you're going to find that the things of this world look pretty jaded and much like nothing. And you'll begin to cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me. I am a sinner. I don't want to come under the wrath of God. I don't want to continue this way."

The Difference Between Spirit and Soul (552A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: In I Thessalonians 5:23 it says, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God that your whole Spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ." Could you possibly explain the difference between the human spirit and the human soul?

HC: The question is, how are we to understand I Thessalonians 5:23, where it talks about your whole spirit and soul and body, being preserved blameless unto the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ?

Actually, only in this verse and one other in the Bible do we find that it talks about the soul and Spirit and body all in one sentence. Normally the soul is a synonym for the spirit of man, or the spirit is a synonym for the soul of man. We know that the body is what goes in the grave. That's easy to understand. We know that in our soul we go to be with the Lord Jesus Christ when we die, that is, if we are saved. And that is sometimes called the spirit. But why would God use the term soul and Spirit together here?

The word spirit also can be translated breath, and breath is the evidence of

life. Now both unsaved man as well as saved man has the breath of life, and that returns to God at the time that we die. However, our breath does not have uniqueness. There isn't the breath of one man as opposed to the breath of another man. Breath is simply the fact that we live, that we have life. And it is the word spirit.

And so the only thing I can think of is that God here has in view the breath, the soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, our life is preserved and we will continue to live eternally.

CALLER: There is no real distinction.

HC: There's no Biblical distinction that I'm aware of between soul and spirit as being a substantive, unique part of human existence. Soul and spirit are used interchangeably about the spirit essence of man. The body of course is the physical or the flesh part of man. And that is all that the personality of man consists of.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

The Place of the Earth in the Universe (584A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I have a question. Nowadays the trend scientifically is toward Einstein's Theory of Relativity. He was, as I guess everyone knows, a scientist born in Germany who fled Germany in, I guess, the 30's. He borrowed a lot from a man named Albert Michelson, who was born in Germany or Prussia, and was involved in the Michelson-Marley experiment, and he had written publications on the velocity of light and light waves and their uses. And there were other people. A man by the name of Hans Warbigger, who didn't have much publicity in the United States, but did in Germany, due to a particular philosophy also had an interpretation of the universe based upon what he called eternal ice.

All these people have their own points of view as to what is the universe, what governs the universe. By the way, the Michelson-Marley experiment wanted to prove the relative motion of the earth to the universe - or in those days I guess they called it the ether, or whatever it was. But I was just wondering. Your specialty is the Bible, specifically. How would you define, insofar as your understanding of the Bible is concerned, God's plan as revealed in the scriptures of the earth and its relationship to the universe? And I'll take your answer over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you very much. A very interesting question. Actually, mankind is fascinated by this grand universe in which he finds himself. He takes his mightiest telescopes, even radio telescopes, and points them out into deep space and finds that there are galaxies of stars extending out billions of light years into space. With light traveling at the rate of 186,000 miles per second, they figure out how far that would travel in a year, and then measure that by several billions years, and you get an idea how far distant some of the stars are.

And wherever he looks, he finds billions upon billions of stars, far beyond his ability to count them. And he looks at this and he wonders, what is this universe? How did it come into being? What's going to happen in the future? He asks all kinds of questions.

Well now, it's very interesting that the Bible puts all of this into its proper perspective. We of course, being just a very tiny little individual on a very great earth, and the earth being only a very tiny little speck in our solar system, or at least within the galaxy in which our solar

system is located, we look with awe and wonder at this universe.

But when we get the proper perspective and we realize that there is a God who created all of this, then we can bring the whole thing down to size. Now the Bible teaches, in Genesis 1, and throughout the Bible, that God's first concern was the earth, the earth, not the universe, not the stars, not the sun, not the moon, not anything out there, but the earth itself. And as a matter of fact, it's very significant that when they send these exploring missions out to some of the other planets – Mars and Jupiter, and Venus, and so on – we find there, as we look at those other planets, that they are altogether different from the earth. They have great ranges of temperature, they have huge storms going on, huge volcanoes, or whatever. Some are dry and barren. In no way do they give the slightest appearance of earth, with its trees and its beautiful flowers and its benign temperatures, its temperate climates, and all the things that we find on this earth. When we want to look at the jewel of the creation, we look at the earth, insofar as the material universe is concerned.

It's true that as we look at the universe we see other astounding things, like the brilliant light that comes from the stars, and so on. But insofar as the part of the universe that shines with the greatest brilliance, it is the earth itself, because of all the beauty and the marvelous interrelationships that exist here on this earth, and the fact that there is life on this earth. It's very significant that they have never found the slightest vestige of life on the moon or on Mars or on any of the other planets anywhere out there. And of course it's when you get to the question of life that you're really beginning to look at that which is exquisite beyond our imaginations. We can't have the slightest idea – we haven't the slightest idea, really, of what life is.

Now the Bible says that when God created the earth, and that was the center of His attention, He formed first of all the vegetation on this earth, after He had formed it out of the water, on the third day of creation. Then on the fourth day, almost in an offhand manner, God says, "He made the stars also," as if to say, what else is new?

Let's look at a molecule, or at an atom, of which molecules are made. And we see that they are very precise, with their protons and electrons. Mathematically they figure all the way through. They are like miniature universes. No matter how you divide the atom into smaller and smaller particles, you never come to the end of it. There's still some further division that can go on, if you have the equipment that enables you to do this. And of course it is God who created this. When He spoke and the earth came into existence, all of these fascinating forms of material existence came into being.

But the very same God who created the atom, which is so tiny that we cannot see it, and it takes thousands of them so that we actually see something with our naked eye, and we can't even see the electrons and neutrons that make up the atom. This is the very same God who spoke, and the stars came into existence, the billions of stars out in deep space. And why did God create the universe? Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament (that is, the expanse of the heavens) showeth His handiwork."

You see, God is indicating His power, His creative ability. And He doesn't require billions of years, as the scientists would suggest, to do all this. He simply did this on the fourth day of creation, taking six days of twenty-four hours to create the earth and the whole universe, because God is God.

Now that's what happened 13,000 years ago, according to Biblical reckoning (I believe that can be shown.) And the

Bible teaches that this universe, as mighty as it appears to us, is going to come to an end. We read in II Peter 3, and the end of the universe will be simultaneous with the end of this present earth, II Peter 3:10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise. And the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

It goes on in verse 12, "Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved. And the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for New Heavens and a New Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

And so this grand universe, that has existed now for the same period of time, namely, 13,000 years, is going to be destroyed on the last day. And we're coming to that very rapidly. We're approaching that last day very, very rapidly. All the signs in the Bible that relate to the return of Christ and the end of the universe are beginning to develop before our eyes.

And so the duration of the universe is going to be approximately 13,000 years. Now one of the interesting facts that keeps the scientists going in their attempt to understand the universe and understand matter, understand this creation, is that they find that everything obeys very precise rules. Have you ever thought about this? The reason that scientists were able to put a man on the moon (that's a long way out there in space) or that they could send a space mission out to one of the other planets that are hundreds of thousands of miles away from here and even millions of miles away from here, the reason that they're able to do that is that everything within the universe interrelates with each other in accordance with very precise mathematical relationships, because God has created it. He has designed it. The same as if you were going to build an automobile; everything has to interrelate within that automobile. Otherwise it will not function. You just can't throw a lot of materials together and then expect to have an automobile. Or if you're going to bake a cake, you just can't go into your shelf and get a little of this and a little of that, and throw it all in a pot and then expect that a cake is going to come forth. It has to be designed. There's just a certain amount of salt, a certain amount of baking soda, or flour, or whatever else you're going to put into that which you are going to bake. And only then are you going to have a beautiful cake.

And so it is in the universe. Everything is very precisely designed by God so that there is precise interrelationships with everything else. And of course, because man's mind is patterned after the mind of God, therefore he sets out to discover this. He first of all discovers that two plus two makes four, and then he discovers that two times three makes six. And then he can go on from there and get more and more involved in his mathematical equations. And he'll find that these things begin to relate with the universe. Everything is very precise.

And so as he uncovers this rule or that law, whether it's the law of gravity or the law of something else, he is simply uncovering one of the perfectly designed laws that God has laid down in establishing, in building, in designing the universe. And of course man is very grateful. He really thinks he's done something. And that of course keeps him excited and interested to keep going even further. And so he can do more and more with the elements of this universe, as he designs computers, and so on. And with computers he can go through his equations much more quickly, so that he can cover even more and do even more with the universe.

And all of this is possible because in the first instance everything in the universe, going all the way from the smallest elements of matter to protons and electrons, going all the way through the universe to the stars themselves, they all interrelate in this very precise fashion. And the only time that they don't is when the anomalies occur because of the curse that is upon this universe, upon this earth. It is under the curse of sin. It has been cursed of God, because of man's sin. And therefore there will be the viruses and the weeds and the thorns and the anomalies that develop, that don't follow a normal pattern. Otherwise everything will, the basic rules can be uncovered.

But when man comes along with his theories that the earth is four and a half billion years old, or the universe is thirteen billion years old, or whatever it may be, if it is contrary to the Bible (and of course those theories are), then you know that man has gone down a blind path. His assumptions are so erroneous that his conclusions are also so erroneous, and he should start all over again.

Actually, if scientists would start with the Bible, and I'm firmly convinced of this, if scientists would start with the Bible and try to uncover all the information they possibly could from the Bible, recognizing it is the Word of God, and use that as their foundation, and then in the light of that begin to examine the evidence they're finding, their production of new information would go far more rapidly than it has.

For example, they wouldn't be fussing around with this idea of four and a half billion years. They would realize they have to fit everything within a 13,000 year period, and then lots and lots of enigmas and problems that they can't solve would begin to fit. For example, they wonder why the floor of the ocean is so bare of sediment. If the earth has been around for millions and even billions of years and if the continents erode because of the action of ice and weather, and so on, and the erosion materials go down through the streams into the ocean, and finally when the ocean water is saturated they precipitate out as sediments on the bottom of the ocean, you would think that there would be vast quantities of sediment on the ocean floor.

But the fact is that, except along the shorelines, most of the ocean floor is relatively bare of sediments. And so scientists speculate and cogitate and meditate, and come up with schemes and theories, like platonic, namely, that the ocean floor is divided into huge plates that gradually slip under the continental masses, and thus they clean themselves of sediments, and that's why we have the bare ocean floor. Well, they wouldn't have to come up with these speculative ideas at all if they would recognize that the earth is only 13,000 years old. How much sediment would they expect to find on the ocean floor, with continental weathering going along like this?

And then when they examine the amount of elements in the ocean water, they would find that they began to approximate exactly what they would expect with a world that is only about 13,000 years of age.

Well, so much for that little bit of an essay.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

When Did the Holy Spirit First Make Himself Known? (010A)

CALLER: At what time did the Holy Spirit make Himself known to the world?

HC: The Holy Spirit made Himself known at creation. We read in Genesis 1:2: "The Spirit brooded upon the face of the waters." The Holy Spirit, who is Eternal God, was already present at

creation, and repeatedly we find references in the Old Testament to the Holy Spirit. We find that the Holy Spirit came upon Saul, to qualify him to be a king. We find that He came upon wicked Balaam, to qualify him to speak about blessings from God. And this was back in around the year 1409 BC.

The Holy Spirit spoke through Noah, the Bible says in the New Testament. This was back in 4990 BC. So the Holy Spirit has been present throughout time in the world. He is Eternal God.

Now God the Holy Spirit made Himself manifest in a very special way at Pentecost, back in AD 33, fifty days after the cross, when He began His work, which was actually a two-pronged work. First of all, He qualified every born again believer to be a witness. Beginning at that point in time, every born again believer received that ability, to be a witness. This was not so before that time. Only occasionally God so qualified a person. And secondly, at that time it was God's purpose that the Holy Spirit would bring the Word of God into power, so that it would free men from the shackles of sin. And so we see this very dramatically at Pentecost, when 3000 are saved. The power of the Gospel became manifest in the new and wonderful way that had not been so to the same degree before.

The Work of the Holy Spirit (013B)

CALLER: I'd like to know, how does the Holy Spirit work?

HC: The Holy Spirit is Eternal God. The Holy Spirit has always been present on the earth. He is active in every aspect of God's program. He was active at creation, Genesis 1:2: "The Spirit brooded upon the face of the waters." The Holy Spirit came upon various kings of Israel, to qualify them as king. The Holy Spirit came upon saved as well as unsaved men, so that they might declare God's Word. Balaam would be an example of an unsaved man. The prophets would be examples of saved men.

The Holy Spirit restrains sin in the world. God keeps mankind from being more sinful than they are. Otherwise mankind would destroy themselves. And then, particularly in relationship to the born again believer, the Holy Spirit cleanses us from our sins. He is the One Who takes the shed blood of Christ, as it were, and applies it to our lives. He is the One who washes away our sins, as the Father draws us to Himself. And then the Holy Spirit indwells us and fills us so that we are qualified to be a witness. This is all the activity of the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit who is the One who gives us various gifts, so that we can be used of the Lord. He gives us the gift of faith, so that we might believe on Him. He gives us the gift, if we have it, to be a preacher, or an evangelist, or whatever. These are all part of the activity of eternal God in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

CALLER: Is it your conscience that bothers you after you read the Word of God, or what is it?

HC: Well, God works through our conscience. And this is because God's laws are written on our hearts. If we are saved, or if we are in the process of being saved, God Himself will prick our conscience and apply that Word to our heart. It's the Word itself that becomes the Living Word. As we read the Word, it's a two-edged sword, and it pierces right into our hearts and exposes us. It cuts us open, so that we are face to face with our sin. And because we were created in the image of God, and therefore we know intuitively that this is sin. And then if God has given us the faith to draw us to Himself, we'll become very sensitive to this sin, and exercised by it, so that we will begin to call out to God for help.

CALLER: I still don't understand how the Holy Spirit works, though.

HC: You're thinking in relationship to salvation? The Holy Spirit is Eternal God. Let's get that before us, number one. He is Eternal God, and God deals with mankind. The Holy Spirit restrains sin in natural man. Otherwise man would destroy himself. "Out of the heart of man comes murder, adultery, fornication, thefts," and so on. And unless God the Holy Spirit actually kept the lid on, so to speak, we'd all become Stalins and Hitlers in the shortest possible time.

The Holy Spirit also is the Person of the Godhead who is used of God to apply the Word of God to our lives, to make us sensitive to it and to be conscious of it. It is God the Father who actually draws us to Christ.

CALLER: Well, could it be like an inner voice or something like that?

HC: Well, God does not articulate to us except through the Word, but when we get under conviction, when we really begin to have a real sensitivity in our soul that we're sinners, and that we're under the wrath of God, this is because the Holy Spirit has put it there. He has begun to apply God's Word to our life.

Who is the Holy Spirit? (093D)

CALLER: Good evening. Would you please explain what the Holy Spirit is? And is the Holy Spirit with you all the time, whether you're good or bad?

HC: The question is raised: Who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is Eternal God. God manifests Himself as one God, but He also manifests Himself as three Persons. And this is a divine mystery, which no man can unravel. Our finite minds are not capable of understanding an infinite God, and certainly not this particular aspect of Infinite God.

But while there is one God, yet God reveals Himself to us as God the Father, who sent the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is also Eternal God in every sense of the word. And He also reveals Himself as the Holy Spirit, or as the Spirit of God, or as the Spirit of Christ. And the Holy Spirit is Eternal God, although He is a separate Person from the Son or from the Father.

Now the Holy Spirit has been present in the world from the very beginning. We read about Him in Genesis 1:2: "The Spirit brooded upon the face of the waters." We read about Him as He qualified Balaam to prophesy. Balaam was a very wicked man, and yet he prophesied very beautifully things of God, because the Holy Spirit came upon him. You can read about this in Numbers 23.

The Holy Spirit came upon an unsaved king, Saul, so that Saul was qualified to be a wise king, at least to some degree, a wise king over Israel. The Holy Spirit was active in the Old Testament in speaking through the prophets, through Noah, or through Isaiah, as they declared the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit was busy writing the Bible. The Holy Spirit spoke through men of old, and so what they wrote down became our Bible. This was all the activity of God the Holy Spirit.

Now the Father finally sent the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is where the second Person of the Godhead puts in His appearance, when He was born as a baby. And He went to the cross for our sins, and then He returned to the Father.

And then the work of the Holy Spirit began in earnest. And the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit being poured out, or the Holy Spirit being sent. This is language to indicate that the program of God to save the world, to save people from every nation, began in earnest. And so, beginning with Pentecost, every born again believer was qualified by the Holy Spirit to be a witness. He was filled by the Holy Spirit. This was the way he was qualified to be a witness.

And the Holy Spirit is busy breaking down the hard hearts of those who are being saved. Now the Holy Spirit is also active in restraining sin in the lives of the unsaved, so that they will not be so sinful, which is their basic nature. And such utter sinfulness would make them destroy themselves. Actually God the Holy Spirit is restraining sin in their lives.

So the Holy Spirit is very much present throughout the world. He's present within us. He fills us so that we are qualified to be a witness. He is busy in the world dealing with the unsaved, both in saving them as well as restraining sin in their lives even if they are not saved. God the Holy Spirit is Eternal God, just as much as God the Father or God the Son, who is the Lord Jesus Christ is Eternal God.

GENEALOGIES

Are Americans and Britons Descendants of Israel? (035B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I just wanted to say in response to the last caller. I kind of had a head knowledge of God, and I didn't really have a personal experience with Him until He brought sickness into my life. At the time I didn't know what was happening until after it was all over. But I found out that it brought me closer to Him. So He does work that way.

HC: He really does.

CALLER: It might be kind of frightening at first, but after awhile you look back on it, and it's pretty wonderful.

My question tonight is about the old theory that Americans and the British are descendants of the Israelites.

HC: There's not a figment of truth in it.

CALLER: But where does that idea come from?

HC: I have no idea. I have no idea where any man gets any idea. You know, our minds are as prolific in our imagination as you want to name. With our minds we can go to the moon, we can go to the stars, we can dream up all kinds of things. And if we dwell on an idea long enough, pretty soon we begin to believe it. And if someone else has had the idea before, and they wrote about it, then we're more convinced than ever that it may be true.

Ideas ultimately come out of our minds, of course. But there isn't the slightest possibility that this is true. This would be absolutely and totally foreign to the Bible.

CALLER: Have they ever traced the descendants of the tribes of Israel? Where did they disperse to?

HC: Well, yes. The Bible indicates that up until the year 722 BC we have the nation of Israel as it existed in the land of Palestine. It was about two million strong approximately, two to three million. And it consisted of two nations, the nation of Judah to the south, and the nation of Israel, comprised of the ten tribes, to the north.

In 722 BC the Assyrians came and destroyed the northern kingdom of the ten tribes. Now some they took captive into Babylon, some they left there to till the fields, and so on. And they also imported Assyrians to live there. And these became a mixed race, called the Samaritans. They still existed at the time that Jesus came.

And some left the northern area and came into the land of Judah and became part of the two tribes. So you have remnants of all the twelve tribes with the two tribes. And so that then became Israel, from the year 722 BC until 587 BC.

Then in that year, that nation, the nation of Israel as it was not constituted, predominantly of the tribes of Judah

and Benjamin with a smattering or remnant from the other ten tribes, was destroyed by the Babylonians. And some were taken captive into Babylon. Many of course were killed. And again, some were left as the poor of the land, right in the land of Palestine.

Then, beginning in 539 BC under Cyrus the Mede, and later on in 458 BC under the reign of Artaxerxes, the king of the Medes and the Persians, some of the Jews from any of the twelve tribes went back into the land of Palestine. And gradually, from this, the nation of Israel was rebuilt until it existed as the nation of Israel as it was in Jesus' day. At that time, of course, they had drifted under the heel of the Roman Empire.

Then in 70 AD the Jewish nation was destroyed by the Roman Empire. The fact is, in Jerusalem itself, according to the secular historians, something like more than a million Jews were killed. And so the nation was pretty well annihilated. And the balance were just dispersed into the nations. So they have continued to exist until the very present day, except for those who returned to Israel beginning in 1948.

Now the Europeans, and of course most Americans, because most of them come from Europe — either from England or Holland or Hungary or Spain, etc. — probably have their genealogical line completely separate all the way back to Noah. The Bible speaks of Noah, back in the year 4990 BC, that he had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now we know the Jewish nation comes from Shem. We know that the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Canaanites, the Egyptians and the people of Africa come from Ham. But the coastland peoples were the descendants of Japheth. And in all probability most of the Europeans came from Japheth.

And so the probability of England or Americans or Europeans being related to the twelve tribes, or the ten so called lost tribes (they're not really lost, because this is a figure of speech that people use, not knowing what the Bible declares) is just about nil.

CALLER: So they're not really lost.

HC: No. They've just been integrated into the nation of Israel and severely decimated by the judgments that God has brought against them.

CALLER: I think also that some people that the word Britain in Hebrew means "Son of the Covenant," or something like that.

HC: Well, I wouldn't pay any attention to that because it's not biblical.

CALLER: I have a friend who just got into that, and he's been telling me a lot about it. And I'm not that much of a Bible scholar, but I can tell that a lot of it's groundless. Did you not write something about this?

HC: No. I never am interested in writing about other religions or cults or gospels. I have written a couple of books on the Bible itself. But I just feel that it's not our job to go through life lambasting others. It's our job to positively offer what the Gospel declares, and let God bring the conviction in the heart.

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

The Question of UFO's (226A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. I have a question with relationship to UFO's. It's pretty much accepted that there is something there. But as to exactly what it is, maybe no one knows. But it seems that there is something there. I was wondering if you could possibly relate UFO's to the Bible.

HC: All right. I'll try. The question that is raised is concerning UFO's. The

observation is made that there seems to be plenty of evidence that there is really something there. Does the Bible have anything to say about this?

First of all, let's try to decide, why are people so interested in UFO's? You see, UFO's are a product of the world in which we live. We live in a world that is fundamentally convinced that the beginning of this earth and the universe was through an evolutionary process. You can pick up almost any piece of scientific literature that deals with the beginning of the world, or the nature of the world, and it will take as a fact, it will assume as a fact the idea of evolution.

It's really amazing, when you read some of the scientific journals and discover this to be so. There's not even a suggestion of a creative process or of the fact that there was a God who created it all. Now of course the reason for assuming evolution to be a fact is that man intuitively does not want to face the idea of a God who will judge him, because he knows deep in his heart that there is a Judgment Day. He knows there is a God. But if he can somehow convince himself that there is no Creator, that this world all came into being by itself, over the last eons of time, then somehow, if there is a God, He's so far removed from this creation there's nothing to worry about.

More than that, if this world has been around for millions of years, then it is probably true that it will be around for more millions years. And this means that if there is a Judgment Day, it's way beyond anything that we will ever have to worry about. All of this is subconscious, but nevertheless it is there.

Now because of the evolutionary idea (and it's firmly imbedded into all of our scientific literature), mankind has become convinced that if this sun, which is our sun, with its 9 planets rotating around it, had nine planets, then amongst the billions upon billions of stars that are found in deep space, which appear to be suns just like our sun, you would think that many many of them would also have evolved with planets revolving around them. That certainly is logical, isn't it? If our sun evolved with nine planets revolving around it, then certainly these other billions of stars to a high degree would have planets revolving around them.

Now of the nine planets revolving around the sun, if one of them evolved in such a way that it was able to support life, and actually became an environment that fostered life, so that we have our present life situation on this earth if that occurred to this planet, in our solar system, then the odds are very very great that the same thing could have happened again and again and again our in deep space, amongst the other suns that are in deep space.

And so it is therefore entirely logical to believe that there must be life out there. It is absolutely logical that there is life out there, if we can believe that our earth evolved, through a process of evolution, by blind chance, which incidentally is the most fantastic idea that man could ever concoct, because it is so far from the truth. But that's another matter.

And this, incidentally, is why so much money is spent, or at least one of the main reasons why so much money is spent, to go to the moon, and to send space probes out to Mars, and so on. Man is desperately trying to prove what he believes is a fact, that there is life out there. The interesting thing is that with all of the millions and millions of dollars that have been spent they haven't found the slightest suggestion of life in deep space, neither on the moon nor on Mars nor any other place. There just is none.

Now when you have a philosophical climate that assumes, as a fact, that there is life out there, then you've got a very fertile environment in which to see

UFO's. And this comes to the second aspect of UFO's. You see, man's mind is very tricky. If you go into a circus and go to the side show, and you watch a magician, you believe you see certain things, because your mind has been guided to make you believe that you're seeing certain things. Now you didn't really see certain things that you thought you saw. But your mind tells you that you did see them. This is of course the whole foundation of the magician. We think we see something, but we're not seeing quite what we think we see. Our minds are very tricky. We can be deceived very easily.

And so when we establish a climate, when we develop a climate where all kinds of people are convinced that there are people in outer space somewhere, and all of the Buck Rogers, Space Patrol, and novels, etc. all add to this kind of idea, pretty soon it is easy for people to begin to see literal evidence of this. And this is where the UFO's come into play.

First of all, there is a lot of phenomena that has a natural explanation, such as marsh gas, or weather balloons, and so on and so on. But people viewing these things have become obsessed with the idea that there are people in outer space. And so their mind says, "I have seen an unidentified flying object.

More than that, even though they don't see anything, they can be convinced they saw something. Our minds are very tricky. If you believe in something long enough, pretty soon you're going to see it. Now for people who believe that there's life in outer space, when they read reports of a sighting here or a sighting there, all of this is giving them further conviction. They're more certain than ever that there are unidentified flying objects. And so they are more and more ready to see one at a moment's notice. And indeed, before long they will. They may even see it with little green men, and they may even have an experience of going aboard one of the UFO's.

I think that a lot of these reports where we read that someone has seen little green figures, or has gone aboard a UFO, or whatever, are from people who really believe that they really had this experience, that they really did see these little green figures, or whatever they may be. So tricky is our mind.

And so the more there is written about it, the more convinced some become. Now the interesting thing is that when it comes to something really substantive, that is, where there is actually a UFO, which somebody can touch and which somebody can photograph, etc., these things never happen. It is always just barely there, just a little bit of evidence. "Oh, we saw something on a radar scope," or "We saw something here," or "We saw something there." But there is never anything that is really of flesh and blood variety, if you know what I mean. There's nothing that has real substance, because all of this is in the minds of men.

Now this, of course, offers a very fertile field for Satan to work, also. Satan is the great deceiver. And he of course is anxious to keep people from thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ, and thinking about the God of creation, from thinking about the Bible as being the final authority. And therefore, Satan can easily continue the deception and cause people to be more convinced than ever that they really have seen something.

Now the Bible of course teaches that the earth was created about 13,000 years ago. And the stars were created on the fourth day. So they can't be over 13,000 years old. The Bible teaches that one of the first things that's going to happen when Christ returns is that the stars will fall to the earth. The universe will begin to collapse.

There is no life out there at all, none whatsoever. It's all in man's mind, altogether. And if we place our trust

firmly in the Bible, you're not going to see any UFO's, none at all. You can't possibly see a UFO, if your trust is in the Word of God, because you're not going to be deluded by your own mind. You're not going to be deluded by all the reports that you read.

Well, thank you for that good question.

Are UFO's Somehow Related to Angelic Activity? (247C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I was calling about UFO's. Could there be a possibility of these beings from other places being angels from God?

HC: The question is raised, "Is it possible that UFO's are somehow related to angelic activity?" We know that they cannot be angels. The angels are ministering spirits sent by God on behalf of those who are being saved. And angels will not violate God's rules. God has laid down His rules that the Bible is the sourcebook of truth. We are to find God's will in the Word of God, ever since the Bible has been completed. So it cannot be angel activity.

Now it is possible that Satan, in his deceptive program, might cause people to see what they think is a UFO, even as he causes a medium, let's say, to think that she is seeing the spirit of a departed dead, let's say, or like the Witch of Endor thought she was seeing Samuel. Actually, all she was seeing was an apparition that was concocted by an evil spirit. And so this possibly could happen. Yes, this could happen.

But that doesn't mean that they are being from outer space, or that we're being invaded, or that they really have substance. You see, evil spirits are spirit beings, and there is no substance there insofar as this world is concerned.

CALLER: I believe they are, myself. And you said there are no references to UFO's in the Bible. And I can see quite a few. There are many stars that do strange things, like the star that led the wise men for so long. That was rather ironic a thing for a star to do. There was the pillar of fire that led the Jews out of Egypt, and led them to the Promised Land. There were quite a few references to pillars of fire, to stars, in those ancient days. Men didn't know what to write down. They had to write down what they saw, or what they thought they were. How would they know what to explain, other than a light of some sort, a cloud?

HC: Your observation is that since the Bible speaks about Elijah going to Heaven in a chariot of fire, or in a whirlwind with a chariot of fire, and the Bible speaks of the pillar of fire in the wilderness, and so on, that these possibly were references to UFO's, and the people who wrote the Bible didn't know quite what to write down.

Now right at this point we've got the sixty-four dollar question: Is the Bible the Word of God, or is it not? Is the Bible the work of ancient men, who didn't really know whereof they were writing, and could not really say what they'd like to say? Or is the Bible the infallible Word of God and absolutely trustworthy in all that it says? In other words, when it speaks about a pillar of fire, was it a pillar of fire? Or was it something else? And when the Bible speaks of Elijah going to Heaven in a whirlwind, with a chariot of fire, were they these things or were they something else?

Now that's where the big question is. If the Bible is going to be the Bible, and it's going to be the Word of God, then we must accept these statements to be what they say. If these writers didn't know what they were writing about, and they were actually writing about UFO's, then we have no Bible. Then we have absolutely no salvation. We have absolutely no salvation. We might as well close shop insofar as looking at the

Bible as the inspired Word of God. We might as well start searching for truth some other place, and hope that somewhere out there in the wild woolly world there's truth. Either we take the Bible, and the whole Bible, as the infallible Word of God, or we have to scrap it. You can't take part of it.

CALLER: I am a born again Christian, and I definitely believe it because God told me so. It was my first experience with God, and I really didn't believe for sure. You know, I thought maybe He was dead or something, or didn't care about us. And He told me that there were angels, and that's when I believed in God.

HC: How did He tell you there were angels?

CALLER: Two and a half years ago there was a big UFO thing going on, and that scared me. And I was scared to death. And in my first sincere prayer of my whole life, I asked God for help, because I was scared. And He told me, "Don't be afraid. I am with you."

HC: How did He tell you?

CALLER: And He said, "They are angels."

HC: Now let me ask you another question then. How do you know that was a voice from God?

CALLER: Because I was immediately at peace. And I had called out to God to answer me. And God would not have let anyone else answer but Him.

HC: How do you know God would not have let anyone else answer? When God has given us His Word . . .

CALLER: He's not going to let Satan answer.

HC: But you see, here's the problem. If God has given me His Word, and He's given me eyes to see, and He's given me the Bible to read, and it's in plain black and white what He wants me to know, and now I repudiate that Word, and I don't read the Word, and I cry out to God, "Oh God, show me, show me," effectively I'm saying, "Look. I don't trust the Word. I have to get some information." And God of course has given us His Word. He wants us to go to the Word, and He may just stand aside and let someone else give us the information.

CALLER: I have gone to the Word, and I have looked in the Word. And I can't find anything that says No.

HC: You see, this brings me to a second observation. Because you have effectively said that the Bible is the Word of God, and you've also said that this voice that you've heard is the Word of God, therefore now you are interpreting the Bible not only by the Bible itself but also by this experience you had where you heard this voice. And of course then you're going to come up with different answers as to what the Bible means, because you have a different foundation. You have a different source of truth than if you had only the Bible.

Any time we add to the Bible, let's say that there's also a source of divine truth over here, or over there, then, from that point on, we're not going to get the same answers from the Bible anymore. If we limit our belief to the fact that the divine Word is confined to the Bible, and let it alone be its own divine interpreter, then we'll come to one set of conclusions. We're going to find our answers in one direction. But if we're going to add, and say that there's also divine truth over here, then our understanding of the Bible is going to come up with different answers. And so I can understand then why you are ready to believe that maybe the pillar of fire wasn't a pillar of fire.

Now I read the Bible in the light of everything the Bible says, and I'm convinced it was a pillar of fire. There isn't one word in the Bible that says it was not a pillar of fire. And therefore I know it was a pillar of fire, because the

Bible says so. And the same with Elijah going up in a whirlwind. There's nothing else that detracts from that.

But if I was going to read the Bible, and say, "Well, it's the divine Word, but I also have other information over here which I think is divine. If I had an experience like that, I would absolutely disregard it. I would cry out to God for mercy." How is it possible that even the suggestion came into my mind that I could hear divine truth from a source outside of the Bible? I would want nothing to do with it.

I know that when I read the Bible, I absolutely cannot be coned into some direction I should not go. I know that, because the Bible is from God. I also know that the Bible teaches, particularly in II Corinthians 11, that Satan goes about as an angel of light. And as an angel of light, it's easy to think about Satan out there in the secular world, in witchcraft and ouija boards, and seances, and what have you. That's easy to see. But when God says that Satan goes about as an angel of light, that is, he comes looking as holy as God Himself, and with the Gospel of God Himself, because that's what an angel of light is, then I've really got to be on guard, and I know that the only authoritative source of divine truth where I'll never be betrayed is the Bible itself.

CALLER: Thank you, Brother Camping.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Have You Really Studied the Subject of UFO's? (562A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I heard you speak the other night with reference to flying saucers. The impression I got was that you think that it's somewhat of a highly unlikely manifestation, as far as extra-terrestrials are concerned. Was I correct?

HC: Yes, you are correct. I'm very convinced there are no flying saucers.

CALLER: Okay. What I wanted to know is, have you studied the subject, or have you read much of the evidence concerning this subject, like the Condo report, for example, which covers many of the UFO sightings?

HC: I haven't read in detail about this. I do know this, that nobody has ever found a nut or a bolt from one of these flying saucers, so-called flying saucers. Nobody has ever really taken a valid photograph of one. But aside from that, I do read the Bible. And the Bible tells us something about this universe. Now the whole phenomenon of flying saucers is spawned by the fact that scientists have been saying now for a long time that this world is billions of years old, and it has developed by the process of evolution. And since our sun has nine planets, I believe, going around it, and since there are billions upon billions of other suns in the universe, certainly many of them must have planets around them.

And since presumably one of the planets going around our sun developed through the billions of years so that it was able to produce life, as has occurred here on earth, certainly by any laws of probability at all there must be many other planets some place out there that have produced life. And if there is life out there, then certainly the odds are that some of that life could be far more intelligent than our life, or could have progressed far faster scientifically than our planet has, and therefore it is logical to assume that there might be visitations from out there to this planet earth.

Now this I believe is the foundation, the thinking that has produced this whole phenomenon of flying saucers. And when scientists of note, scientists who write in some of the most prestigious scientific magazines of the world today, write about the possibility of life out there, then certainly it is logical, it is not

abnormal at all, to contemplate the visitation of that life to this planet.

However, when we read the Bible, we find that all of this kind of speculation is absolutely impossible. The Bible indicates that this earth is about 13,000 years old, and the universe is no older than the earth. The Bible details for us in Genesis 1 that the stars and the sun and the moon were created on the 4th day. And it details the fact that the whole universe therefore was created in 6 days. And from the language of the Bible we know that they were 6 days 24 hours in length, about 13,000 years ago.

Secondly, the Bible indicates that the whole universe came under the curse of sin, and when Christ comes again on the last day, which could happen in the next decade or two, if we're that close to the end of time (and I really believe that we are), then the Bible indicates that the universe also will be destroyed. The elements will burn with fervent heat. Now therefore the Bible indicates that the universe, all those stars out there, have a life span equal to the earth, or about 13,000 years. And nowhere in the Bible does God intimate or suggest that any life was created out there.

As a matter of fact, after spending literally millions of dollars in space exploration, even sending men to the moon, to try to prove or find some evidence that there is life out there, thus far scientists have not found the slightest, not even the slightest suggestion of life out in deep space, because there is none. Nowhere is this suggested in the Bible. And so you can listen to these scientists, and all that they say sounds very fine and very plausible and very possible. But the Bible says no, it's an impossibility. It just doesn't fly at all.

And so when people talk about flying saucers or visitors from outer space, I say no, that's impossible because there is no life out there. And so then, knowing that our minds are as tricky as they are when you watch a magician pull a rabbit out of a hat, you know the rabbit wasn't in the hat, but you saw him pull it out of the hat. And so your mind and your eyes aren't doing very well right at that point. You are seeing things and believing things that you know could not have happened. And so the same is true with any area where we begin to really devote our attention and become obsessed with it. We're going to begin to see things and believe things that really are not true.

CALLER: I agree with you completely on that, and I also believe, as you say, that the scientists try to make things sound very attractive and very convincing. I believe that's especially true where they say that the universe was created by what the scientists call the "big bang." I'm sure you've heard that. I disagree with that, because I believe God did create the universe. With reference to our universe, it's true that it would be as old as this planet. But there are also other universes beyond this universe.

HC: Now when you say that there are universes beyond this universe, the Bible speaks only about the universe. And when they are looking out into deep space, they see just an unending number of stars out there. That is the universe. Now when you say there are universes beyond this universe, where do you read that in the Bible? Or where can you get that from?

CALLER: I'm not quoting that from the Bible.

HC: All right. But you see, when scientists say there are universes beyond universes (although I've never heard that expression quite that way), all they're saying is that no matter how far they peer out into space they find the evidence of God's creation. And God can just as easily (because God is God) speak and there are billions of molecules or atoms or electrons or protons in a drop of water as He speak and create billions of

star clusters out in space. But it's all the same universe, you see.

CALLER: It's all the same universe, that's true. Now as far as the stars are concerned, I want to bring up a really interesting case. This is about a New Hampshire couple, Barney and Betty Hill. Now some people say, "Oh yes, I've heard that name before." And some may say, "Who are they?" Barney and Betty Hill were enroute home from some friends' place, and they were abducted, or taken aboard this craft, this alien craft from wherever. Now what makes the story so conclusive, or you might say, so indisputable, is the events that happened on the craft. They were brought into what they described as an examining room. They were both put on what they thought were like large operating tables, and they were examined, physically. Some were taking skin scrapings, bits of hair, and they were put into little plastic bags and put aside. And later one of the aliens was showing Mrs. Hill a map aboard the craft.

Now why I'm saying this is so conclusive is this. In 1963, under hypnotic suggestion (they had gone to a psychiatrist because they were having deep-rooted problems, physically and mentally, and they were going through deep depressions at this time; they couldn't understand what was happening to them, because when they left they were told that they would not remember anything that happened to them at all, so at this time they were seeing a psychiatrist so they could understand what was going on, like I said, there were a lot of deep-rooted anxieties, and there were also a few hours of time that had been missed, they couldn't understand where this time had gone), so in 1963 under hypnotic suggestion, Betty Hill drew from memory the map shown to her aboard the space craft. The astronomers became fascinated, for what if the map corresponded to a pattern of real stars from an alien viewpoint?

Now the astronomers reasoned that the majority of star systems likely to have life-supporting planets were located in the obscure southern constellation of *Verticular*. Yet three stars in the cluster were unknown until 1969. No astronomers on earth knew their position in 1963. But that same year Betty Hill drew a map which contained these undiscovered stars. The astronomers at Ohio State University requested that a computer put them in the correct position, out beyond the incredible double star system of *Zatar Verticular I* and *Zatar Verticular II*, which is 220 trillion miles, 37 light years away from earth, looking towards our sun. Now what is really fascinating is that the computer duplicated, with virtually no variations, the map of Betty Hill.

HC: You see, first of all we've got to decide, what is the authority? And the Bible is the authority. And the Bible absolutely negates any possibility of life in deep space. That is an impossibility.

Number two, we must remember that there is a spirit world. And it is possible that Satan can mix up these things. You know, when people talk about ESP, when they talk about occult activity of one kind or another, Satan is always at the bottom of it, because he is the prince of the powers of the air. And so he can confuse situations and make men believe this or believe that. And of course secular psychiatrists or secular scientists don't recognize Satan. They have no idea about these things.

It's very significant to me that a lot of people who are involved in flying saucers and unidentified flying objects also look upon this to a high degree as some kind of a religious experience. Or it becomes very close to a religious experience in one way or another. And it could well be that Satan capitalizes on this and helps to confuse the issue.

But regardless of whatever report you

might read, you must remember that if you trust what somebody has written, first of all you don't know who the reporter is, you don't know whether he's exaggerating, you don't know whether he's given you absolutely all the truth. The fact is, he doesn't know all the truth. No one does. And yet it can be written in a very plausible fashion. But I for one would pay absolutely no attention to it. I know that that is an impossibility.

And there are many clever writers today who are able to write in such a way that you can hardly know where truth is any longer. But that's why it's so wonderful to have the Bible, because with the Bible we have the framework of truth. And any time you start reading some science fiction of this nature, and you discover that it's going outside of that framework of truth established by the Bible, then you know you're being taken. You're either being taken by Satan, who is spinning a lie in somebody's life through some kind of occult activity, or you're being taken just by the normal deceitfulness of man. Or you're being taken by your own mind, because your own mind is not clearly seeing things.

But the Bible always is the framework. It is the authority, and the Bible would have to say no, that whole story is absolutely implausible. There is no life out in deep space. There was not that kind of a contact made. That's an impossibility. And I'll buy the Bible any day. I'll accept the Bible's authority any day over against what I read in somebody's magazine, or what testimony somebody's giving on a TV program, or whatever.

CALLER: To tell you the truth now, if it came down to a thing of what truth I would accept, I'd accept the Bible first, before anything else.

HC: All right. Then what you should do is very carefully read the Bible again and again, and spend a lot less time reading this other thing. In fact, I've learned this in my life. Many years ago, when I was really working very very hard on this matter of signs and wonders, and some of the other gospels that were developing so very rapidly in the world in our day, I read a lot of material of this nature, books dealing with the occult in one way or another. And I finally began to discover that this was a very unwise thing to do. And I no longer read any of this at all. I will have nothing at all to do with it. As far as anything that deals with the occult or supernatural activity, the only book I want to read is the Bible, because unfortunately, when you read that kind of material, ultimately you are eulogizing Satan. You are giving credit to him. And he dotes on that kind of attention. And the focal point is moved away from Christ.

Now the marvelous thing about reading the Bible is that there God clearly puts on display the nature of Satan, what he is and what he can do, and so on. And yet He shows him forth in the context that is the proper context, as a defeated foe, with Jesus Christ being the one who receives all the honor and the glory. And therefore, if you're at all interested in any kind of this wild speculation, stick with the Bible, and don't read that other material. All it'll do is clutter your mind with a lot of things that are worthless.

CALLER: The way I feel about it, I don't intend to lose sight of what I have come to. In other words, I won't get carried away with it. But as you said about reading this, this was not something that was written by a writer. This is a true story of a couple. Now I saw the woman on a TV show.

HC: But you have to remember that people, for the attention they receive, or because they are self-deceived, what you're really saying is, you saw someone on a "talk" show who was talking about an experience they had, and you would believe that rather than the Bible. No, you're not saying that. You said, I'd

rather believe the Bible. But the fact is, where the rubber meets the road, that when you face the question, the woman on TV or the Bible, you're ready to buy what the woman says on TV. And frankly, if I heard that same thing on TV, I'd say, nonsense. I don't buy it. I don't believe it. I don't know what happened to her, but I don't believe it, because it's contrary to the Bible. And I don't accept it for a moment.

There are all kinds of people, you see, who are self-deceived. And I just don't want to be conned by anybody. I trust the Bible. When I read it in the Bible, then I know that I've got really solid ground, and nobody can deceive me.

CALLER: I understand that, but the only reason I say that this case stands out above all is not so much because of what she said, but only because of the fact that in the map that she drew she...

HC: You see, you're still listening to what she said and what others are saying. And so you still have to face the question. Are you going to believe this whole yarn because it is so plausible and because it has so much authority, and because of this and because of that and the other thing? Or are you going to believe the Bible? And if you're ready to believe this other because they've taken you in, fine. That's your privilege to do, but then you're not believing the Bible in my judgment.

If the Bible says that this universe is 13,000 years old and that it's going to be destroyed by fire on the last day, and God has made no provision for the salvation, nor has He discussed anybody out there, then I know there is no life out there. And so any time somebody comes to me, regardless of how authentic it may appear, or regardless of the proofs they may offer, I'll say no, that isn't possible. I may not know why it's not possible, I may not be able to put my finger on where they are self-deceived, but I know that on the bottom line it is not true. It absolutely is not true, because it does not agree with the scriptural evidence. The Bible is my authority.

And that's the way we have to go through life, if we're going to let the Bible be our authority.

CHAPTER 8 – END TIME PROPHECY

GENERAL

Why is the Tribe of Dan Missing in Revelation 7? (010B)

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. My question deals with the twelve tribes of Israel, as originally named in the Book of Genesis, Chapter 8. My question concerns Chapter 7 of the Book of Revelation, where it speaks of the twelve,000 representing each of the twelve tribes, with the exclusion of Dan and the inclusion of Manasseh, which differs from the original twelve. I was just wondering what happened to Dan, and why is Manasseh substituted?

HC: And you might ask one other question: Why is Ephraim not named, and Joseph is named instead of Ephraim?

CALLER: Well, I was going back to the original. Joseph was one of the original twelve, and at one point Ephraim and Manasseh were mentioned. Levi was left out because he became a priest and he was restored back in Revelation. But the only difference in Revelation 7, from the tabulation in Genesis, is Manasseh in place of Dan. And so I know there have been these changes along, and I was wondering what happened to Dan.

HC: Well, let me say this. First of all, in every naming of the tribes, you will always find that one is not named. Sometimes it will be the tribe of Simeon

that's not named. Sometimes it's the tribe of Levi that's not named. In this case it's the tribe of Dan that's not named. And the reason for this is that there were actually thirteen tribes. The half-tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasse eventually become noted as full tribes, but God is constantly emphasizing the number twelve. And therefore, in every enumeration you'll find twelve tribes named. That's the first reason, because God is focusing on the number twelve, which is a symbolical number to indicate the fullness of God's people, or the fullness of the church, even as in the New Testament we have twelve apostles.

Now secondly, both the tribe of Ephraim and the tribe of Dan (and Dan especially, which I'll speak more about in a moment), but in one sense Ephraim and Dan were twins, in that they were the locations of the original worship of other gods.

When the ten tribes separated from the tribe of Judah in 931 BC, upon the death of Solomon, then wicked Jeroboam was their king. He raised up altars at Bethel, which was in the area of the tribe of Ephraim, and at Dan, which was in the area of the tribe of Dan. And this was a grievous sin in the eyes of God. Jeroboam is faulted again and again in the Bible for this. And so these two tribes became notorious for the fact that they were the locations of this original worshipping of other gods, or of false worship, actually.

Now Dan is especially emphasized in the Bible as a figure of Satan himself, very surprisingly. And I don't know why Dan was named in this way, but it's interesting that in the twelve apostles there was one who was a servant of Satan, and that was Judas. And so it was in the Old Testament that God, for His own particular purposes, provided a figure of Satan amongst the tribes. And we find in Genesis 49:17, "Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a viper by the path." Now a serpent or a viper (that's a figure of Satan himself) "that bites the horse's heels so that its rider falls backward." I suppose that Dan, or Judas, in a real sense is a figure of any false prophets that come out of the church. They were amongst us, and then they came out and began to inveigle the congregation into trying to get them to accept another gospel. And this is where the greatest deceit comes from, right out of the body of believers.

The Book of Revelation – An Overview (186A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I was wondering if you could give an overview of what you think the Book of Revelation is. And how would you subdivide the book? Maybe the first three chapters would mean a certain thing to you, and then the next ten would mean that, and maybe the latter eight would mean something else. So I was wondering if maybe you could donate a little time to the Book of Revelation, because I personally find that a lot of people are having problems interpreting it.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you for sharing that question.

The question is raised concerning the last book of the Bible, The Revelation. What is its nature? What is God really doing with this? How could we subdivide it? And so on.

Now in Revelation 1 it starts out to give us the purpose of the book. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His servants what must soon take place. And He made it known by sending His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the Word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw."

Now God is going to give the apostle John a series of visions, in order that

through the writings of John, who is the instrument in God's hand, He might give us the Word of God, because the Book of Revelation, like the rest of the Bible, is part of the divine revelation of God. And it's concerned with the events that are going to transpire. And, of course, in places, as we'll see when we study the Book of Revelation, the Book of Revelation goes all the way back to the beginning of time, or to the cross, in order to develop the context and bring us to the New Testament period, or to the end of time.

I suppose the main focus of the Book of Revelation is the victory of Christ over Satan. If you ever wonder about the difficulty you are facing personally as a Christian, or if you wonder about the difficulties that this world is facing, as it is reeling and rocking under the hammer-blows of the rule of Satan, sit down and read the Book of Revelation in one sitting. And you will see, shining through the Book of Revelation, the victory of Christ over Satan. Even though at times it looks like Satan is winning, again and again and again the conclusion comes through that Christ has won. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. And of course it ends with the last two chapters, where we have visions that deal with the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Now in the first chapter we have a vision of Christ Himself, indicating that He is the First and the Last. He is the one who rules and conquers. He has the keys of death and Hades. And He is the one who is the head of the churches.

In Revelation 2 and 3 God gives us a description of seven of the churches that existed in that day, in order to do two things. These seven churches are typical of the churches that would exist at any time in history. On the one hand these descriptions are given to encourage. No matter what happens, we know that Christ is aware of what happens. "I know your works, your love and faith." "Do not fear what you are about to suffer." Christ is always there, and is aware of what is happening in the church. "I will confess his name before My Father." "He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God." And so on.

The first thing that we find in these chapters 2 and 3 is the fact of Christ's awareness of what is happening here on earth, in the body of believers, and that He encourages us. But also in these two chapters we find many many warnings. Watch out that you are not snared. Watch out that you don't fall. "I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. Behold, I will throw her on a sickbed, and I will strike her children dead, and all the churches that know that I am He who searches mind and heart," and so on.

He warns, "I know your works. You are neither cold nor hot. I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of My mouth. Those I love I reprove and chasten. So be zealous and repent."

On the one hand, there comes the encouragement. On the other hand comes the warning. The church that has become apostate will be cut off from Christ. It no longer will be a church of the Living God.

Then in Chapters 4 and 5, particularly, we have visions focusing on Christ. The vision is in Heaven, four and twenty thrones around the throne of God. And these four and twenty thrones would be a revelation of the church as it reigns in Heaven. When we leave this earth, we go to live and reign with Christ in Heaven. But the focal point is on Christ Himself.

Verse 11 of Revelation 4: "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power. For Thou didst create all things, and by Thy will they existed and were created." Or again, in verse 9 of Revelation 5: "Worthy art

Thou to take the scroll and to open its seals. For Thou wast slain and by Thy blood didst ransom men for God, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priest to our God, and they shall reign on earth."

We see in Revelation 4 the emphasis in this psalm of praise to Christ that He is the Creator, in Chapter 5 the fact that He is the Redeemer. Now let me interject right here that the Book of Revelation is not chronological. It is not an unfolding of a time plan of the end of time. Many many teach that it is chronological.

They begin already with the seven churches, and they say that the first church was the church right after the disciples. And then the second church was in its period in history, and so on. And we perhaps are in the period of the seventh church. That is not suggested anywhere in the Bible. And it's certainly not suggested in the Book of Revelation.

If the Book of Revelation were chronological, then everything past Revelation 6 would have to be in the New Heaven and the New Earth, because in Revelation 6, beginning with verse 12, we have a vision of Judgment Day itself. Each chapter, each paragraph, has to be looked at on its own merits. It's a separate vision from the visions before or after, and has to be analyzed on its own merits.

Now in Revelation 6 we see the vision of Christ going forth to conquer. And as the church goes forth to conquer with Him, they are persecuted, as seen by the second horseman. They become apostate, as we see by the third and fourth horsemen. And then God gives us a vision of the end of those who have persecuted the church, and those who have remained faithful, and those who have not remained faithful.

In verse 9 we see the souls of those who have been slain for the Word of God, the martyrs. They are in Heaven, and God emphasizes here that it's going to be a while before the end will come. But they must patiently wait for the vengeance of God.

And then in verse 12 and through to the end of Chapter 6 we see a dramatic account of Judgment Day, as the universe begins to collapse, as the world falls apart, and as the unsaved call upon the mountains to fall on them and the rocks to crush them, for the great day of their wrath has come.

Now in Revelation 7 we have a preparatory statement to the final warning judgments that God is going to bring against the world and which are outlined in Revelation 8 and 9 and Revelation 15 and 16. The thrust of this passage is, first of all, that God is not going to allow these final warning judgments to come upon the earth (and I say allow because Satan will be the instigator of these, as we shall see in a moment) until all whom God plans to save will have been saved.

He says in verse 3, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads." And the number sealed are 144,000, a symbolical number in this context to indicate the fullness of all believers. God is not going to allow the final trauma that will envelop the earth (and this final trauma will be just ahead of Judgment Day itself) until everyone has been saved whom God had chosen to be saved.

And then the veil is pulled back, from verse 9 to the end of the chapter, and God gives us a picture of all who have been martyred throughout time, all of the believers throughout time, who are in Heaven. And there is a vast multitude, "which no man could number, from every nation and every tribe and people and tongue, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." Here again we see that beautiful picture of the victory of the

Christian.

Now these are those who have "come out of the great tribulation." The Christian's walk in this world throughout time has been one of tribulation. Now this scene is offered here in Chapter 7 perhaps because of the traumatic events that are going to envelop the world beginning with Revelation 8 and 9. And the assurance is that no matter what happens on this earth, no matter how great the tribulation might be, we cannot lose, because the moment we die we go to live and reign with Christ in Heaven. We will be included amongst that vast throng that we see in Revelation 7, beginning with verse 9.

Now in Revelation 8 and 9 we see here a description of final plagues, or warning judgments, that will come upon the earth. And the instigator of these is Satan himself. They are brought as an effort to try to destroy the body of Christ. This I believe is the reason that constantly we find here the numeral 1/3. I believe it relates back to Zechariah 13:8, where God assigns the number 1/3 as a symbolical number representing those who are being saved.

And the purpose of these plagues is to try to silence the Gospel. And possibly Satan will be able to do this. But in doing this, actually he will bring terrible trauma to the unsaved of the world. We read in verse 6: "In those days men will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, and death will flee from them."

This will be a self-destructive activity of Satan himself. And while it will be directed at the world, to try to silence the Gospel, actually he cannot harm the born again believers. We read in verse 4 of Revelation 9: "They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green growth, or any tree, but only those of mankind who had not the seal of God upon their foreheads." While the born again believers may die in this nuclear war, or whatever it may be, he cannot really hurt them because they will simply change their residence, and go to live and reign with Christ in Heaven.

But it will be a vast warning judgment upon the unbelievers. Now in Revelation 15 this same event is pictured again, in Revelation 15 and Revelation 16, through verse 11. Only this time it is pictured from the vantage point of the judgment of God, as the anger of God. Not the final wrath of God, not Judgment Day. That is not in view here as yet. But it is a great warning of God, a warning judgment of God. It's instigated by Satan, as we can gather from Revelation 8 and 9, but it will be used by God against the unsaved of the world, as a warning judgment against them. And it will transition finally into Judgment Day itself, as we see in Revelation 16 beginning with verse 12. Revelation 16 ends with Judgment Day, just as Revelation 6 ended with Judgment Day.

Revelation 10 is a transition paragraph, which is simply indicating that when the seventh trumpet-blows, that is, when Judgment Day comes (and it's coming; it's very close), then everything is going to be revealed. Now in Revelation 11 God backs up, and he's going to talk about the church. He's going to talk about how they bring the Gospel throughout the New Testament period. And finally they will be silenced. Now that was the purpose of Revelation 8 and 9, to silence the Gospel. And Revelation 11 will show that this really happened.

It begins with measuring the temple. In other words, the implication here is that God defines the timing of the earth's existence by the number of the born again believers rather than by the names of the unsaved. Once that temple is complete then Christ will return.

And then it speaks about the church as it witnesses, prefigured by the two witnesses. And finally they are killed. And then this is followed by Judgment

Day. And so Revelation 11 ends with Judgment Day.

Now Revelation 12 looks at the whole package of salvation, or the conflict between Satan and Christ, from another vantage point. Here it's the dragon that's going to devour the child. The child is Christ. And it gives us an insight into what is happening to Satan and his angels as Christ goes to the cross. We see that Michael and his angels cast out the dragon and the fallen angels, so they no longer have a place in Heaven. They were defeated by the blood of Christ. And then it declares that the serpent goes after the woman, which is the body of Christ. But she is nourished, during the New Testament period, by Christ Himself.

Revelation 13 backs up again and indicates the authority of Satan, as he rules in the world. He's symbolized here by a beast with seven heads and ten horns. And it indicates his total rule over the earth, including that of religious rule, as prefigured by the beast that comes out of the earth, that has two horns like a lamb and speaks like a dragon. And it really discusses the control that Satan has over the peoples of the earth, throughout the New Testament period.

Revelation 14 continues with another vision. And here we see a vision of the victorious church in Heaven. It is under the figure of 144,000, the fullness of all the believers. Now in Revelation 12 and 13 we see the church on earth, as the woman that's nourished in the wilderness. And it has its troubles, because the serpent is after it, trying to destroy it. In Revelation 13 we saw that the vision indicated the rule of Satan, both religiously as well as politically, and in every other way, and how most of the peoples of the earth worshipped Satan.

But in Revelation 14 we see that for the born again believers there is victory. No matter how powerful Satan had looked, there is victory. We see them in Heaven, as we saw them earlier, in other chapters of the Bible. And they are victorious. In fact, in the last half of Revelation 14 it speaks about the wrath of God being poured out on the unsaved. And the chapter ends with Judgment Day, even as Revelation 6 ended with Judgment Day, and Revelation 11 ended with Judgment Day. So Revelation 14 ends with Judgment Day.

And as we saw already, Revelation 16 ends with Judgment Day. Now Revelation 17 and 18 deal almost exclusively with the judgment of Satan's kingdom. It indicates the fact that they come under the wrath of God. There's an implication in these chapters of the fact that Satan's kingdom had begun at the very beginning of time. Of course, it goes all the way back to Adam and Eve, in the Garden. But finally they are judged. "In one hour thy judgment has come. Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great!" Babylon being a figure of the kingdom of Satan.

And then in Revelation 19 we find again an account of Christ coming to judgment. Verse 11: "I saw heaven opened and behold, a white horse. He who sat upon it is called faithful and true. And in righteousness He judges and makes war." And it goes on to describe Judgment Day. You notice how again and again in the Book of Revelation God gives us a word picture of Judgment Day, how awful this will be for the unsaved.

Revelation 20 is a book that approaches the whole New Testament period from a slightly different vantage point. It shows why the Gospel can go out. That is because Satan has been bound. And it shows that even though he is bound, he can still martyr. "I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded. They reigned with Christ a thousand years." Satan is bound, but he can still martyr the believers.

But he doesn't win, because they are in Heaven reigning with Christ. And then it gives us the information, very important information that relates back to Revelation 8 and 9, that right near the end Satan will be loosed, that he will again deceive the nations. He will assault the born again believers. And he will seek to destroy them. But Judgment Day comes upon him. "Fire came down from heaven and consumed" these wicked, all of the kingdom of Satan, wherever it is found on the earth.

And then again we have a description of Judgment Day, in the closing verses of Revelation 20. Revelation 21 and 22 are visions concerned with the New Heaven and the New Earth. They look beyond time into eternity, and complete the victorious account of what happens to people who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, the Book of Revelation is a whole series of visions. They are listed under trumpets, under bowls of wrath, under seals. But it isn't a chronological opening. It's simply a series of visions to give us insights as to how Satan is going to be working throughout the New Testament period, how Christ is going to be working throughout the New Testament period, what happens to us when we are martyred, when we seem to be defeated by Satan.

And again and again the theme is, Christ has won. He has conquered. And Judgment Day is portrayed again and again, because Judgment Day is when everything comes to an end, and all the wicked are cast into hell.

The Four Horsemen of Revelation (6230B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. The horsemen in Revelation 6. Does that point to Christ?

HC: The question is raised concerning the four horsemen of Revelation 6. I'd like to speak just a moment on that, and so I'll go into it.

This is an interesting question, and we haven't talked about this for some time, so I would like to look at it for just a moment. In Revelation 6 we have a reference to four different horsemen. In verse 2, "I saw and behold, a white horse. And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer." Now who is this horseman? What does this phrase represent?

When we search the Bible, we find that the color white is always used in connection with that which is pure, that which is holy. We find, for example, in Revelation 19, when Christ comes at the end of time, at Judgment Day, that He comes on a white horse. He sends out His Gospel into the world. "A crown was given to him," we read. Remember in Ephesians 1, it says that He was raised from the dead and was seated at the right hand of God, and was given rule and authority over everything, not only in this age but in the age to come. So that identifies very well.

Now what about this fact that it says that its rider has a bow? Well, back in Psalm 45, we find an interesting commentary on that. In Psalm 45:3 we read, "Gird your sword upon your thigh, O Mighty One. In your glory and majesty [you see, it's talking about God Himself] ride forth victoriously for the cause of truth and to defend the right. Let your right hand teach you dread deeds. Your arrows are sharp [notice the arrows — to have arrows means that you have a bow] in the heart of the king's enemies. The peoples fall under you. Your divine throne endures forever and ever. Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity. You love righteousness and hate wickedness." You see how Psalm 45 identifies very beautifully with the Lord Jesus Christ as He's seen in Revelation 6:2.

As we go out with the Gospel, it is Christ who is out conquering and bringing to subjection those who are the unsaved and who are becoming born again believers.

Now the second passage is speaking there about a red horse: "Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another. And he was given a great sword." Now this in all likelihood is talking about the persecution that comes against believers, as they go forth with the Gospel. Red signifies the shedding of blood. To take peace from the earth the born again believers are the ones who bring peace to the earth. And yet this horseman is one who is taking peace from the earth. And very frequently this kind of a sword, that is spoken of here, is spoken of in the sense of slaughtering the believers.

We are reinforced in this, I think, when we look at verse 9, where it says, "I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God." This word slain here is the same word that is used in verse 3, "that men should slay one another." And he was given a great sword.

In other words, as we bring the Gospel, it is against adversity. It is against persecution. It is being resisted constantly by the forces of evil, who do not want the Gospel to go out.

Now the third horseman is a little different problem altogether. There we read, "I saw, and behold, a black horse. And its rider had a balance in his hand. And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius. But do not harm oil and wine." Now what could this be referring to?

The reference, I think is, first of all, going back to Ezekiel 4:16. Now how do I get to Ezekiel? Well, simply by taking a concordance and looking up every possible reference to wheat and barley and denarius and famine, and a balance, and all of these things. And this is the passage that stands out.

In Ezekiel 4:16 we read that God is faulting Israel in the days of Ezekiel, because they had run after other gods. They had not been true to the Gospel of their day. And therefore He said, "Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem. They shall eat bread by weight and with fearfulness, and they shall drink water by measure and in dismay. I will do this that they may lack bread and water and look at one another in dismay, and waste away in punishment."

Here God is really indicating that spiritual famine will be on the earth because of the sinfulness of the body of believers, in not being true to the Gospel. In this context, in verse 10, He says, "And the food which you eat shall be by weight, 20 shekels a day. And once a day you shall eat it. And the water you shall drink is by measure, the sixth part of a hind. Once a day you shall drink." And it's the same idea that's presented here in Revelation 6.

Now when it says "Do not harm oil and wine," I believe that this is referring to the fact that those who are born again believers will not come under judgment, wine referring to the shed blood of Christ, those who are identified with Him, oil referring to the anointing that we receive when we are a born again believer. As false prophets and as false pastors lead the church away from the true Gospel, so that there is spiritual famine, those who are born again believers will not lose their salvation.

Now the fourth horse: "I saw, and behold, a pale horse. And its rider's name was death." Incidentally, there's another reference that I'd like to check a minute, in Leviticus 26, to see if that relates to this. There is a statement in connection with the third horse, where again God is faulting Israel because they would turn

away from Him. He says, in verse 23 of Leviticus 26, "And if by this discipline you are not turned to Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you. And I Myself will smite you sevenfold for your sins. And I will bring a sword upon you that shall execute vengeance for the covenant. And if you gather within your cities, I will send pestilence among you. And you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. When I break your staff of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven and shall deliver your bread again by weight. And you shall eat and not be satisfied."

Again it's using the same kind of language, to indicate the spiritual famine that will come if they go contrary to the Word of God. Now the fourth horseman: "And I saw and behold, a pale horse, and its rider's name was Death. And Hades followed him. And they were given power over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth."

Now Ezekiel 14:21 assures us that God here is talking about judgments that will be brought by God against the church for their failure to remain faithful to the Word. In Ezekiel 14 we read, in verse 21 (and the context is that they have gone after idols, they have gone after false prophets, and therefore God is bringing His wrath against the body of believers): "For thus says the Lord God, How much more, when I send upon Jerusalem My four sore acts of judgment, sword, famine, evil beasts and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast." The same language, you see, that you find in Revelation 6:8, where it talks about this fourth horseman who kills with sword, with famine, with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

The four and the one-fourth that we find in Revelation 6 I think in both cases are speaking about the worldwide nature of this, the fact that God will not tolerate unfaithfulness within the church. He will bring judgments against the church if they are not faithful.

To summarize then, we find that the first horseman gives us a picture of the Gospel as it goes victoriously throughout the earth, to accomplish the work God has set forth for it. The second horseman gives us a picture of the resistance that will be encountered by this Gospel as there are those who will persecute those who bring the Gospel. The third and the fourth horsemen are figures of the judgments that will come against the church when it is not faithful in bringing the Gospel. It really is a very excellent outline of the whole matter of the responsibility of bringing the Gospel — the joy, the glory, the wonder of it all, the tribulation that comes because of it, and the judgments of God when we are not faithful in bringing the Gospel.

The Identity of the 144,000 in Revelation 7:4 and 14:1 (260D)

CALLER: Could you tell me who the 144,000 are that John is writing about in Revelation?

HC: The question: that is raised concerns itself with the 144,000. The 144,000 are spoken of in two places in the New Testament: one in Revelation 7 and the second in Revelation 14.

Now in Revelation 14 they are shown to us to be those who have been redeemed from earth. They are those, we read in Revelation 14, who are chaste. This is verse 4: "They have not defiled themselves with women." In other words, they're the perfect bride of Christ. Their sins have been covered by the blood of Christ, and they stand before God as if they had never sinned. And they have been redeemed from mankind: "and no lie was found in their mouth." In other words, when we are unsaved we are slaves of Satan, who is the father of lies. And once we are saved, our sins are

covered and we're like those who have never never lied. And this is talking about all born again believers.

Now the number 144,000 is used because God frequently uses numbers symbolically. The number twelve is symbolical of the fullness of God's program. And here He's talking about the number of believers, the fullness of believers.

Sometimes He uses it as twelve plus twelve. And so we have the twenty-four elders in Revelation. Sometimes He uses it as twelve times twelve. And so we have the 144,000. Sometimes He uses it as twelve times twelve times twelve. And so we have the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is in size 12,000 stadia by 12,000 stadia by 12,000 stadia. And in the Holy City Jerusalem, which is the fullness of all believers, we have twelve foundations, we have twelve gates, and we have walls that are 144 cubits thick. The whole picture, you see, is symbolical.

And so with the 144,000. It is the fullness of all believers. Now in Revelation 7 they are spoken of as twelve tribes of Israel, because in the Bible God repeatedly speaks of the true believers as being the true seed of Abraham, whereas the blood descendants of Abraham are not necessarily Israel. The true Israel of God are those who are the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Read Galatians 3 particularly, and you will see this.

Well, thank you for that question.

The Sequence of End-Time Events (261A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum,

CALLER: Could you explain your version of what the Millennium is. What's the purpose of it? And then also I wanted to ask you, if you feel that we'll be raptured at the end of the tribulation, then obviously we're not in the tribulation right now, if you read the description of it. Then the Lord won't be taking us home until after the tribulation, so why should we be looking up for our rapture now? Do you understand what I mean?

HC: Your question really deals with, what is really the sequence of events? What are we looking for? You've used three terms. You've used Rapture, Tribulation and Millennium.

Now in your judgment, what is the sequence of events?

CALLER: I've always been taught, and even in good Bible studies, and I've even found out for myself from the scripture, that we would be raptured before the tribulation began. And this has always been my impression. And I'm very interested in what you've said about it, and this is why I'm asking more about it.

I understand that we would be raptured, and there would be the tribulation, and at the end of the tribulation the millennium would come, and Christ would reign for the thousand years. But I understand now that you don't believe that way, because you believe in the symbolical terms in the scriptures. But ministers in the pulpits today are saying, "Look up and be ready, because Christ can come at any time." You know, we should just be ready. And even Paul said that it could be today. Well, if it could be today, we aren't going to be raptured until . . .

HC: Paul did say that it could be today?

CALLER: He said that he was looking for, I really am not sure on the scripture.

HC: No, he didn't say today. Now you see the phrase that because I look at the symbolical meaning of scriptures, therefore I conclude that the rapture cannot be immediately, whereas those who hold that the rapture could be immediately do not look at it symbolically.

Actually, no one reads the Bible without some symbolism. There are certain phrases that have to be understood symbolically. And there are other passages that must be understood literally.

Now when we talk about the timing of the Rapture, there is no symbolism applied. The Bible is very very plain as to the timetable of the Rapture, that it is the Last Day, that it is the end of time. There isn't any possibility of coming to any other conclusion. And I'll be very happy to go through the scriptures, to show this. And if it is the Last Day, the end of time, at the time the universe is collapsing, on Judgment Day, then it means that there cannot be a thousand years after that. There cannot be a millennium of time after that, because that would be a contradiction in terms altogether.

When you ask for the purpose of the millennium, first of all we have to decide, when is the millennium? Now the only place in the Bible where we read about the thousand years is in Revelation 20. And we find a number of references to a thousand years in the first seven or eight verses.

Now we can't tell from Revelation 20 when this thousand years will be, nor can we accept that we know it will conclude with Judgment Day. We know that, because at the end of thousand years Satan will be loosed and then he'll be cast into the lake of fire. And so that's Judgment Day. We know that from Revelation 20. And we also know from Revelation 20 that whatever God means by this binding of Satan, he is not completely removed from the scene, because in verse 4 of Revelation 20 John sees in this vision the souls of those who had been beheaded, and they lived and reigned with Christ during this thousand years.

Now it's speaking here of disembodied souls: "I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded." And so this indicates that whatever God means by the binding of Satan, and He does give a clue in Revelation 20, because He says that he will be bound so that "he will not deceive the nations." That's one clue He gives.

Secondly, in Revelation 20, He indicates that he'll still be able to martyr people, because there are people being beheaded. But it's no victory for Satan. In their souls (the souls of those who had been beheaded) they lived and reigned with Christ. And so they went to Heaven.

CALLER: Now I was always taught that the souls of those who had been beheaded means those who will be beheaded during the tribulation. And they're supposed to be watched, and then they come back to life after the tribulation.

HC: It's not talking in Revelation 20 about the tribulation. It doesn't mention tribulation. It simply says, "I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded." Now to use a parallel phrase, "I saw the hand of the man." Did I see the whole man? No, I only saw his hand. "I saw the hand of the man who was killed." All I saw was his hand. "I saw the souls of these who had been beheaded." John only sees their souls. Now disembodied souls don't live and reign on earth, do they?

So now we've got some questions already developing, haven't we? We know that the millennium ends with Judgment Day. And we know that whatever it means by Satan being bound, it does indicate that he'll still be able to martyr. And since those who are martyred are reigning in their souls, than it's talking about them going to Heaven, because this is what the rest of the Bible teaches. "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord," in Heaven. So that gives us some clues about what this millennium might be.

Now when we look at the first three verses where it talks about the binding of Satan, the first thing we have to do, like we have to do with all of the Bible, is to study the rest of the Bible to see if there's anything at all that might possibly relate.

Some people, unfortunately, who say, "We take the Bible literally," what they really mean by that, without thinking it through, is that they read a sentence, and it makes sense as it stands, and without checking further in the Bible to see if that phrase is used in some other fashion in the Bible, they accept it as it stands. In other words, they really are saying, "We don't interpret scripture by scripture. We let scripture make sense as it stands by itself." And that can't be, of course. We never can do that. We've always got to let the Bible interpret itself. And it always will, if we can be patient enough, and really search it out.

Now in Jude 6, and in II Peter 2:4, we find language that is very very similar to the first three verses of Revelation 20. In Jude 6 we read, "And the angels [and remember, Satan is a fallen angel] . . . And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their dwelling have been kept by Him in eternal chains, in the nether gloom, until the judgment of the Great Day." Now that's in the past tense, and it was written a few decades after the cross. We can't tell where Revelation 20 was referring to, but Jude was written in the past tense, a few decades after the cross. And it's saying that they have already been put in chains, in the nether gloom, until the judgment of the Great Day. Whatever God means by this language, it was already accomplished.

Now in II Peter 2:4 we read the same thing, the past tense again. "For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell, and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgment, He did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness." In other words, he's citing things that have already been accomplished. And Peter is writing in the past tense, a few decades after the cross.

And so we know that whatever God means by the language of Revelation 20:1, it was already an accomplished fact a few decades after the cross. And so that means, if the end of the thousand years of judgment Day, or near to Judgment Day, and if we've already had over 1900 years since the cross, a thousand years has got to be understood in a symbolical fashion.

It could be a literal fashion, if we were only in the year 800 AD, or something, and a thousand years had not transpired as yet. But because we know that more than 1000 years have passed since the cross, we know that the millennium or the thousand years must be understood in a symbolical fashion, as God frequently does in the Bible, as He speaks, for example, of His love continuing for a thousand generations. There it's symbolical, you see.

And so we know that the beginning of Revelation 20 had to occur some time before a few decades after the cross, and it would end some time just before Judgment Day. In other words, it's the whole New Testament period: the millennium.

CALLER: We're living in the millennium now?

HC: We're right near the end of the millennium. Jesus said in John 16, "In the world you will have tribulation." Tribulation or affliction is normative for believers throughout time. That is constant. Now the increase in tribulation right near the end of time, that Christ spoke about in Matthew 24:21, "And then there will be great tribulation, such as this world has never known," will be simultaneous with the end of the thousand years.

Remember, Revelation 20 says that Satan will be loosed from his prison, and he will deceive the nations again, and he will gather them, Gog and Magog, from the four corners of the earth, to attack the camp of the saints or the Beloved City. Now that is talking about what will cause this great tribulation in Matthew 24:21. It will be Satan's attempt to silence the Gospel. And he will be successful in doing this.

He will marshal all the nations. In other words, he will come with political power, through such ideologies as Communism. He will come with social pressures, cultural pressures. And more successfully then ever, he will come through other gospels.

We can see it in all kinds of activity today, as other gospels proliferate, and as they are getting more and more successful. I really believe we're at that time when Satan is being loosed. And this is why we see such a tremendous increase in wickedness in the world, both in the church and outside of the church.

CALLER: Then we'll be able to identify the antichrist?

HC: I believe Satan himself is the antichrist, and he is already coming. Now in John 2 it says that there will be antichrists who come out from among you. Let me read that language, because it really tells us what an antichrist is.

In I John 2:18: "Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us [in other words, they were fellow believers], but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might be plain that they all are not of us."

In other words, antichrist is particularly the activity of Satan in working through false prophets and false christs who will rule in the church. This is what Matthew 24:24 is speaking about: "False prophets and false christs will arise with signs and wonders, to lead astray if possible even the elect."

CALLER: That's maybe where the Satan worshippers come in.

HC: Well, that's one rabid form of this. But this isn't what Jesus warns about. When He talks about the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, in Matthew 24:15, He's talking about other gospels that look so holy that even the elect, the true believers, would be deceived, if that were possible.

CALLER: If what you say is true, that we will not be raptured until the end, when Jesus comes to take us . . .

HC: Let's look at the timing of the Rapture, for just a moment. He cannot come now. Those who say that He may come tonight are doing so without Biblical validation, in my judgment.

CALLER: Jesus Himself said that no one knows the day or the hour or the time.

HC: Yes. We may not know the day or the hour. But that doesn't mean that we can say that He will come at any moment. Even God Himself warns, in II Thessalonians 2. Notice this language. A lot of times we fail to realize the significance of what God is saying. He says in verse 1 of II Thessalonians 2: "Now concerning the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet Him [Aha! He's saying that we will assemble to meet Him], we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord are one and the same." And we're going to see that it's the Judgment Day. It's all one and the same.

CALLER: But I thought it was in the twinkling of an eye.

HC: His coming is not in the twinkling of an eye. The phrase, "the twinkling of an eye," has to do with the changing of the believers sin-cursed body to his resurrected body at the time of His coming. That's a phrase found in 1 Corinthians 15, in verse 51 or 52, where God declares, "We'll not all sleep, but we'll all be changed, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye."

And then He says when. That's the timing of the Rapture, you see: "at the sound of the last trumpet." And the last trumpet, the seventh trumpet, that's Judgment Day, according to Revelation 11. And here in II Thessalonians 2 He's saying, "Now concerning the coming of Our Lord [the day of the Lord], let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship." That's Satan who takes over the rule of the church. He silences the Gospel. This is what is being spoken of here.

CALLER: I don't see how he can do that if we the saints are still here.

HC: Well, let me read Matthew 24:24. Matthew 24:24 says, "False prophets and false christians will arise with signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." Now who are the elect? The born again believers. We are the elect. Now where do we normally congregate, to worship God? In the church, where the true Gospel ought to be proclaimed.

But here it's talking about false prophets and false christians, leading astray, if possible, even the elect. That means that the church has been infiltrated, and has begun to be ruled over by those who come with another gospel, and who actually are not of Christ at all.

And they're coming with a gospel that looks so holy and so much like the true Gospel that if it were possible (and it's not possible, because no believer can be snared away from Christ), even the elect would be deceived. And they come with signs and wonders. In other words, they come with a Gospel that features miracles and wonders, and it looks far more exciting than the true Gospel.

Now this is saying the same thing as II Thessalonians 2, where it talks about the man of sin taking his seat in the temple. The temple is the body of Christ. To take one's seat means to rule, or have authority. And Satan, through these false prophets and false christians, gains the rule over the church. He is able, as God brings judgment against the church because of its increasing rejection of the holiness of God, the Word of God, and so on, as is seen very greatly today, to rule. And the true Gospel, through this, will be silenced.

CALLER: In scripture, too, it teaches that they'll put up an image of the antichrist.

HC: Revelation 13 speaks about an image of the beast. And I really believe that is referring to the other gospels, any gospel that is not true, that is giving an object that the unsaved people, who think they are Christians but they are not, because you can't be an unsaved person and truly be a born again believer, obviously, something that they can worship. They will be convinced that this is it.

And remember in Revelation 13, where it talks about that image, it speaks again about signs, doing great signs.

CALLER: In a sense we could be into the tribulation now.

HC: We are entering into that period. I believe that we're getting . . . But the Gospel still is able to go throughout the world. It has not come to that point. But what we're beginning to see is that there has to be a transition time.

Now we look at the period when Judah was finally destroyed, in 587 BC. They were not instantly destroyed by Babylon.

They had a marvelous King Josiah, who ruled from the period of about thirty-one years, from about 640 BC until 609 BC. And then, at the comparatively young age of thirty-nine, he was killed in a war, a very unnecessary war. And for the next twenty-three years Judah, or Israel, gradually decayed and disintegrated.

First they were in bondage to Egypt, and then they were in bondage in some degree to Babylon. And finally, in 587 BC, Babylon utterly destroyed Jerusalem. They destroyed the temple, they brought a great many of the Jews captive into Babylon. And that's the kind of period we're in. We're in a transition period, where the true Gospel is getting squeezed out more and more. Other gospels are gaining the ascendancy. Political ideologies that are anti-God are gaining the ascendancy.

CALLER: Why are the Jews getting Israel back, if these are supposed to be symbols of the church today?

HC: The question is raised about the nation of Israel. Well, you know, Jesus predicted this. Remember, He said in Matthew 24:32, "From the fig tree (and in the Bible I believe the fig tree is a figure of national Israel) learn its lesson. As soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that He is near, at the very gates."

Now look. It talks here about leaves. It doesn't talk about fruit, does it? "When you see the fig tree put forth its leaves, you know that summer is near," and therefore Christ is at the very gates.

Well now, when Jesus saw the fig tree in His day, and He put out His hand to find fruit, and there was no fruit, what did He do? He cursed it because there were only leaves. All right. Now what about the nation of Israel today? Is there fruit? No. As a nation they are as antagonistic toward Christ as Messiah as they ever have been. There is a remnant chosen by grace of Jews being saved, and this is thoroughly predicted in the Bible. But as a nation it is a nation amongst the nations, a viable, independent nation, but it's all leaves.

And so this is soundly predicted in the Bible as one of the signs of the end. And Jesus also had something to say about what was going to happen. Luke 21:20 says, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is come nigh." And Jerusalem is surrounded by armies, both the literal Jerusalem, over there alongside the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, and we too, the spiritual Jerusalem, are surrounded by armies that want to destroy us. And they will be destroyed, and so will the church be destroyed.

The believers will not all be killed, of course. There will be many, many, many believers who will patiently wait for the end.

Well, that gives you a few things to think about.

CALLER: It really does. I think it's very interesting. I wish there was some kind of literature out, a book or something, that people could get, to really research this.

HC: Let me encourage you to read the Bible. Now read Matthew 24 very carefully. Don't read it once, but read it again and again and again and again. Matthew 24 is an excellent statement. And you don't have to read it symbolically or anything else. Read it as it is put here. And you'll see the timetable of the end.

Understanding Matthew 24 (305B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I'm reading Matthew 24, and it's a little puzzling. And according to this New American Standard, it says, "See that no one misleads you," and that there will be

Wars and rumors of wars, and tribulation, and false prophets will arise, lawlessness, and so on.

And down farther it says, "Let him who is on the housetop not go down," and "Woe be to those who are with child," and "Pray that your flight not be in winter or on the Sabbath." Now the way I figure that out, that can't be the last days.

HC: Why can it not be the last days?

CALLER: If it would be the last days, why would it tell you not to come down off the housetop, and "Woe be to those who are with child"? Because if it was the very last days, what difference would it make where you were?

HC: First of all, immediately when we read these passages, we start thinking about a particular moment in time. But look at Luke 17. Leave your finger in Matthew 24. And if you turn to Luke 17, where Jesus is talking about Judgment Day itself, He's using as a figure the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. And you'll remember that Lot and his family were driven out of Sodom and Gomorrah. And right on the heels of them leaving Sodom and Gomorrah, fire and brimstone were rained down on these cities, and they were destroyed. The fact is, Lot's wife looked back, and she was enveloped in that very destruction.

Now notice what it says, in verse 29 of Luke 17: "But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take away. And he that is in the field, let him likewise not turn back. Remember Lot's wife."

You see, God is not talking here about taking time to go down into the house. He's really talking about an attitude. What was Lot's wife's interest in?

CALLER: She was interested in the city. That's why she turned around.

HC: Yes. She was more concerned about the things of this world than she was about a right relationship with God. And she was consumed in the judgment.

So at the Last Day, when Christ comes again, if we are still worshipping the creation, which the unsaved man does (he finds his security, his joy, his hope, in the things of this world) if that is our attitude, that we find our hope, our joy, our security, in the things of this world, we are going to be consumed in the Judgment Day, even as Lot's wife was.

This language, of not going down into the house, is not speaking about us literally standing on the roof of the house and running down. From this context we learn that it is really addressing itself to the question of where is our love, where is our concern?

Lot's wife's concern was in the things in her home, in the city that she lived in. She couldn't bear to leave them. And because of this attitude, she was consumed in the judgment. If our attitude, when Christ comes again, is that kind of an attitude, we also will still be subject to judgment.

CALLER: Yes, I can see that. But why would it speak about, "Woe to those who are with child"?

HC: Well, again, we have a commentary on that in the Gospel of Luke. Remember when Jesus was carrying the cross? And as He carried the cross, the women cried out after Him. And then Jesus turned on them and said, in Luke 23:28, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming in the which they shall say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck.' Then shall they begin to say to the mount; in, 'Fall on us,' and to the

hills, 'Cover us.'"

Now in Luke 23, just as in Luke 17, Christ equated going down into the house with the very moment when Judgment Day had come. So here He is equating the language of "Blessed are the barren" (or in other words, "Blessed are those who do not have children") with Judgment Day, because "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'" From Revelation 6:15 or 16, we know that that is the time when Christ comes, and the unsaved are in mortal fear of Him, and will be calling to the rocks to crush them and the hills to cover them.

Actually, again Christ is teaching here an attitude. You see, there are a couple of factors in view here. First of all, an unsaved parent couldn't care less about his children, insofar as how they are going to be brought up spiritually. And yet he has a certain love and concern for his children.

Now remember in Sodom and Gomorrah. What happened to the babies there? They were destroyed. What happened in the Flood of Noah's day? What happened to the babies? They were destroyed. Now can't you see a parent that has children, and Judgment Day has come, and suddenly he realizes that he has done nothing to, it's bad enough that he himself must be thrown into hell, under the wrath of God. But what an awful thing to know that his family, his whole family, is going to go there. It's just going to add to the turmoil and the awfulness of his predicament. It would be far better if he had no children, if he had no responsibility toward these.

You see, Judgment Day is the final moment. There's no escape, there's no turning around, there's no more time to correct any past mistakes. He has made no effort to train his children in the fear and the knowledge of the Lord. He has made no effort to bring them the Gospel. And their eternal destiny, in all likelihood, is going to be very similar to his own.

CALLER: Well, that's the reason I wondered. I know it's supposed to be in the twinkling of an eye. And why would you worry about coming down off the housetop to get your coat?

HC: You see it's not talking about an actual thing that we would do, but it's talking about an attitude, the same as when it talks about, "Pray that your flight will not be in winter." Now again, a "flight in winter"? That talks about an escape of some kind.

You see, Jesus equates His coming with summertime, in Matthew 24:32. "Now learn a parable of the fig tree. When its branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the door."

Okay. Christ is equating His coming with summertime. Now anyone who is not ready is not seeing that it is summertime, that it is time for Christ's return. They are as if they are in winter. They are still thinking that it's a long time before Christ will return, or at least, whatever they're thinking, they're not ready for His return. They are like those who are in winter. Only the true believer will be like those who are in summer. We will know that it is time. We will be ready at any moment that that might happen.

CALLER: There were a few things in there that kind of had me baffled. And another one was verse 30, when it says, "All the tribes of the earth will mourn." Well, the tribes of the Jews were not considered tribes, and I thought it was speaking more about the fall of Jerusalem, or something like that.

HC: No. In verse 30, where it says, "All the tribes of the earth will mourn," look at the language carefully. "All the tribes of the earth will mourn." That is, this is

another way of saying, all the nations of the world, all the peoples of the world, will mourn.

Now why will they mourn? Well, Revelation 6 tells us why they will mourn, why they will weep. Because Judgment Day has come. They will be in terrible trouble. In hell they will weep and gnash their teeth. And already, just anticipating judgment, there will be great weeping, because the time of retribution has arrived. It will be a terrible, terrible moment for those who are unsaved. Words cannot describe the awfulness of Christ's return for the unsaved.

CALLER: Well, I just wondered, because Matthew 24 is quite a chapter to study.

HC: Well, you know, I remember years ago, when I had not worked as long in the Bible as I have at the present, I struggled with Matthew 24. Of course I read whatever commentaries I could lay my hands on, and I found that virtually every commentary related Matthew 24, at least to a high degree, to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. And so for a long time, for several years, I tried to piece through Matthew 24, to identify, what verse refers to AD 70, and what verse refers to the return of Christ? And I always had great difficulties.

I must confess that as I have continued to study the Word, and compare scripture with scripture, and just generally become more acquainted.

You know, you keep reading and reading and reading. And pretty soon you get a little better idea of the way God speaks, I suppose. But at any rate, presently I am altogether convinced, altogether convinced, that Matthew 24 does not have AD 70 in view at all, not a bit, that the whole chapter of Matthew 24 has the end of time in view. It begins this way, and it goes all the way through.

Remember, already in Matthew 24:3, "And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us. What shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world?'" And that sets the context of Matthew 24. It's the end of the world.

CALLER: This says, "the end of the age."

HC: Or the end of the age. But you see, elsewhere in the Bible we read that the New Testament period is the end of the ages. We are the last days, the whole New Testament period. Remember Hebrews 1:1: "In these last days He has spoken by His Son." Now before the coming of Christ we have the period from Adam until the Flood, which actually works out to be a little over 6000 years. And then we have a rather bleak period, from the Flood until Abraham is called out of Ur of the Chaldees, a period of about 3000 years. And then we have a period of about 2000 years, during which God dealt through the nation of Israel.

And now we come to the Christ, to the cross. And the Bible speaks about the "last days," or the "end of the ages." In Matthew 24:13 it says, "This Gospel must be preached to every nation, and then the end will come." So it's the end, you see.

CALLER: That's what's kind of confusing, if you haven't studied any more than I have. Another thing that threw me back to thinking it was Jerusalem was when it says, "Pray that your flight not be in winter or on the Sabbath." Well, if it was in winter, they had to hide in caves. Or if it was on the Sabbath, the Jews weren't allowed to travel. So they'd be stuck.

HC: But that isn't what's in view.

CALLER: You see, there's little things like that that crop up, that kind of had me a little bit confused.

HC: Well, join the party. These are not easy verses to understand. But I really believe that in these verses, "Pray that

your flight be not in winter or on the Sabbath," "Do not go down into the house," that you will be included amongst those who will be saying, "Blessed are the barren," all four of these references are language that is being addressed to the question: Be careful that you are saved! All four of these are speaking of those who are unsaved, who are not ready.

Later on in Matthew 24 Jesus became more specific. He said in verse 42, "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord cometh." And this is really the focal point. Be sure that you are ready. Be sure that you will not be included amongst the unsaved.

CALLER: Well, of course there are a lot of hidden things in here. If it was too plain, we'd never read it. We'd just read it once and put it down and say, "Oh, I understand that."

HC: Well, God has His own purposes for writing the way He did. That's for sure.

CALLER: That's what I mean. You have to search the scriptures daily.

HC: Exactly. That's what God wants us to do.

CALLER: You read a novel once, and you say, "Oh, I read that?" and put it back on the shelf, where you forget it. But this way, you have to keep searching. Anyway, that helps a lot. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

CALLER: Good night.

The USA in Prophecy (325B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Does the Bible have anything prophetic to say about the United States?

HC: Is there anything in the Bible that specifically refers to the United States insofar as the future of this world is concerned? There is nothing in the Bible that indicates or names the United States. While it is true that God does name historic nations like Egypt and Israel. He does not name any modern nation that I'm aware of. It certainly does not name Russia or China or the United States or Germany, or any of these nations.

However, God does indicate His judgment upon the world. And when He speaks of His judgment upon any nation, God has in view the whole world. The whole world, including the United States, is going to experience God's damning judgments, God's wrath poured out because of the infidelity, the fornication of the body of believers, the church, as it's found in many congregations and denominations throughout the world. And the Bible of course also indicates that the Gospel will be silenced. This will occur in the United States just as well as in every nation. And then of course the Bible speaks of Judgment Day itself coming, which will involve all the peoples of the world.

Obsession with End-Time Prophecy (379A)

CALLER: Time and time again we've heard questions and discussions about end time prophecy, the rapture, and so on. And I realize that this is a very important part of the Christian's life, looking forward to Christ's return, and all. But surely, at least I used to find myself obsessed with this and nothing else. And I was wondering if perhaps you could discuss putting the end time prophecy into a proper perspective, as far as our daily walk in the Christian life is concerned. And I'll take that on the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you.

We have a very good question that has been asked. How does end time prophecy and its discussion and its pressure on our thinking life interrelate with a Christian perspective of walking

uprightly before God? In other words, is it important, really, that we worry about when Christ is going to come, or is it important that we be concerned with the details of Christ's coming again? Does it really make any difference what we believe concerning His return?

Frequently, when we get into these questions, some will tell me, "Well, really it isn't important at all. The important things is that I am a believer."

Let me answer it this way. There are at least two ideas that come to my mind. Number one: The Bible says that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for correction and training in righteousness, and teaching, and so on. In other words, God has given us a lot of information in the Bible concerning His return. He has not put it in there just as some kind of a curiosity, something for some theologians in their ivory towers to debate over a little bit, wondering just how all this is going to be. God has put everything in the Bible in order that we might be trained in righteousness, in order that we might grow in grace.

And so whether we are studying the origins of this earth from the Bible, that is, we're studying the Book of Genesis, or whether we're studying the activities and experiences of the nation of Israel, or whether we're studying the Gospel concerning the events that occurred when Jesus was on earth, or when we are studying end time prophecy from the Bible, each and every part of this study is equally important.

Now that's something we must understand. Each and every thing is equally important. We must never believe that this is important but that is not so very important. Everything is important.

Now when we begin to reflect on this just a little deeper, we can see why this is so. There is a tremendous interrelationship that exists between every aspect of the teaching of the Bible. We cannot really understand salvation, for example, unless we also begin to understand something about where sin came from, why we are sinners. We cannot really understand God unless we see Him as the Creator, as He's revealed in Genesis 1 and 2. We really cannot understand God's covenant promises unless we carefully read Genesis 12 through 24, and discover how God dealt with Abraham of old, because in the New Testament God, in a number of places, refers to Abraham and to the patriarchs. And if we don't study Genesis, then we won't get the full grasp of how these chapters and verses impinge upon the salvation story.

And by the same token, if we really want to know even more about our salvation, it helps like everything to know about the end times and what is going to happen. Now let me show you how important this is.

There are those today who teach, "Yes, I'm saved by grace." And I think they are saved by grace. I can't judge what's going on in the heart of anyone. That's not my question at all. But then they go on and start talking about how God is going to use the nation of Israel to do a mighty work of bringing the Gospel in this world, and how the nation of Israel are the chosen people, and they will have prior rights somehow, and that Christ is going to set up an earthly throne, a political throne, on this sin-cursed earth.

Well, when I study the Bible apart from the end time, I find that we're saved by grace, we become children of God, we're sons of Abraham, we're of the seed of Abraham, if we're born again. Our heritage is an eternal heritage. We are inheritors of the whole earth, as we read in Romans 4:13. The Holy Spirit is the one who came to evangelize the world. Our focal point is not on creation and this sin-cursed earth. Our focal point is on the Lord Jesus Christ and an

everlasting heritage.

And so if we have the wrong thinking on the end times, it will begin to bend our thinking on the nature of salvation. It will begin to warp our thinking as to what our salvation really is. We won't have the full picture that it is altogether eternal, that it is altogether glorious, that it is altogether beyond this sin-cursed earth, and so on and so on. We begin to focus on a salvation that is limited to this sin-cursed earth, limited to a Christ who is going to reign as a man on this sin-cursed earth, limited to a work of bringing the Gospel that no longer is the work of the Holy Spirit but is the work of the nation of Israel. And so we begin to get a warped idea of what salvation really is.

It's imperative that we keep searching the scriptures, that we continue to study these questions about the rapture and the tribulation and the return of Christ, because as we get Biblical answers, we will find that they will begin to tell us more and more about the glorious nature of our salvation, and that our salvation is eternal in character, and that we are the recipients of the highest blessings when we have become born again, and that God did not have to change His program because He was rejected by His countrymen when He came on earth two thousand years ago. And the church of the New Testament is not some kind of an interlude. The church is the working out of God's program.

What I'm trying to say that there is no aspect of theology, that is, the study of God or the study of the Bible, that is unimportant. But it is imperative that the foundation for our study is the Bible. And if we can bring ourselves to this point (and by God's grace only will we arrive there), where we are ready to be open to everything the Bible teaches, ready to compare scripture with scripture, however it's going to take us, then we're going to find a real joy and a real glory in searching the scriptures.

But if we are not ready to be open to everything the Bible teaches, if we have been taught certain things and we don't want to lose any regard for those who have taught us at all, in other words, if we want to maintain our thinking that those who have taught us have taught us absolutely correctly, without error, and therefore we don't really want to look at these questions again in the Bible lest we might be troubled somewhere, then we're not going to grow in grace the way we ought to. Then we're not going to really begin to get a full and wholesome picture of the marvelous salvation that God has provided.

Let me say this again. All scripture, all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for reproof, for correction and training in righteousness, all scripture. Now the Bible is talking about the Bible. It's not talking about a lot of books that have been written. And there are a lot of fine books that have been written. But realize, please realize, when you read a commentary, I don't care how marvelous, what a beautiful Christian the writer was, always read a commentary or a book about the Bible with a grain of salt. Realize that he at times will be speculating. The writer will at times be incorrect. The writer may be correct most of the time, but there are times when he does not have the proper insight. There is no book that has been written, ever written, that is infallible, that's always accurate in every aspect. There is no such book.

And therefore you are not doing a disservice, when you read somebody's book about the end time or about any other subject, and you begin to raise a lot of questions, "I wonder how he can say this. I wonder if this really is what the Bible teaches." You're not doing him a disservice. You're not putting the author of this book down in any way. You're simply doing what is being faithful to God.

The only book that we can read and know that the author knew what he was talking about, and that it's absolutely accurate and trustworthy, is the Bible. That's why on this program I keep saying, "Don't trust me. Don't trust me. Keep asking questions. Keep wondering if I know what I'm talking about. And check me out in the Bible. Let the Bible be the authority, because I am not infallible, even as no one who has ever written a book about the Bible is infallible."

And if we'll get in the habit of doing this, more and more of us will do this, then we're going to have the joy of discovering that everything the Bible talks about, whether it's the return of Christ or the origins of the earth, or the miracles that Jesus did, or whatever, all have their proper place, and they all add to our understanding of this fantastically marvelous salvation, this incomprehensible salvation, that God has provided for us.

Luke 21:34-36 and the End-Times (425D)

HC: Good evening, Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I was listening to the radio tonight, and there was some discussion of the last days and the Biblical prophecy about it, in conjunction with Revelation. And in Luke 21:36 it says, "Watch ye therefore and pray always that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." And as he starts Chapter 21, he's talking about the things that we will be facing in the last days, and they do relate somewhat to Revelation. So I was wondering if verse 36 could be related to Revelation and some of the things that were foretold there.

HC: The question that is being raised is concerning Luke 21:36, where Christ is speaking about His return. Let's read these three verses, beginning in verse 34, "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, so that that day comes upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Now the caller is raising the question, does this relate to some of the things we read about in Revelation, or in other parts of the Bible that speak about His return? One of the best commentaries on this particular passage, I think, is Matthew 24. Throughout Matthew 24 Jesus is talking about His return. And the big warning that He is hold forth there is, watch out for false prophets. Again and again in Matthew 24 He calls attention to this. This is highlighted very specifically.

For example, in Matthew 24:24 it says, "False prophets and false christ will arise with signs and wonders, to lead astray if possible even the elect." Now the elect are the born again believers. That means that these false prophets will be working where the elect are. They will be working in the church, where the true Gospel ought to be proclaimed. Because it says that even the elect would be deceived if that were possible, it indicates that these will come with a gospel that looks so holy, that is so identified with the name of Jesus and the blood of Christ and the resurrection, and all of these holy things, that even the true believers could be snared if that were possible.

And of course the first evidence that something is afoul is the fact that they are featuring signs and wonders: "False prophets and false christ will arise with signs and wonders, to lead astray if possible even the elect." Now in John

10:8 we read, "All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers." Now I won't develop this right now, but in the Bible thieves and robbers have to do with those who come with other gospels, those who come as wolves in sheep's clothing, to harass the flock and try to snatch out of the flock anyone possible to make them follow other gospels.

But notice what it says in verse 8: "All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers. But the sheep did not hear them." In other words, those who were the true believers, who were truly born again, did not get snared by these false prophets, by these false gospels. Anyone of course who was in the congregation, and bear in mind that congregations are filled with people who are unsaved, and everybody in the congregation isn't necessarily born again, who was not born again was tantalized, intrigued by these other gospels, because they were so exciting. They brought signs and wonders. They brought a "here and now" thing that was far more marvelous than the true Gospel. After all, the true Gospel means to walk by faith, to repent of your sins and walk patiently by faith, not by sight. It means to have nothing to do with signs and wonders, because Jesus said that "an evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a sign." Our trust is in what the Bible declares, that we are saved and that we are children of God and that we're looking for an eternal place with the Lord in the New Heavens and the New Earth, and so on, not with some kind of a dramatic thing that is going to be here and now.

And so anyone who isn't saved is going to be attracted into these other gospels. But the sheep will not be snared. Now this is what Luke 21 is talking about. It's speaking about the fact that there will be those who will be overcharged with drunkenness and the cares of this life. Now drunkenness in the Bible is also a synonym for running after other gospels. We find this in Ephesians 5:18: "Don't be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit." It's not talking there in the first instance about physical drunkenness. The whole context has nothing to do with physical drunkenness. The context of Ephesians 5 is that of those coming with false doctrines, with another gospel. Don't get involved with that. "But be filled with the Holy Spirit." That is, those who are true believers, who are born again, are filled with the Holy Spirit, language that means we have been qualified to be a witness. The fact is, in Ephesians 5:19 it goes right on, "addressing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." That's what the true believer's role is, not to be attracted by these other gospels.

We become worthy only by becoming saved. Luke 21:36 says, "Pray that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things." We're not worthy because of any personal worthiness. We're not worthy because there is something intrinsically marvelous about us. Isn't God lucky, so to speak, that we are on this earth and that He can save us? No, no, no. The Bible says that we're wretched sinners. We're under the wrath of God. We deserve to go to hell. We are like a worm in God's sight.

Now we become worthy only because we have become covered by Christ's righteousness. His righteousness has been imputed to us. So we have become a child of God. We have become a citizen of God's Kingdom. And now we are counted worthy. We're counted worthy all because of what Christ has become for us. Now we are counted worthy. It means, in other words, that you are saved. "Pray that ye are counted worthy" pray that ye are saved, so you will escape this. You see, if you are saved, if you're born again, then as the church is assaulted by other gospels you will not be snared, you will not be caught.

Now remember in Matthew 24 that we

started out to understand Luke 21:34-36 by examining Matthew 24, and remember in that context it says repeatedly, "Watch." Watch, be ready, because you don't know the time of Christ's return. Watch.

Now the only way we're watching, that we're ready, is to be saved, is to be born again. For the unsaved, those who are being snared into other gospels, those who are being caught up by these moneychangers in the temple, to use Biblical language, for them Christ's return will come as a snare, verse 35 or Luke 21: "For as a snare shall it (that is, the day of the Lord, Judgment Day) come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." They are not ready.

Oh, they're talking about Christ's return. And they sense that it's time for something to happen. But they're not thinking in terms of personal judgment, the fact that they're facing hell, because they have been deluded. They have been blinded into believing that all is well with their soul because they are all tied up in these other gospels that look so glorious. But in actuality they're not in the true Gospel. And we can only be saved by being related to the true Gospel. We cannot be saved by being related to a false gospel, by imbibing and drinking from a false gospel. If we're going to be saved, we have to realize that the true Gospel is circumscribed by the Bible. It alone and in its entirety is the divine Word.

So the prayer of anyone today must be, "Oh Lord, may I know that I'm a born again believer. May I know that regardless of when you come, whether it's to take me in breath three breaths from now, or tomorrow morning, or next month, or whether it's the fact that you are going to come on the Last Day and rapture me, be as it may, may I know that I'm a child of God."

Now how can I know that I'm a child of God? When I know in my heart that I want to be obedient to everything that is in the Bible. I have this ongoing earnest desire to be submissive to anything and everything that I find in the Bible, because the Bible is the voice of God, my Lord, God my Savior.

If that earnest desire isn't there in our hearts, and if that earnest desire isn't translating into a life of substantial obedience to God, then we are not saved. And one of the commands that God gives us is that we are to look for divine truth only in the Word. We're not to add to the words of this book.

The Seven Churches and the Seven Seals (470D)

HC: Good evening, Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I wanted to ask you a question on Revelation. And it's about the seven churches talked about in Chapter 2, and also the seven seals that are in Chapter 5. I was wondering, do they mean anything today, the seven churches?

HC: The question is, do the seven churches that we find discussed in Revelation 2 and 3 have any bearing on us today? Does it have any meaning? There are those who say that the seven churches are to be understood in a chronological fashion, that actually we are living in the age of the last of the seven churches.

But actually, there's no intimation, no suggestion in the Bible, that we are to understand these seven churches in any kind of a chronological fashion. That would be sheer speculation, because there is nothing in the Bible that suggests this. These were seven churches that actually did exist at the time the apostle John was writing. And as we study these seven churches we get insights as to the nature of the organized church of the Lord Jesus Christ as it has stood throughout the New Testament

period. Any church today will find characteristics of itself as they read about these seven churches. I don't find anything chronological here at all.

Now insofar as the seven seals are concerned, which is also asked about here, the seven seals have to do with the presentation of the Gospel throughout the world. The first seal has to do with the fact that Christ goes forth conquering and to conquer. The picture is of a rider on a white horse with a bow. And it's a figure taken from Psalm 45:4 & 5, where it speaks about God riding triumphantly, conquering. It is the Gospel as it goes forth.

The second seal, where the rider is on a red horse and peace is taken from the earth, is a picture of the fact that as the Gospel goes forth there will be great persecution. Satan will persecute. He will kill. He will do everything possible to frustrate the Gospel.

The third seal has to do with the black horse, and the pair of balances in his hand. And when we really check this out in the light of other passages in the Bible, we find that it's a warning to the church that if they are not faithful, then God is going to take the Gospel away from them. God is going to bring judgment upon them.

And then in the fourth seal we see the rider on the black horse, or on the pale horse, rather. And it is a picture of the fact that indeed God's judgment does come upon the church, because it will not remain faithful. Eventually the Gospel will be silenced.

The fifth seal really gives us an insight into what happens to those who are persecuted, who are born again believers. And they are seen in Heaven under the blood of Christ, or under the altar. That is, they are covered by the blood of Christ. They are redeemed. And they're crying out for God's vengeance to come, for God's justice to be satisfied.

And then the sixth seal gives us a picture of Judgment Day itself.

The seals are quite unrelated to the seven churches, except that we find certain warnings in the language of the seven churches that relate to these six seals, that God will bring judgment upon them if they are not faithful, that the church is used of God to send forth the Gospel, to conquer the forces of evil, and that finally God will take away the authority of the church if they are not faithful, which is akin to judgment coming upon the church.

CALLER: What actually do the churches mean? Are they seven churches throughout the whole world?

HC: The seven churches that we read about, actually, the number seven in the Bible is a figure signifying the perfection of God's plan. Now it is God's plan that throughout the New Testament period, beginning with Pentecost in AD 33, God would be represented upon earth by various denominations and congregations throughout the world. And these would be the official stewards of the Gospel. They would be the places where the born again believers would be found. And they would be sending forth the Gospel into the world.

And the seven churches we find recorded for us in Revelation 2 and 3 are really a figure or a picture of the organized church of Christ as it has gone forth in the world throughout the New Testament period, not in any chronological order, however. They simply are in total a picture of the perfection of God's plan to have His congregations throughout the world.

CALLER: Oh, I see. Okay. I want to thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night

The Fate of the Earth (499A)

HC: Good evening Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I have a question with reference to what happens to the earth when the end of the world comes, at Christ's second coming.

HC: The question is, what will happen to this earth when the end of the world comes?

Now we find two or three passages that speak to this. We find, for example, in Matthew 24:29 that: "The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give her light, and the stars will fall from heaven." We read in Revelation 6, where it says that there was a great earthquake. "The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell to the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places."

The most dramatic picture, and the one that shows the ultimate destruction of the earth is found in II Peter 3, where we read in verse 10: "But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise. And the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." And then it says in verse 12, talking about the day of God, "wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

This earth will be altogether destroyed, just parallel to the situation of our bodies. If we die before the last day, our bodies are put in the grave and return to the dust. They are altogether destroyed. And yet they're recreated a new spiritual body that is perfect in every way, that is, if we're born again. And the same thing will be true of the earth. Christ went to the cross to redeem this universe. And so it will experience this redemption in the sense that it will be recreated New Heavens and a New Earth, where righteousness dwells, as we read in II Peter 3.

CALLER: These scriptures I looked up, Ecclesiastes 1:4, Psalm 78:69 and Psalm 104:5, seem to refer to the earth as lasting forever. Could you explain those?

Yes. You see, when God comes to you and me as human beings, and He says that He has given us eternal life, that we will live forever, we must remember that we do not live forever in our present bodies. Do we? We live forever, it's still me, I'm a unique personality, I'm not someone else after I've been resurrected, but nevertheless, it's me who lives forever in my resurrected body. There is this change that occurs that involves a resurrection. My old body goes back to the dust, and my new body is resurrected. Nevertheless God says that I will live forever.

The same is true of the earth. This earth is going to exist forever, no, not as this present sin-cursed earth. But this present sin-cursed earth will be burned by fire and recreated New Heavens and a New Earth. Jesus said, for example, in the Beatitudes, "The meek shall inherit the earth." Not the earth as it's presently constituted, under the curse of sin, but this earth as it will be constituted when it becomes the new universe, the New Heaven and the New Earth.

CALLER: So basically, it's like when the Flood came in Noah's time. The earth was cleansed, and there were new heavens and a new earth in the same respect. Isn't that so?

HC: Is the Flood of Noah's day analogous to this principle of a New Heaven and a New Earth? We could say it is a figure of it or a type of it. But of course it falls far short of reality. It is true that the earth that then existed was destroyed by water. The whole face of the earth was ravaged. And the whole population of the world was destroyed except for those in the ark. And God began all over again. And in that sense it is a figure.

But it of course falls far short of the actuality, because when God talks about the elements melting with fervent heat and the universe being destroyed, it means that it's going to be destroyed? just as when our bodies return to the dust. If you would examine the grave of someone who died thousands of years ago, ordinarily you would find nothing there at all. It just becomes part of the dust of the earth.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Daniel's Seventieth Week (548A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. You were speaking earlier on Daniel's Seventy Weeks. And I have a question. In verse 26 it says that the Messiah shall be cut off, and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city. Is it talking about Jesus there?

HC: Yes. The Messiah was the one who was cut off. To cut off means to come under the judgment of God. And He actually is the city that was destroyed. Remember that He called Himself a sanctuary? "Destroy this sanctuary . . ." Jerusalem is a figure for the body of Christ, and Christ is the head of the body. And so in a real sense He is the city, and the people of the prince that destroyed Him of course was the nation of Israel. They are the ones who plotted His crucifixion.

CALLER: Now you were saying that the last half of the seventieth week was at the cross. Now Matthew 24:15 also refers to the abomination of desolation. Is that the same thing? That's the end of time - right?

HC: Yes, that's right near the end of time, the abomination of desolation.

CALLER: Is that making the last half of that week 1900 years or more?

HC: No. You see, in Daniel 9:27 it indicates that in the middle of the seven years sacrifice and offering ceases. That's the cross. That we can't get away from. That's the only point that could be. And we know that the end of the seventieth week is at the consummation and the decreed end being poured out upon the desolator or the desolate. And that's Judgment Day.

And then in addition, it talks about the overspreading of abomination, and that of course, we know from Revelation 20, would identify with the loosing of Satan right before Judgment Day, or Matthew 24:15, where it talks about the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. That again is right before Judgment Day.

CALLER: But I still don't understand. When does the seventieth week end then?

HC: At Judgment Day.

CALLER: That's what I mean. Then that means the last half.

HC: Oh, I see. That makes the last half of the seventy sevens the whole New Testament period. Absolutely.

CALLER: The first half was dealing in sevens of years.

HC: The first half was actually three and a half years. It went from the baptism of Christ in AD 29 until the crucifixion of Christ in the spring of AD 33. And as a matter of fact, the 483 years before that, the 62 sevens, were actually literal years that did pass by.

But you see, God in these seventy sevens has two paths that lead to the Messiah. They both begin in 458 BC, when Ezra went to Jerusalem to reestablish the Law there. Now to reestablish the Law spiritually is speaking about building the house, or building the city. We are temple builders, or city builders, as we share the Gospel.

Now the first path goes from 458 BC right to the cross, in verse 24. "Seventh

weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression and to make end of sins," and so on. From 458 BC to AD 33 is exactly 490 actual years. And that's seventy times seven, 490 years.

But then beginning in verse 25, God gives us a second path to Christ. Only this time it goes to Christ's coming in judgment. The first path was the first coming of Christ, which was exactly 490 years. The second path also ends up with Christ, but it's not quite as simple a path. First of all, it begins with seven sevens of years, or forty-nine years.

Now forty-nine years in the Bible is a Jubilee period. It's the period between two Jubilee years. It happens that 458 was the last Sabbath year of the last Jubilee period. 457 was a Jubilee year, and that means that the first seven sevens of the second path (beginning in verse 25) go from one Jubilee period to the next, which would bring us from 458 BC (the Jubilee year was 457, and the next Jubilee year was 407 BC. All right. Now we're up to 407 BC.

Then it says that there were sixty-two sevens, and these come in unbroken fashion, which is a period of 434 years. The first seven of seven ended with the Jubilee year of 407, so the next year, which would begin the 434 years, would be 406. And going from 406 to AD 29 is exactly 434 years. And then beginning with AD 29 and going for half of a seven brings us to the spring of AD 33, when Christ was crucified.

But now God in this second path is going to take us all the way to the second coming of Christ, and so He indicates that the last half of the seventieth seven is the whole New Testament period. It ends with Judgment Day. And God picks up that figure of three and a half years in Revelation 10, in Revelation 11 and in Revelation 12, as He talks there about 1,260 days, or 42 months or three and a half years, or a time, times and a half a time, which again would speak of the last half of the seventieth seven.

CALLER: And what does it mean, "the end therefore shall be with a flood"?

HC: Well, a flood, I'm not sure of the exact language of this, except that it would indicate the total destruction of that which is in view. When Christ died on the cross, He endured hell for our sins. It was not just a partial destruction of the city and the sanctuary. But it's like Jesus said, "Destroy this sanctuary." And He meant destroy it. He was killed. He endured hell for our sins. And then He said that in three days He would rebuild it.

CALLER: Okay. Very good. Thank you.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Zechariah 13 and 14 Explained (645C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I would like to ask you if you could explain Zechariah 13 & 14 to me. I have a very hard time understanding when it says that His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives. I heard you say there is no future for national Israel. But how do you explain these two chapters?

HC: The question is raised concerning Zechariah 13 and 14. Verse 1 of Zechariah 13 tells us what Zechariah 13 is all about: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Now when was there or will there be a fountain opened for national Israel or for anyone else to have their sins paid for?

CALLER: That's at the cross.

HC: That's at the cross, at the cross, precisely. In other words, Zechariah 13 is prophesying concerning the coming of the Messiah as He goes to the cross. That we can be very certain of. And if you

look at verse 9 it emphasizes this. Or look at verse 7: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd." Now who is God's shepherd, that came to pay for our sins? The Lord Jesus Christ. And was the sword against Him? Yes, indeed. He is the one who died for our sins. And of course the church was scattered. The disciples were scattered at the time that He went to the cross.

But the ones who are saved, typified by the third of verse 9, "I will bring the third part through the fire and will refine them as silver is refined and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on My Name and I will hear them. I will say, It is My people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Now we have been refined because Christ has endured hell, the furnace of fire, if you will, on our behalf. And so we can say, "The Lord is my God." And Christ says of us that we are His people.

So Zechariah 13 very distinctly is talking about the cross. Now Chapter 14, however, is talking about Judgment Day. It talks about all the nations against Jerusalem to battle. And Jerusalem in this context is not literal Jerusalem. And if you read it carefully, you can see that it could not be, because it says the city shall be taken and the houses rifled and the women ravished. And yet it says half the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Well, how can it be taken and have half the people still remain there? It doesn't make any sense. If it is taken, it means that the whole city would be destroyed.

But this language is talking about the church, the congregations that will be assaulted at the last time by other gospels, by Satan. And those who go forth into captivity are those who fall snare of these other gospels. And yet half will not be taken. That is, the true believers will remain faithful to the Word of God.

And then it says in verse 3 that the Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations. Now this is picked up in Revelation 19 and Revelation 20, where it talks about Christ coming in judgment. Ant He speaks of it as warfare, as a battle, because the whole relationship between the dominion of Satan on the one hand and the Kingdom of Christ on the other is one of warfare, and this is going to talk about the final battle. And the final battle is Judgment Day. It's not really a battle, but it's the time when Satan is judged, and is cast into hell.

Now let's look at verse 4: "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives." And it goes on and talks about how the mount is going to be split and then in verse 5 it says, "Ye shall flee to the valley of the mountain, for the valley of the mountain shall reach unto Azazel. Yea, ye shall flee as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Azziah, king of Judah. And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." Ah... Now at the time that He sets His feet on the Mount of Olives, it says, "The Lord my God (that's the last part of verse 5) shall come and all the saints with him."

All right now, in the New Testament God speaks about this. God tells us what this is going to be. We read in I Thessalonians 3:13, "to the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." Now when is He coming with His saints?

Well I Thessalonians 4:14-17 tells us this. It says in verse 14, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." That's at the end of time, you see, because it says that the dead in Christ shall rise, and the resurrection of the believers is the last day, we learn from John 6.

And so Zechariah 14 is talking about the end of time. It's talking about Judgment

Day, when Christ comes on the clouds of glory and He gathers in His elect, and at the same time the resurrection of those who have died occurs.

CALLER: But this is not literal then.

HC: No. You see, His feet standing on the Mount of Olives is a figure to indicate that He is coming in judgment. We find the same kind of a figure, for example, in Micah 1:3: "For behold, the Lord cometh forth out of His place and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under Him, and the valleys shall be cleft as wax before the fire and as the waters that have poured down in a steep place. For the transgression of Jacob is all this and for the sins of the house of Israel," and so on. In other words, God is talking about judgment coming and using a figure of Him coming down and treading, or putting His feet on the high places of the earth. And that is the figure that's used in Zechariah 14:4. It is a figure employed to indicate that Christ is coming in judgment.

But as He comes in judgment He comes with His saints, as verse 5 teaches, because it is also the time of the Rapture. And that agrees precisely with the New Testament.

CALLER: Yes. How about verse 16?

HC: Verse 16 says, "And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." Now you see, the ones who are left are the true believers. They are the remnant chosen by grace out of all the nations of the world. And they are the ones who continue to worship God eternally. God is using Old Testament language of the ceremonial worship in speaking about our worship of the Lord throughout eternity.

CALLER: I thank you so much, Mr. Camping.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

THE TRIBULATION

Believers and the Final Tribulation (180A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. A week ago one of the pastors said that God would never let believers go through the Tribulation. Then a little further along in his conversation he said that we must always take everything literally in the Bible that is meant literally, and not spiritualize that which we cannot. In the light of that statement, how in the world can we understand a Scripture such as John 16:33, which says, "In this world you shall have tribulation."

Now there are many Scriptures in the New Testament that speak about tribulation, such as Matthew 13, Matthew 24, Mark 13, Acts 14, Romans 2, Romans 5, Romans 8, Romans 12, II Corinthians, and on and on. And I'd like to ask you to comment on this question and on the Scriptures that I've offered, and I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

First of all, let me comment briefly on this observation of taking the Bible literally. Now I've heard this kind of a comment many many times, that we are to understand the Bible literally. If we mean by that that when the Bible speaks historically, we are to understand it historically, I'll accept that. But if we mean something else by that, then I have a big question mark in my mind. And I'm thinking of this.

There are those who read the Bible, and they say, "Well, the verse says 'so-and-so', and we are to just take it because the verse says it. What else is new? What

else do we have to talk about? But the biblical rule is that we have to understand Scripture by Scripture. And I can't underscore this enough. We've got to become more and more in the habit of letting the Bible explain itself.

For example, in Revelation 19 it talks about Christ coming on a white horse, with a sword protruding from His mouth, when He comes in judgment. Now there are those who say that we take that literally. What they mean by that is that we just read it, and it says that He's coming on a white horse with a sword protruding from His mouth, and that's what we are to expect to see.

Well, that isn't the way we are to read the Bible. We are to examine the context, and we are to look at the phrases and the words that are used, to see how they're used elsewhere in the Bible. Now we know, for example, that the sword is the Word of God. And this is a picture of Christ coming with the Word of God. We know that there are not horses in Heaven. There just are not horses in Heaven. But the horse is used prominently in the Bible in battle. Again and again, when we read the Old Testament, we read about all the horses that Solomon owned, or that the enemy owned. And it's a white horse. White is constantly used in the Bible to signify purity. And so we find that Christ is coming as King of kings and Lord of lords, to bring judgment upon the nations. And the Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, which will judge the nations. They will be measured by the standard of God's Word.

Again, if we read Revelation 13:1, where it says, "I saw a beast coming out of the sea, with seven heads and ten horns," now if we're going to understand that just as it stands, without examining that statement in the light of everything else in the Bible, we've got to conclude that God is saying that there's going to come a time when out of the ocean there's going to come this strange beast, with seven heads and ten horns. And you try to draw a picture of that seven heads and ten horns. That doesn't make any sense, does it? We sense that already. But when we look at the rest of the Word of God, we find that it indicates the sea frequently is used as a figure of hell. Frequently it's used as a figure of the place where Satan's abode is.

We find, for example, in Jonah 3, where Jonah is thrown into the sea, and out of the belly of hell he cries, out of the heart of the seas. The seas are frequently a figure of hell. A beast is used in the Bible, particularly in the Book of Daniel, to signify political rule, or certain rule of men on this earth. And so this beast ultimately, when we continue to search out the Scriptures, we will find is a representation of the Kingdom of Satan, as it rules throughout time. And the ten horns represent the rule of Satan in the end time, just before Christ's return.

Now we know that there are many passages that stand as they are, to be understood literally. When God says that Moses went up into Mount Sinai, there's nothing in the Bible at all that says the he didn't go into Mount Sinai. There's nothing to suggest that that's anything but a historical statement, that he went up into Mount Sinai. When God created the heavens and the earth in six days, there's nothing in the Bible that suggests anything different than that. And so we know that these are straight historical statements of fact.

But any passage has got to be examined in the light of the rest of the Bible. Otherwise we're going to end up with wrong doctrine. Now as I've said many times on this program, the Bible is written to foster unbelief, to foster wrong doctrine. Jesus spoke in parables, so that "seeing they would not see, and hearing they would not hear." In other words, He clouded the truth. He covered the truth. And the only way that we can go to the Bible is to go by faith that it is the

Word of God, and it is its own interpreter. It is not subject to private interpretation. And then we will actually find what is truth.

When I say that it fosters unbelief, I could prove from the Bible very quickly that we are saved by our works. And I could marshal a dozen verses to prove this, that we are saved by our works. Now you immediately say, "Now wait a minute. That isn't the Gospel. We're saved by grace." Well, how do you know we're saved by grace? I can show you a lot of verses that say we're saved by works.

Well, the only way we can synthesize all this and tie all these verses together is to look at everything that speaks of salvation. And then we'll find that these passages that speak about our works, and how they figure in our salvation, are really speaking of the fact that the works are the evidence of our salvation. And so on and so on.

We've got to read the Bible in the light of the Bible. Now when the Bible talks about tribulation or affliction, we have to read it very very carefully. We can't put words into the mouth of the Bible, so to speak. I think, for example, of an illustration of this. Have you ever heard Revelation 3 referred to as a proof text that we would not go through the Tribulation? This is Revelation 3:10: "Because you have kept My word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth."

Now I've heard this verse offered many times as a proof text that we will not go through the Tribulation. Now when I read this, I don't find the word tribulation here at all. The word tribulation, as we find it in Matthew 24:21, "And then there will be great tribulation, such as this world has never known," is the Greek word thlipsis. And it is found more than a dozen times in the New Testament.

Ordinarily it's translated tribulation or affliction. But here is not found the word thlipsis. The word trial is the Greek word peirasmos, and it is never translated tribulation or affliction or trouble in the Bible. It is simply saying here, "I will keep you from the time when God is going to bring the world to trial."

Now if you have been accused of a crime, you have to go to trial. You stand before the judge. But the born again believers do not go to trial, because we have passed from death into life. Or again, frequently I Thessalonians 5:9 is used as a proof text that we will not go into tribulation. There it says that God has not destined us for wrath but for salvation. But the word thlipsis is not found there at all.

The word wrath, if we check that out in the Bible, is the Greek word orge, and we find it used, for example, in Revelation 6:16. In the context here God is talking about the collapse of the universe. He's talking about the dread and terror of the unsaved, as they call to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb." That's the same word wrath that is used in I Thessalonians 5:9: "For the great day of their wrath has come. And who can stand before it?" Now this is talking about Judgment Day, and we do not come into judgment.

Now on the other hand, when we read the Bible carefully on this subject of tribulation, as has already been offered by our caller, the Bible does teach that in the world you will have tribulation, thlipsis. In fact, if you read the Bible, you'll find (and you can count this), if you research this with a concordance, the word tribulation or affliction or trouble or persecution used over three hundred times in the New Testament. And in more than ninety-five percent of the instances where it is used, it is used in

connection with the body of believers, or those who have been born again.

And so this is the normal posture of the believer, to endure tribulation, and why shouldn't he? He's an alien, he's a stranger in a sin-cursed world. The majority of the people of the world are antagonistic toward God, and so this is bound to be a climate, an environment of trial and tribulation and affliction for the believer.

Now the Bible teaches that as we approach the end, wickedness will multiply, as we read in Matthew 24. And so if wickedness multiplies, then we would expect that tribulation would multiply, because as wickedness multiplies it means that the lot of the believer is more and more difficult. And so we're not surprised to read in Matthew 24:21, "And then there will be great tribulation, such as this world has never known and never shall know. But then, notice: "But for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened."

Now when we search the Bible for all the information we can about the elect, or about this concept of the elect living here while this increase of tribulation develops, we find that there are more than twenty-four places in the Bible where the word elect or chosen is used, or ordinarily it refers to born again believers. We are chosen, we are elect of God, from before the foundations of the earth, we read in Ephesians 1:4.

We are a royal priesthood, an elect race, we read in I Peter 2:9. "For the sake of the elect," that is, for the sake of the born again believers, "those days will be shortened." And then we come to Matthew 24:29-31, and we discover that immediately after the tribulation of those days will appear the Sign of the Son of Man, "and then all the tribes of the earth will see Him coming in power and great glory." And the very first thing that He will do, "He will send out His angels with the sound of the trumpet, to gather His elect." That's the Rapture.

If we'll only let the Bible be the authority, and if we'll only patiently compare Scripture with Scripture, then we'll begin to see that all of these things fit in together. Yes indeed, the believers will go through the final tribulation. They've been going through tribulation all through the history of mankind. Even today there are those who are rotting away in concentration camps. Is that tribulation? Even today there are those who are being beaten because they are serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Is that tribulation? Even today there are believers who are weeping because unsaved loved ones refuse to come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is that tribulation?

You see, that is normative for the believer. But praise the Lord, praise the Lord. We know that the day is coming when we will live eternally with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Will the Church Go Through the Tribulation? (246A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I would like to know, do you think that the church is going to go through the tribulation?

HC: The question that has been raised is, do I think the church will go through the tribulation? Let me ask you this question. Those people who died in the days of Nero, by being tied to a post; and burned to death as blazing torches, do you think they went through tribulation? Those people who were persecuted at various times in history, and tortured to death rather than deny the Lord Jesus Christ, did they go through tribulation? Those people who are in concentration camps today, because they would not deny the faith, are they going through tribulation?

You see, the Bible teaches that it is very normative for believers to undergo tribulation. Jesus said in John 16: "In the world you will have tribulation." Now why does a Christian have tribulation in the world? You see, the world is enslaved to Satan, and the world essentially and substantively is in enmity against Christ and therefore against His Kingdom, of which we are citizens when we are born again.

And so the world will lash out at believers and make life difficult for them in one way or another. And frequently this will develop into heavy persecution and troubles of one kind or another. So we're not at all surprised that again and again the Bible speaks of the fact that we will undergo tribulation.

Now the Bible does teach that as we approach the end, wickedness will multiply. And as wickedness multiplies, obviously tribulation for the believer will also magnify. And so the Bible says that there will be great tribulation, in verse 21 of Matthew 24, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be." Now notice what it says: "And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened."

Now who are the elect? The elect are the born again believers, those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are chosen in Christ before the foundations of the earth. Now during the final tribulation period, there is language in the Bible that suggests there will be no one being saved during this period, because the antagonism of the world will be such that the true Gospel will be hard to find.

But the believers will be here. The elect are the believers. Now notice verse 29 of Matthew 24: "Immediately after," and incidentally, you'll notice it says, "For the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened." You see, tribulation ordinarily is directed against the believers, because they are the ones that Satan is most concerned about, in trying to harass and trying to silence. Notice in verse 9 of Matthew 24: "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death. And you will be hated by all nations for My Name's sake." It's speaking about the believers. We are the ones who are hated by all nations, are we not? The true believers are the ones who are the targets of Satan's venom, the targets of Satan's antagonism. They are the ones that are hated by all nations.

CALLER: I thought that the elect were the Jewish people.

HC: But the Bible here is not talking about the Jews. It's talking about the elect.

CALLER: But the Book of Matthew was written to the Jews.

HC: You see, if we're going to decide that the Book of Matthew was written to the Jews, and therefore is not normative for me because I'm a Gentile, and then if we're going to decide that the Book of Romans is not written to me, but to the church at Rome, and therefore it's not normative for me, pretty soon I don't have a Bible, do I?

CALLER: Each book of the four Gospels was written to certain people. Matthew was written to the Jews, Mark was written to the Romans, and then Luke was written to the Greeks.

HC: Well, no. Actually, the Bible teaches that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God." You mentioned that Mark was written to whom? The Romans? Now let's look at Mark then, if you don't care for Matthew. Let's look at the Gospel of Mark.

I'm reading from Mark 13:19: "For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will be. And if the Lord had not shortened the days, no human

being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect..."

Now you didn't like Matthew 24, because you thought that was just for the Jews. But now I'm reading from Mark 13. And you see, God says exactly the same thing. The Bible is speaking to me, and it's speaking to you, whether we're a Jew or whether we're a Gentile. When we look at the word elect, we have to see how God uses that word, and we find that He's talking about those who are chosen in Christ, or elect in Christ, from the foundations of the world, to be saved. They are the born again believers at any time in history. And some of these are Jews, and a great many are Gentiles.

In Romans 11, it speaks in verse 5, where it's particularly concerned with the nation of Israel, and it says there that there is a remnant chosen by grace out of the nation of Israel, a remnant "elect" by grace. But it also speaks of Gentiles being elect, you see.

And so the Bible is simply teaching that when we get near the end, Satan will be loosed, wickedness will multiply. And those things that are normative, that is, a world that essentially does not care for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, a world that is at times bitterly antagonistic to the cause of Christ, so that it is engaging in open persecution, all of these things will become even more greatly manifested in the closing years of the earth's history. But "for the sake of the elect," God says, both in Matthew 24 and in Mark 13, "those days will be shortened."

And then it says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened." And now I'm reading in Mark 13, if you'd rather have me read there: "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." Now this obviously is the language of the end of the universe. It's beginning to collapse, beginning to fall apart.

"And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds, with great power and glory." And what is the first thing that He will do, as all of the nations see Him? In Matthew 24 it's expanded. It says, "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

And what will be the first thing He will do? Verse 27 of Mark 13: "Then He will send out the angels and gather His elect from the four winds," that is, the believers who are to be raptured. They will be caught up in the air to be with Christ. All of the believers will go to be with Christ because it is the end of time.

Now this language is very clear that the believers will go through the tribulation. Now this is taught many places in the Bible. We don't have to confine our understanding of this just to Matthew 24 or Mark 13. We can find this kind of a truth in many places, as, for example, Jesus teaches that the resurrection of the believers is the Last Day. Well, the Last Day is the end of time.

CALLER: God indwells believers, and I believe that the Holy Spirit is the restraining force now. And do you believe that the Holy Spirit can indwell people when there is great tribulation?

HC: The question is, if the Holy Spirit is the one who restrains sin, and if He indwells believers, which He indeed does, could there be the presence of the Holy Spirit while there is great tribulation going on?

First of all, let's remember that the Holy Spirit is Eternal God. And God always is present in the world. He was present at creation, He was present throughout the Old Testament period, where we read again and again of the Holy Spirit. He was present while Jesus was ministering

on earth. And it is also true that He indwells the lives of the believers.

Right up until the end, God the Holy Spirit will be present. Now it doesn't mean, however, that He will continue to restrain sin as He has throughout time. The Bible teaches, in Matthew 15, that out of the heart of man comes murder and adultery and thefts, and all these terrible things. Or in Jeremiah we read that the heart of man is desperately wicked.

Now if God did not restrain natural unsaved man from sin, this world would destroy itself in the shortest possible time, if man just did entirely what came naturally. But in order that this world will go to its predetermined end, God restrains sin. And He does this completely apart from the fact that He indwells born again believers. God restrains sin in unsaved man directly, as He did for example, in the life of Abimelech, in the days of Abraham, who otherwise would have taken Sarah and ravished her. But God said, "No, I have kept you from that."

God restrains sin because He is God. Now when we read in II Thessalonians 2:7, which I think you're alluding to, where it says that "He that restraineth much be taken out of the way," God is simply saying that He will not restrain sin as He has in the past. He will allow the world to become more wicked than ever.

Now this will obviously increase tribulation for the believers, because they are ultimately the target of the sinful activity of Satan. But for their sake, those days will not go on and on. God will shorten them, so that there still will be believers alive when He returns.

CALLER: Do you believe in the rapture?

HC: Absolutely I believe in the rapture. The Bible teaches, and by the rapture we mean, I think, the time when Christ comes, and those who have not died, and who are born from above believers, will instantly be changed into their resurrected bodies and be caught up in the air to be with Christ.

CALLER: "The dead in Christ will rise first, and then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds."

HC: What about the verse that says that the dead in Christ will rise first, and then we who remain will be caught up together with them in the air? That is I Thessalonians 4:17, I believe. And there Christ is only speaking about the believers. He is simply teaching that the rapture of the believers will be a simultaneous event with the resurrection of the body of believers, that is, those who have died previously and who in the meanwhile have been living and reigning with Christ in Heaven in their soul existence. They will come with Him, and their bodies will be resurrected simultaneously and be caught up in the air simultaneously with the rapture of the believers who are living.

Now if you go on from I Thessalonians 4 into I Thessalonians 5, which is part of the same context, there God speaks about the unbelievers. And there He says that He will come like a thief in the night for them. When they think that all is well, that there is peace and security, then sudden destruction will come upon them. But there He also says that Christ will not come as a thief in the night, for you, believers, because you are children of the day.

CALLER: That's the Jewish people, in the tribulation. They'll say, "Peace and safety," and then sudden destruction will come upon them. That's talking about the Jewish nation, not the Christians.

HC: No, it's talking about the unsaved of the world. How does the Bible use the word destruction? "Broad is the way that leads to destruction." It's not talking about the Jewish people in I

Thessalonians 5. It's talking about the unsaved of the world. They are the ones that are subject to perish, to eternal damnation. They are the ones for whom Christ will come as a thief in the night.

You see, the Bible is teaching one central truth, and that is that the world goes along, as Matthew 13 teaches, the wheat and the tares continue right up until the end. And then Christ comes. And at that time the universe begins to collapse. At that time the believers are raptured. At that time the graves are opened, and all the people who have died are resurrected. And at that time we have Judgment Day. And once we catch that, then everything begins to fit into focus.

CALLER: So then you don't believe in the rapture before the tribulation.

HC: Not a bit. There's no possibility of it, I don't know of any language in the Bible that would suggest this.

CALLER: All right. Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Let me make a suggestion which may be helpful. And I say this very, very kindly. I'm sure that I've said this before, but let me say it again. Particularly when we talk about the rapture, and talk about tribulation, you will hear me say things that make you say, "My, oh my, I can't believe it, that that's what the Bible teaches. The fact is, I'm sure that I've read in the Bible something quite different from what you are saying." For example, when I say believers will go through the final tribulation period, everything about you is saying no, no, no, no, "I read something different in the Bible."

Now one of the problems is this. There are a number of Bibles on the market today which have within them marginal notes. One of those Bibles, for example, is the Berkeley Version of the Bible. Now the Berkeley Version of the Bible is a rather good translation. But in the margin you will find the date given, and you will find explanatory notes. Now this is very unfortunate. It's very unwise, because these explanatory notes are the work of the translators. They're not the divine Word at all.

Many Bibles, for example, have in their margins the date of creation as 4004 BC. And this has been drilled into us because we've seen it in the margin of our Bibles. Now that's no more a Biblical statement than Time magazine is a Biblical statement, or the Examiner, or any newspaper is a Biblical statement. That is simply the opinion of a man by the name of Usher, who worked out a time plan. And it happens to be a very incorrect time plan. But some of the editors or publishers of Bibles have put this in the margin. And therefore a lot of people believe that they have read somewhere in the Bible that the world was created in 4004 BC.

Now this is what happens when notes are put in the margin of a Bible. We involuntarily begin to accept those notes as being part of the Holy Canon. And yet under no circumstance are they. The fact is, if you are asked, "Is this note infallible?" you off course would admit, "Of course it's not infallible." But because it is on the page of the Bible you have accepted it involuntarily as being part of the Holy Canon.

Now the New Jerusalem Bible is produced this way, with marginal notes. And there is another Bible that has had a profound effect on the lives of many many believers in the United States, and that is the Scofield Bible. Now the Scofield Bible is the King James Bible. It's a very excellent reputable translation. But in the margin you will find certain explanations. And if you use the Scofield Bible, you will find that repeatedly, when you are reading the text of the Bible, and you find that it's kind of hard to understand, the first thing that you do (and you'll have to admit that this is the

way it is) is read the explanation on the bottom of the page. And you'll say, "Oh, oh, this is the way we're to understand this."

Now unfortunately those explanations are not always correct. Sometimes they are, but frequently they are not. But if you use a Bible like the Berkeley Version, or the Scofield Bible, or one of these others, for a long time, and you have repeatedly read these marginal notes, pretty soon you have a very difficult time separating in your mind what you read in the notes and what you read in the text. All you know is that it was in the Bible.

The fact is, there are even some ministers who go so far as to say, the only Bible to get is a Scofield Bible. Now why do they say that? Because they want your thinking to be conditioned by those notes in the margin. Now it's fine to read commentaries. But when we read a commentary, then we know that it's not the Bible. We know that it was a separate book, and it's the work of man, and it is fallible.

But when we read something repeatedly on the same page as the text of the Bible itself, we pretty soon have a very difficult time separating what is the Bible and what is not the Bible. And so on this program, again you will hear me say things concerning Christ's return that just flabbergast you, to use a word. It really upsets you. "The Bible doesn't say that! He's wrong. The believers don't go through the tribulation. The rapture could occur at any time. I read it in the Bible."

Well, did you read it in the Bible? Did you really read that in the Bible? Or did you read it in the notes at the bottom of the page somewhere? And has this become impressed on your memory as being part of the Holy Canon? This is the big question, you see.

And the only way you can test this is to say, "Well, okay. I better check. I better really check. Did I read it in the Bible? If I really believe that the believers won't go through tribulation, I'd better try to find those verses that teach that. If I really believe that the Gospel of Matthew is only for the Jews, I'd better find that in the Bible."

Just because a commentator said this, or a theologian said that, that doesn't prove anything at all. I've got to find it in the Bible. The Bible is the guidebook. And I don't know personally anything in the Bible that tells me that the Book of Matthew is for the Jews, and it's not for me. Then I would have to conclude that the Gospel of John, Chapter 3, was for Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee. He was a Jew. It's not for me.

And you begin to immediately sense that this will lead nowhere. Then it means that we finally end up without a Bible. I'm pleading here that we recognize that if we have used a Bible with marginal notes (and I say this kindly, I don't say this to press you or to put you on the spot, or to call names, or to do anything), then you're going to be troubled by the fact that your knowledge of the scripture is going to be mixed up between what you read in the Bible and what you read in those notes. And it's very difficult to separate.

I personally would not like to use a Bible with marginal notes, because I don't want to have that kind of thing happening. I want to know what the Bible says, and oh yes, I read a commentary over there. But that was a commentary. That was not in the Bible. If you've used a Bible with marginal notes, it's going to be very difficult to sense when you're really hearing truth, because you're going to be evaluating it against what you read in those marginal notes, as well as what you read in the Bible. And so you do not have a clear standard by which to measure. And you're going to have to do the hard work of beginning to

individually check out these truths and see what the Bible really says.

I personally would never recommend a Bible with marginal notes. Even though you may have a high confidence in many of these who have written these marginal notes, and even though they may be right part of the time, nevertheless they under no circumstances are infallible as the Bible is infallible. And I don't want to read from them on the same page as the Bible, because I might be picking up their ideas as being infallible, and accepting their ideas as the Bible. And that would be very unfortunate. Then I'm not able to really know truth any longer.

Well, I thought this might be helpful to someone.

The Fall of the Corporate Church in the Last Days (260E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I'd like to have some points clarified about the last days. First of all, is not the true church the body of believers, or the body of Christ?

HC: When we talk about . . . your question is: Is not the true church the body of believers.

Now in the Bible, when the Bible talks about the church, or the Kingdom of God, or the congregation, it is speaking of it from two vantage points. It is speaking of it organizationally, or corporately. The congregations, for example, or the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3, or the congregation which consisted mainly of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, or the congregation that Jesus belonged to when He was on earth, that's the corporate congregation. That is the organized church as we find it spread out throughout the congregations and denominations found in the world today.

But He also uses the word church in the sense of the born again believers who are found in all of the organized churches, sprinkled through the organized churches. And they are the only ones, of course, who are eternal, who really have entered into the Kingdom of God in a real way, so that they have eternal life. That's the true church.

CALLER: When you talked about the last days, you said that Satan would overcome the church. So therefore you're talking about the corporate church, the organized church.

HC: Yes, because the true believers, of course, can't lose their salvation. They'll just patiently wait for all this to pass over.

CALLER: I'd like to read from Matthew 24, starting with verse 7: "For nation shall rise against nation; and kingdom against kingdom. And in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My Name. And at that time many will fall away, and will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations. And then the end shall come."

Reading these few verses here, it would seem to indicate to me that the Gospel will be preached until the very end, because it says that after the Gospel is preached, then the end shall come.

HC: Yes, except that that assumes that the end is immediately. In other words, that assumes that one day you have the Gospel being proclaimed, and the next day Judgment Day is here. Actually, the final tribulation spoken of in verse 15

really is just a final little period of time just before the end. But in the perspective of all of time, it is just an incidental point in time, as compared with all of time.

What I'm trying to say is that I think in verse 14, where it says, "Then the end will come," we have a statement that is giving an overall view. But then we have these other statements, like Jesus' statement of John 9, "Work while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work," which is focusing now on this in greater detail. It's opening it up so that we can look a little bit more carefully at the end. We've got a magnifying glass now, and we're looking right at the end.

Again, the language of Revelation 7 is a magnifying glass looking right at the end. I believe that Amos 8 is the same kind of a thing, where it says, "Men will run to and fro looking for truth, and they will not find it." There will be this brief period when the Gospel will be silenced. And this of course is Daniel 8, where it says that the continual will be taken away, and the sanctuary will be overthrown. This is the language again, you see, of the silencing of the Gospel.

CALLER: As you read this Matthew 24, up to verse 14, it's talking about all these "ends." And then you go to verse 15, and it says "Therefore." And that seems to expand on the previous verses.

HC: That's exactly it. Now you see, in verses 7 and 8 God is simply giving us the language of what is normative for the world, throughout time nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom, famines and earthquakes, and so on. "This is but the beginning of the birth pangs." This is what precedes.

And then in verses 9 through 14, very quickly He is giving us the pattern of the end. "Then." This is a time reference. Sometimes you find the word then, and it's not a time reference. But in this Matthew 24, whenever you find the word "then," it's a time reference. "Then." Now He's going back to His initial premise, that He's laid down in verse 3: "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world?"

And so in verse 9 He's saying, "Then [that is, after you've had these wars and famines and earthquakes, which are a normative thing - they may even speed up at the end, although we have no way of saying it's absolutely so - but at least that is the condition that will always be in the earth] they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for My Name's sake." Now that matches the language of Revelation 20:8 where it talks about Satan being loosed: "And he will marshal the nations from the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog. And they will assault the camp of the saints [or the Beloved City, which is the body of Christ]." They will assault this. So here we have some details about it. "You will be subject to tribulation, and some of you they shall put to death. And you will be hated."

And then in verse 10 He's giving another aspect, indicating the tremendous activity of false prophets: "Many will fall away." And verse 11: "And many false prophets will arise, and lead astray." Verse 12: "Wickedness is multiplied. Most men's love will grow cold." In other words, the church is being decimated right and left.

The true body of Christ can never lose its salvation. But you see, here's the thing that's going to happen. Within the corporate church as we see it today, in any congregation, today the best we can do, and this is a traumatic idea, when you stop to think of it. When we look at any normal time in history, if a pastor looks at his congregation and sees he has 200 members, and they have all joined the church and they all partake of Communion and they're all reasonably faithful people, he may have questions

about two or three of them, but fundamentally he really wants to believe, and as nearly as he can tell, they're all children of God. They're all born again believers. He has no reason to believe anything different than this.

And that's the way the church normally exists throughout time. And so these 200 people, they live and they die. And when they're buried, the minister preaches a burial service. And everybody is grateful because they know Brother John is in Heaven now. They have no way of knowing for sure whether he was born again or not.

But the Bible teaches, of course, that in the congregation, and we see it in the seven churches of Revelation, we see it in the church of Jesus' day, everyone in the corporate church is not born again. Many are not. Many have just been making like a Christian.

And so I expect to see that the true church, or the corporate church, will be decimated, so that here and there we're only going to find that there are only relatively small percentages of true believers in the congregation, after all.

CALLER: The true church are the believers.

HC: Let me put it another way. Here is a congregation that finally succumbs, and a man begins to be the pastor who is not bringing the true Gospel anymore. He's bringing another gospel. Most of the church, or maybe half of the church, or some part of it, is going to go right along. They're going to trust the pastor, and they're going to go right along with these other gospels, because they're not born again believers.

But there will be those in that congregation who will say, "Wait a minute. We can't stay here any longer, because this isn't the true Gospel anymore." And so they have to leave. And so that congregation effectively is going to be silenced then, isn't it? It's no longer the true church, but it was the true church. That is, it was the custodian of the Gospel. It was represented in Heaven symbolically by a lampstand, as we read in Revelation 1 and 2. But it has become ruled over by those who are another gospel.

CALLER: If these people are led away, then they were never actually members of the true church and the body of Christ.

HC: Let me say it again. Any congregation today is composed of saved and unsaved Christians. Okay? And as long as it brings the true Gospel, to any degree, in other words, as long as it holds that the Bible alone and in its entirety is the Word of God, even though it may bring it fallaciously at times, and poorly at times, yet it is the church of Christ. It is the body of believers. And as near as we can tell, we have to assume that the members are born again believers.

But when these snares strike, that we read about here, false prophets arise, leading many astray, wickedness is multiplied, many will fall away, we're going to find that many of these congregations only had a handful of true believers. Or maybe they had as many as two-thirds true believers. I don't know what the number will be.

And as they come under the rule of those who bring other gospels, the true believers will leave. And in this way the church is finally silenced, you see. The moment there's no true believers in that congregation anymore, then it's an apostate church. Then it no longer has any relationship with Christ.

CALLER: Are we looking at the church as the collective body of believers on this whole planet?

HC: Yes, but it will not be able to work as God normally has it work, as congregations of born again believers, for whatever reason. I don't know how all this is going to take place, but God

indicates that the true Gospel will be silenced, and the believers probably will be scattered to some degree. We already see this in some communities. In some smaller communities, there may only be three churches in town. And you go to all three, and you find that they're not bringing the Gospel.

And so what do you do? Well, the best you can do is hope that you can find someone else in the community to worship with, and form your own church.

How Long Will the Tribulation Last? (293D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I would like to ask you if it mentions anywhere in the Bible just exactly how long the tribulation is going to last. And if it does, is that a symbolic number or an actual number? And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. Good night.

The question is raised, How long will the tribulation, the final tribulation that must come against the believers, last? When we study the Bible regarding this question, there are four numbers that relate to the question.

The first number is seventy years. The Bible teaches that God came against Israel and said that they would be afflicted for seventy years because of their rebellion against God. And this is found in a number of places. I think immediately of II Chronicles 36, where we read of the destruction of Judea. They went into exile in Babylon (verse 21), "to fulfill the Word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbath. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years." Now that's one figure that God gives to us as a possible length of time for tribulation.

Now incidentally, this first period of seventy years is a literal period that did exist for Israel. It went from 609 BC, when Josiah was killed, until 539 BC, when Babylon was overcome by the Medes and the Persians. And at that time the first contingent of Jews returned to Jerusalem. During that seventy year period Israel was in deep trouble. During the first part of this seventy year period, from 609 BC, the Egyptians troubled Israel, and then the Babylonians troubled them, and then finally, in 587 BC, Babylon actually destroyed Israel. And it was not until 539 BC, seventy years after Josiah's death in 609 BC, that Israel began to return to its own land. This was the first fulfillment of this seventy years.

But nevertheless, the language of this seventy years has end time implications and certainly must be a number to be considered when we're thinking about the length of the final tribulation.

The second number that must be considered is the period from 609 BC, until 587 BC, when Judah was destroyed by Babylon, a period of twenty-three years. That too could be related in some sense to the final tribulation.

The third number that must be considered is a number found in Acts 7. This is a surprising place to look for a number relating to the final tribulation, but it really does, because in Acts 7 Stephen is preaching, and he's talking about the famine that came on the land at the time that Joseph had become Prime Minister over Egypt. And in verse 11 of Acts 7 he says, "Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction. And our fathers could find no food."

Now the interesting thing about this phrase "great affliction" is that this phrase is only found three places in the Bible. It's found in Matthew 24:21, where it says, "And then there will be great tribulation." The word tribulation

in Matthew 24:21 is the identical word to the word that we find here in verse 11 of Acts, "great affliction" or "great tribulation," the Greek word is the same.

The other place where this term "great tribulation" or "great affliction" is found is in Revelation 7, but there the context surely indicates that it's talking about the sum total of all the tribulation that believers will endure throughout time.

And so we're attracted to Acts 7, because we have the same language that we find in Matthew 24:21, where it talks about the tribulation period. Now this tribulation was a seven year period. You'll recall that the famine existed in the land for seven years, but actually, at the end of two years Jacob and his family came into Egypt under the care and keeping of Joseph. So they actually only experienced two years. But tribulation was to continue seven years.

So here are three choices. There's seventy years, there's twenty-three years, and there is seven years. Now there are those who talk about Daniel 9:27 as the tribulation period, or as referring to the tribulation period. But that context has nothing at all to do with the tribulation period. That's talking about something altogether different.

When we continue to study the Bible, however, we discover that those days will be shortened. Those days will be shortened. Do you remember you read that in Matthew 24? Maybe that won't be recalled very quickly. But let me read it, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no and never will be. And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened."

Now this sets up a very interesting analogy. Tribulation, which is called "great tribulation," identical language to Matthew 24:21, that the family of Jacob went under, should have lasted seven years. The famine was in the land seven years. It was shortened for the, however, to two years, because after two years they came under the care and keeping of Joseph in Egypt, where there was sufficient grain for them.

So in their case it was shortened. It should have been seven years, but it was shortened to two years. Isn't that interesting? And so we look at these other tribulation numbers that are suggested in the Bible – the twenty years that I spoke about, and the twenty-three years – and we sense that it probably won't be either of these, but it will be a shortened period.

And lo and behold, when we go to Daniel 8, we find a period of time there that is a time of tribulation, it is a time when the Gospel is silenced. The continual has been taken away. The place of the sanctuary has been overthrown. And it speaks there of a period of 2300 evenings and mornings, which is about six years and four months.

Now this is a significant number: 2,300 evenings and mornings, because it relates in number fashion to the twenty-three years we've already spoken about. God very frequently uses numbers in a symbolic fashion to illustrate a spiritual truth. Twenty-three years, 2300 evenings and mornings. Two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings is much shorter than twenty-three years, and certainly shorter than the seventy years.

So I believe that this is the length of the period when the Gospel will be silenced. It relates to the other numbers, it matches the requirements of Matthew 24:21, that those days will be shortened. They should have been much longer, like the twenty-three years or the seventy years. But they will be shortened down to 2300 evenings and mornings.

Now the question logically could be asked, how do you know that that's a

literal period of time? When we search the Bible for other language concerning evenings and mornings, the one outstanding place where we find reference to this is Genesis 1, where God created in six days. And each time it says there was evening and morning, one day.

From the context of Genesis 1, as well as from everything else the Bible teaches, we know that those were twenty-four hour days. They were literal days. And if this is so in Genesis 1, and there is no other evidence in the Bible to offer anything else contrary to this, we must then conclude that the 2300 evenings and mornings of Daniel 8 are twenty-four hour periods of time. This then would give us a little more than six years as the period when the Gospel is silenced. That will be the time when the tribulation will be most severe for the believers, inasmuch as it will be a dreadful time, without people being saved, without any opportunity to share the Gospel. Wickedness will have increased. There will be great trauma in the world because of other judgments that have come against the world because of their apostasy. But all of this will end with Christ Himself coming on the clouds of glory.

THE BEAST / THE ANTICHRIST

The Mark of the Beast in Revelation 20:4 (143E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: In Revelation 20:4, is the mark of the beast on the forehead and on the hand to be taken literally, or is it symbolical?

HC: The question that is raised is concerning Revelation 20:4. What is the beast named there, and what does it mean when it speaks of those who have the beast's mark on their foreheads or their hands?

CALLER: Now in Revelation 13 and in Revelation 17 it speaks about a beast coming up out of the sea with seven heads and ten horns. And that beast is worshipped as God by the unsaved. It is intimately related to the dragon, who is Satan himself. And so we know that the beast is a reference to the kingdom of Satan, or to Satan himself. You can't have a kingdom without a king, nor a king without a kingdom. And the beast and the dragon are references to Satan himself, or to his kingdom.

Now all of the peoples of the world are slaves of Satan. Now when a man had a slave, that slave was marked in some fashion. It either was branded, or his ear was clipped, or whatever. And here it speaks about those who have the mark of the beast, that is, the mark of the kingdom of Satan on them, on their foreheads or their hands. That is, their wills, represented by their hands, have been sold out to Satan. And their foreheads means their intellects, their minds, have been sold out to Satan. They are totally the slaves of Satan.

You see, they are unsaved. They cannot come to life. But if we do not have the mark of the beast, that is, if we are not identified with the dominion of Satan, which of course occurs when we become born again, then to be martyred, or to die, is no victory for Satan. We simply leave our body and go to live and reign with Christ in Heaven as a soul being. And this is what is in view here. "I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded." These are disembodied souls.

CALLER: Yes. Thank you so very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

The Two Beasts in Revelation 13 (234B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open

Forum.

CALLER: I have a question on the thirteenth chapter of the Revelation. I was wondering if you could explain what the difference is between the two beasts. And I'd also like to know if you could elaborate on the last verse of the chapter, about the beast's number being 666.

HC: The question is raised concerning the two beasts of Revelation 13. What is the difference between them? What do they signify? And then, the question is asked also about the number 666 that is found in the last verse of the chapter.

The first beast comes out of the sea. It has ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns or diadems upon its horns, and a blasphemous name upon its head. And it "was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority." Now this is our first clue, that really teaches who this first beast is. "The dragon gave to it his power and his throne and great authority."

Now the dragon is Satan. Again and again in the Bible God speaks about the dragon as Satan, or Satan as the dragon. And the beast therefore would be the kingdom of Satan, totally synonymous with Satan himself. But it is the kingdom of Satan as it is found in the world throughout time. The seven heads refer to the rule of Satan throughout time.

In Revelation 17 we find another reference to this beast, and we find in verse 8: "The beast that you saw was and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition." It says that "the seven heads are seven mountains, or hills on which the woman is seated. They are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen. One is and the other is not yet come. And when he comes, he must remain only a little while." Therefore, it's speaking already in the past tense of seven of the heads, five of the seven heads representing kings who had already reigned. Now this simply is indicating that it is going all the way back into time, wherever the kingdom of Satan has been. It is the rule of Satan as it is found in the earth.

Now the ten horns more particularly relate to the rule of Satan right at the end of time, and tie very closely, incidentally, into the second beast, or in some respects to the second beast, as I'll show in a moment. But the ten horns do refer to the rule of Satan at the end of time because again, when we read Revelation 17, it says in verse 12, "And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings, who had not yet received royal power. But they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beasts."

Now the interesting thing is that in the Book of Daniel God makes reference to ten horns, out of which the little horn comes. And when we look at the Book of Daniel carefully, we find that in this reference to the ten horns and the little horn, it is really speaking about the false prophets, or it's talking about the church itself. The fourth beast spoken of in Daniel seven has ten horns: "And I considered the horns. And behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things."

"Eyes like a man" is a figure of speech speaking about prophets. If we tie that back into Isaiah 29:10, we can see this. Now the beast, therefore is the kingdom of Satan that rules throughout time, although particularly the period that's in view here is the whole New Testament period, the forty-two months of Chapter 5. And in verse 3 it says, "One of its heads seems to have had a mortal wound," indicating that at the cross Satan was dealt a death blow. The kingdom of Satan was dealt a death blow because of Christ's victory on the cross.

But yet, "Its mortal wound was healed. And the whole earth followed the beast with wonder." You see, the kingdom of Satan still goes on, even though the destruction of Satan and all the wicked was guaranteed because of Christ's work at the cross. Yet the kingdom goes on.

Then in verse 4 it says, "Men worshipped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like the beast and who can fight it?" Now this beast is what unsaved man is totally involved in. Any unsaved man is a worshipper of the beast, a worshipper of the kingdom of Satan, a worshipper ultimately of Satan himself.

Now in verse seven it says that this beast was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And this of course is pointing to the end of time, just before Christ returns, when Satan will be able to silence the Gospel.

Now beginning in verse 11 it speaks about a second beast coming out of the earth, that had "two horns like a lamb, and it spoke like a dragon." Now the minute it says that it spoke like a dragon, we know that again it is totally Satan related.

Now this beast is Satan in his religious rule, particularly, as he works through false prophets and false christ. "Two horns like a lamb." You see, he appears like Christ Himself. Christ is the Lamb that was slain. Remember, in II Corinthians 11 it speaks about Satan going about as an angel of light. Well, that's another figure that is tied in with this other beast that rose up out of the earth. The phrase "out of the sea" or "out of the earth" is a figure relating to hell itself. Hell is sometimes spoken of as the heart of the earth, or the heart of the seas.

Now this beast works great signs, "even making fire come down from Heaven to earth in the sight of men. And by the signs which it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast, it deceives those who dwell on earth, bidding them make an image for the beast which was wounded by the sword and yet lived. And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain."

Now you see, Satan, as he controls the minds of unsaved men, normally does not show himself to be of any life, or the giver of any life, or of having any life characteristics. A political kingdom ultimately is a fairly dead kind of a kingdom. It exists, and then it doesn't exist. It has no supernatural power.

But when Satan comes through his emissaries, false prophets and false christ, who come with signs and wonders, as predicted in Matthew 24:24, as he comes through occult activity of one kind or another, this makes the worship of Satan far more glorious and marvelous. Now of course those who are worshipping him don't understand that they're worshipping him. They are deceived, because Satan is the great deceiver. But nevertheless, ultimately they are worshipping him.

And they give breath to the image of the beast. They make the worship of the kingdom of Satan a live venture, as if through this there is a vital, energetic eternal relationship with the god that they are worshipping failing to realize that their god is Satan, and that he is doomed to eternal damnation.

Now those who worship the beast are spoken of in verse 18 as having a number, the number of man. Now as I've said before perhaps, in the King James Bible the translation is, in this instance, a poor translation. In your King James Bible you'll find that it says, "It is the number of a man." But the word that is used here, the Greek word, is the identical word that is used in the Bible repeatedly where it speaks of Christ

being the Son of Man. Now under no circumstance would that be translated the "Son of a Man," because Christ under no circumstance was the Son of a man. He was the Son of Man. He was of mankind. In other words, He was a human being.

And here also the same word is used, so it would have to mean that it is the number of man, the number of mankind, the number of the human race. In other words, anyone at all who is unsaved symbolically has the number 666 on his forehead. It is the number assigned to an unsaved man, who is destined for hell, because he is a slave of Satan.

Now this number originally had its beginning in Zechariah 13, or at least it's referred to there, where it says in verse 8: "Two-thirds I will cut off and destroy, but one-third." And it goes on to speak about the redemption of the one-third. The number two-thirds, if written as a decimal, is .666666. And if we just use the first 3 numbers, we get 666.

And there are at least two illustrations in the Bible where this is put forth. We read about David, when he defeated the Moabites, that he caused them to lie down in three lines. Two of the lines he put to death. One line he spared, and they served him. David there was a type of Christ as Messiah, the two-thirds a figure of those who are under the judgment of God, the one-third a figure of those who are saved.

In II Kings 1 we read of Elijah, that he was sent for by the wicked king of Israel. And a company of men came to take him, and he called down fire from heaven, and they were destroyed. A second company of men came to take him, and he called down fire from heaven, and they were destroyed. A third company of men came to take him, and he called down fire from heaven, and they were spared. Again we have two-thirds being destroyed, one-third being spared.

Well, there, just very quickly, is an outline of some of the ideas presented in Revelation 13.

Who Will the Antichrist Be? (330B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'm wondering, is the antichrist going to be a real Jew, or is he going to be a Gentile?

HC: The question is raised, "Who will the antichrist be?" For many many years I was under the impression, because of what I had read in the Bible, as well as books I had read about the antichrist (and it's amazing how our minds are influenced by books that we read), and I was quite certain, that the antichrist would be some human being that God would raise up. And this man in time would be in-filled by Satan, much as Judas was in-filled by Satan at the time that he betrayed Christ.

But as I began to study the Bible more closely, I began to see that this is an impossibility. There were too many scriptures that could not be reconciled to this kind of an idea. Finally it dawned on me, and I began to see that the antichrist is not a man, that is, not a human being. But the antichrist is Satan himself.

You see, the big drama that the world unfolds is the drama between the enmity that exists between Satan on the one hand and Christ on the other. Now Christ has His followers, who are called Christians, or they're called prophets, or ambassadors of Christ. But Satan, whom I believe is the antichrist, who heads up the kingdom of darkness, has his followers. And they are called in the Bible false prophets or pseudo-christs, or antichrists.

Now the Bible teaches, in Revelation 20, that right near the end of time Satan will be loosed, so that he can deceive the nations again. In Revelation 13:4 it speaks about the dragon being

worshipped, that is, Satan, being worshipped. In Second Thessalonians 2 it speaks about the man of sin taking his seat in the temple. Now I believe the man of sin is Satan. He is called a man here because of language that we read in Isaiah 14, where it talks about the fall of Lucifer, who became Satan, as near as we can tell in the Bible. And it says of him, "Is this the man that caused the nations to tremble?" and so forth.

Now he's called man there because he was typified by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He is called the man of sin, who takes his seat in the temple, and causes himself to be worshipped as God. Now Satan takes his seat, that is, he rules. To take one's seat in the Bible means to rule or have authority over. He takes his seat in the temple. The temple is the body of Christ. We are the building stones in the temple of God.

And so through false prophets, through false christ, Satan rules in the church, where the true Gospel ought to be proclaimed. He comes with a gospel that is very much like the true Gospel, but it's another gospel. And so, ultimately, he himself is worshipped rather than Christ. Those who worship think they're worshipping Christ, but effectively they're worshipping him, because it's his gospel.

Now God also speaks about this in Matthew 24:24: "False prophets and false christ will arise with signs and wonders, to lead astray if possible even the elect." It's the activity of Satan as he rules in the congregations. This is spoken of in Matthew 24:15, where God says that the abomination of desolation will stand in the holy place. The holy place is the body of Christ. We are the only holy place in the world. Same think that the temple will be built again, and it will be the holy place. That's impossible. No physical building could ever be the holy place again, because when Christ hung on the cross and the veil of the temple was rent, that forever ended the temple's existence as a holy place where God came down to man.

In the New Testament we read not of a physical building as the temple, but as Christ being the temple, or His body being the temple. We are the temple. And the abomination of desolation, I believe, is speaking of the fact that the church will be overrun by prophets and pseudo-christs, false prophets and pseudo-christs, convinced they are serving the Lord Jesus Christ, but in actuality, because they are coming with gospels that are not the true Gospel, they are emissaries of Satan. And this is the time that we're really coming into right now.

I really believe the antichrist is here. Because he is the very master of deceit, most people do not recognize this. They're fondly thinking, or blindly thinking, or sleepily thinking, or something, that some day there will be a man, Jew or Gentile, who will stand up and be the antichrist. And that will give us plenty of warning to do this or to do that. Actually, I believe that the antichrist is on the scene.

His spirit has always been present, as we read in First John: "The spirit of antichrist is already here," the Bible said at that time. That is, the spirit of Satan, the spirit of wickedness, was always present in the earth. But the antichrist will come. That is, Satan will be loosed, and wickedness will multiply. I believe he has come, and this accounts for the terrible things that are happening not only in the secular world, but also in the church, as other gospels are gaining the ascendancy like wildfire.

CALLER: I thought that this man would also be a false prophet, in the physical.

HC: Satan is a spirit, and therefore he cannot manifest himself as an individual. He is only one angel. He could fill one man, as any demon could fill a man. When he filled Judas, Judas didn't look

any different than anyone else. The disciples still thought that he was a true disciple, in the upper room.

But Satan has his followers, his emissaries the false prophets, the false christ, who are eloquent in proclaiming their false gospel. They are convinced of course that they are proclaiming the true Gospel. They are convinced they are bringing the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the Bible teaches that the church will be overrun by these, and I believe it is in this fashion that Satan rules in the congregation.

Now you see, he can rule in every church in the world, through false prophets. As any congregation begins to follow another gospel, as any denomination succumbs to a gospel that is not the true Gospel, then Satan is ruling that congregation or that denomination, is he not? And in this way he can completely bring desolation to the church. The Bible predicts that this will happen.

The "Holy Father" and the Antichrist (650A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a couple of questions, and I would like to make a comment or two. I would like to know, would it be considered blasphemy against God for a man to take the title of Holy Father?

HC: Would it be blasphemy against God to take the title of Holy Father? The Bible says, "Call no man your father." Now it is true that we have our earthly fathers. We have a father who is our blood father, and we call him "Father." And that's not contrary to the Word of God.

But if we look upon anybody in place of God, a father in place of God the Father, then of course it is blasphemy. Then it would be entirely contrary to the Word of God. In fact, if a man is a spiritual leader of a flock, it would be far safer and wiser to call him a pastor, which really means shepherd. He is the shepherd of the flock.

Now Christ of course is the Good Shepherd, but those who are pastors are under shepherds, guiding the flock.

CALLER: I'm sure you're familiar with II Thessalonians 2:3: "Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

Then I'll drop down to verse 9, "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." And I follow the newspapers quite a bit. And as the Lord raised up Pharaoh to show His power, that His mighty works might be declared throughout the earth, there is no doubt that the beasts written of in Revelation will appear in these prominent positions that men hold.

HC: Actually, when we study the Bible, we find that the man of sin here in II Thessalonians 2 (I'm very convinced of this) is no one else but Satan himself. And he is the beast that comes out of the sea, or the beast that comes out of the earth. It is Satan and his kingdom.

Now he is manifested in men of course. And we read in Matthew 24:24 about "false prophets and false christ, who will arise with signs and wonders, that is, anyone at all who comes with a gospel other than the true Gospel is an emissary, ultimately, of Satan. He is being used of Satan to woo people away from the true Gospel. And if they're not saved, many will be wooed away from it. It doesn't necessarily mean that they have to be prominent in the world. A lot of people, when they think of the antichrist or the man of sin, think of some figure-head who is very notable, in a very high

position. No, that's not required at all. Anyone at all who comes with any gospel other than the true Gospel is an Antichrist, is someone who is coming as Satan's emissary. And in II Thessalonians 2 God has His eye on Satan. He is the one who is ultimately worshipped in any gospel other than the true Gospel, even though they may think that they're worshipping Christ, because it's not the Gospel of the Bible, ultimately.

Therefore it is a false gospel, and they're worshipping Satan, even though they don't realize it. This I believe is what God has in view here.

CALLER: You're saying that the beast with the seven heads and the ten horns then would be Satan himself.

HC: Yes, or the kingdom of Satan as it's revealed throughout time, and will continue to be on the scene right up until the end of time, but will be particularly dominant during the final tribulation period, when Satan is loosed. And that's particularly the time of the ten horns.

CALLER: Okay then, the second beast who follows after him will, I believe, be a man - the one with the two horns. I've been doing a study on that. Each horn signifies a king. So this beast with the two horns would signify two people, and I believe they would be behind a very large congregation. And there are two in the world today, one that is based in the Middle East, and also there is one that is based in Rome. And these two horns would be these two kings of this beast, working signs and wonders.

HC: These men you're referring to aren't able to do signs and wonders. They just aren't able to do that. Whether they have the true Gospel or not is another question. But when God talks about this beast in Revelation 13, with two horns that speak like a dragon and yet look like a lamb, God is emphasizing that this is the rule of Satan as he comes as an angel of light. Remember II Corinthians 11, where God talks about Satan coming as an angel of light, and his ministers as ministers of righteousness. And he causes all to worship the dragon.

This is simply talking about Satan as he comes through other gospels. And they are legion today. Everywhere there are all kinds of gospels that are holding forth. And I define another gospel as any gospel that goes outside of the Bible looking for divine truth, or which refuses to look at the whole Bible as the Word of God. I believe there's only one true Gospel, and this circumscribed by the Bible. The Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. And any gospel that will not measure up to that definition is another gospel. And if it's another gospel than the true Gospel, it will be a false gospel. And these are found everywhere today.

CALLER: That's true, but in this one church that I'm talking about, with over 600 million people in their congregation, has doctrines in their church saying that this man is endowed with infallible abilities, which in fact would make him to be God, because only God is infallible.

HC: While there may be a church here or there that is obviously is not the true church, that does not mean that that church embraces all that the Bible is talking about. You see, the Bible is not concerned with just one denomination at any time in history. The Bible is concerned with the whole kingdom of Satan, as it exists in the world. Now the kingdom of Satan runs the gamut all the way from Eastern religions to those gospels that are so close to the true Gospel that even the elect would be deceived, if that was possible. And there's every variety in between. And it finds its place in every country of the world, in every city of the world. Everywhere we find the kingdom of Satan holding forth, with one kind of a gospel or another.

By the same token, we find the true Gospel sprinkled throughout all the nations of the world. And it is not confined to one denomination. It can be found in many different denominations. But this is the conflict that God talks about in the Bible. God does not single out this particular denomination or that particular denomination, any more than He singles out nations. We don't find Russia mentioned in the Bible, or China mentioned in the Bible, or the United States mentioned in the Bible. We do find some of the ancient nations, like Egypt and Israel, mentioned certainly. But the modern nations are not mentioned in the Bible at all. God is not concerned about modern nations as individual nations, any more than He's concerned about individual denominations, regardless of how large they may be or how powerful they may be. God is concerned about the dominion of Satan on the one hand, and the kingdom of Christ on the other. And Satan's dominion has its big names and its little names. It has its big denominations and its little congregations. It has its religions that bear no relationship to Christ, and it has those that are so close to the true Gospel that even the elect could be deceived. We find all of this as part of the kingdom of Satan.

However, in these last days God particularly warns that the major assault will come against the true church by those gospels that are so close to the true Gospel that they would even deceive the elect, if that were possible. The doctrines are so close, and the practices are so close. But the first thing we can recognize them by is that they have a real interest in signs and wonders, which the true church has no interest in.

CALLER: You just said that signs and wonders wouldn't be possible in these last days, but I know for a fact that there are people going around claiming to have these.

HC: No, I did not say that. I'm only saying that the man that you mentioned, for example, doesn't do signs and wonders. While he is looked upon by his people as a great religious leader, he doesn't do signs and wonders. But there are plenty of gospels around, plenty of them, that may not appear evil in the sight of many, but nevertheless they do feature signs and wonders. And these are found all through the world.

Thank you so much for calling and sharing your thoughts.

THE RAPTURE

The Rapture and the Millennium (150A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I need to ask a question about the Rapture. Will it take place before the Tribulation and the Mark of the Beast and the time of the antichrist? Do you think it will take place before that comes about? If I understand it right, Christ said, before He ascended to Heaven, that He would come back and receive us to Himself. And another thing I'd like to know about is the Millennium. Will that be before the judgment or after? I know that there's some connection through there. I think the Rapture takes place first, and then the Millennium. The Bible speaks of the earth being made new, and so on. Will that be before the judgment scene?

HC: Let's see if I can help you. You're raising a question concerning the Rapture. When will it take place? And then you're wondering how that relates to the Millennium.

Now we understand by the term Rapture (and we must define it because it's not found in the Bible) the time when those who are believers, who have not died, will be instantaneously given their

resurrected bodies, and will be caught up in the air to be with Christ. And this will be at His coming.

Now in I Corinthians 15:51 and 52 God gives us a time clue as to when the Rapture will take place. There we read, "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet." In other words, it is just at the time of Judgment Day that the believers will be raptured. In other words, it's right at the end of time.

Now this is taught very clearly in Matthew 24, amongst many other passages. We read in Matthew 24, in verse 21, that there will be great tribulation, such as the world has never known. And then in verse 29 it says: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven." That means that the universe is beginning to collapse. It's the end of time. "And the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

And what will He do? "And He will set out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect." The elect are the born again believers. They are the ones who have been chosen by God from before the foundations of the earth. "They will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other."

And so here it teaches that the Rapture is right at the end. This is what the Rapture is all about, when it talks about sending out His angels with a loud trumpet call. Now this of course is the same time that our bodies are resurrected if we had previously died. We find in I Thessalonians 4 that it talks about the resurrection of believers, and at the same time the rapture of believers takes place. And in that context, in I Thessalonians 4, it says the same thing as Matthew 24, that Christ will come with "a shout of command, and the voice of the archangel, and the sound of the trumpet." And you see the same characteristics that we find in Matthew 24. We find the trumpet, we have the archangel's call, we have the angels, and the gathering of the elect, and the coming of Christ, all the same elements that we find in Matthew 24.

And we know from John 6:40 and 44 and 54 that the resurrection of believers is on the Last Day. The Bible says so very emphatically. And so if the resurrection of believers is on the Last Day, the Rapture is on the Last Day.

Now in Revelation 20 we have this puzzling chapter where, 5 or 6 times, in a few verses, it speaks about a thousand years. And many many people stub their toes on that passage. They read there that the time will come, or has come, whatever it may be, that Satan has been bound so that he cannot deceive the nations. And then, at the end of the thousand years, he will be loosed. He will be bound for a thousand years, and at the end of a thousand years he will be loosed. And he will come against the believers, and then he will be judged and cast into the lake of fire.

And many immediately box themselves in with Revelation 20. Immediately they envision that this thousand years has got to be a literal thousand years. And since they don't know of any time in the past when a literal thousand years occurred, when this could have happened, they believe that it is in the future.

Now in the Bible the number 1000 can be a literal number, or it can be a symbolical number. It can be used in either way. And we don't know when we read Revelation 20 whether it's used symbolically or whether it's used literally. We've got to discover when it

begins and when it ends, and see how long a period there is in between. If it's more or less than a thousand years, it's to be understood symbolically. If it's exactly a thousand years, then it's to be understood literally.

Now there are many places in the Bible where a thousand or a hundred or ten are used symbolically. The Bible says in Psalm 105 that God's love continues for a thousand generations. No one would understand that in a literal fashion. There it means for the completeness of God's plan. Christ spoke of the hundred sheep, not a literal number but the completeness of all believers, and so on.

Now how is it used in Revelation 20? Well, when we study Revelation 20 carefully, we find that Satan was bound at the cross. We can go through the Bible and find all the verses that could possibly relate to a change in the fortunes of Satan, past, present or future, and we find that they focus on the cross. Then he was bound so that he could not deceive the nations any longer.

Up until the time of the cross, all the nations of the world were in spiritual bondage. There were hardly any believers, in any nation. But once Christ went to the cross and the Holy Spirit was poured out, back there in AD 33, something changed in the fortunes of Satan, in his ability to hold people, in his dominion. We find that Peter preaches one sermon, on Pentecost afternoon, and 3000 are saved. Ever since then people have come from every nation of the world into the body of Christ. Satan has been bound so that he can't deceive the nations. Christ said, "I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Now the end of the thousand years is just before Judgment Day. The language of Revelation 20 shows that. And so therefore we know that it cannot be a literal period of time. It's got to be a symbolical period of time, because more than a thousand years have passed since the cross. And that millennium, therefore, is the whole New Testament period.

Now it doesn't mean that Satan has been taken out of the way. Right in verse 4 of Revelation 20 it speaks about the martyrs, those who have been beheaded. Satan still goes about as a roaring lion. But he doesn't win. It looks like they have been vanquished, but he doesn't really win, because in that vision John sees them as disembodied souls. "I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded." And they're living and reigning with Christ a thousand years.

So when we die, in our souls we go to be with Christ in Heaven. And so the Rapture occurs at the end of the millennium, to be very specific. The Rapture occurs at the end of the millennium, which is the exact point when Judgment Day is. It's the end of time. It's when everything connected with this world has been completed.

And we are very near to this. The millennium has been going on now since AD 33, and we're living in a time when sin is magnified. Satan has been loosed. And as we see sin growing in every phase of life, every department of life, in every nation, we sense very clearly that Satan has been loosed, and we can expect that wickedness will continue to multiply until Judgment Day comes.

Well, thank you for that question.

The Timing of the Rapture (198B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I wanted to ask about the rapture of the church, when it's supposed to occur in the timetable, where it's indicated in the scriptures.

HC: The Bible speaks about the rapture in many many places. It never uses the word rapture, in speaking of that moment when those who are born again

believers will be instantly changed into their resurrected bodies and caught up in the air to be with Christ.

Now for example, in Matthew 24:37 we read: "As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the Flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field. One is taken and one is left. Two women will be grinding at the mill. One is taken and one is left."

Now this tells us what to expect. We are encouraged, in verse 37, to look at Noah. Now Noah lived on this earth right up until the day that the floods came. And on the day, the very day that the floods came, that brought God's judgment upon all the wicked of the earth, on that day he entered the ark. He was brought to safety, you see. But the unsaved were caught in the judgment of God.

And likewise it will be when Christ comes. "Two men will be in the field. One is taken." One is taken to safety and to the presence of Christ. That's the rapture. The other is left for judgment. The rapture is on the Last Day. It's right at the end of time.

CALLER: You're saying that the rapture and the second coming are the same thing.

HC: Yes.

CALLER: But some say that the rapture is coming at the beginning of the seven-year tribulation, and then the Second Coming follows that.

HC: Where do they read that in the Bible?

CALLER: I don't know. This is what gets me. I've heard this so many times. The rapture is referred to in I Thessalonians 4:16, I guess. This is to precede the seven-year tribulation, in which the abomination of desolation will be set up. And then at the end of that seven years, then will be the Second Coming. That just doesn't make any sense.

HC: I Thessalonians 4 doesn't talk about a seven-year tribulation, does it?

CALLER: No, but I mean that is the scripture they use to teach being caught up in the air, or a rapture, that occurs before the tribulation. And then following that is the second coming. But isn't that really the second coming that's referred to in I Thessalonians also?

HC: In I Thessalonians 4 it's talking about the very same event. It's talking about the coming of the Lord. And those of us who have not died will at the same time as those who are in the graves come forth to the resurrection be caught up with them in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

Now I Thessalonians 4 is simply teaching that when Christ comes He will come with the archangel's call, with the sound of the trumpet, and it will be simultaneous with the resurrection of those who have died previously. Now when will the resurrection of those who had died occur?

We know from John 6:40 and verse 44 and verse 54 that the resurrection of believers is on the Last Day, again teaching exactly the same truth. "I will raise him up on the Last Day," Jesus says 4 times in John 6. Now in John 12:48 Jesus taught that Judgment Day is the Last Day. "This Word will judge them on the Last Day." And so that means that the resurrection of the unbelievers has to be on the Last Day, because the resurrection of the unbelievers has to be at the time of judgment.

And this is taught very plainly in John 5:28 & 29: "The hour cometh when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth, some to the resurrection of judgment and some to the resurrection

of eternal life." You see, everything that I have quoted here (and I haven't taken anything out of context, and I haven't pushed at anything, or spiritualized anything) very literally says exactly the same thing. It points to the Last Day.

Now I Corinthians 15:51 & 52 say the same thing: "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet." And the last trumpet is the seventh trumpet, and we know from Revelation 11 that when the seventh trumpet blows, then its' time for judgment, and for the rewarding of the saints, and so on.

CALLER: Revelation 19, is that saying the same thing?

HC: That's Judgment Day again. Revelation 6, Revelation 16, Revelation 19, Revelation 17, Revelation 18, a few verses in Revelation 20, all are discussing Judgment Day.

Now this idea that the rapture could come at any moment, I don't know where it's taught in the Bible. I know a great many believers hold this. And I wish that they would go to the scriptures and try to prove it from the scriptures. If we hold an idea, then let's be sure that we can back it up with scriptures. And in backing this up with scriptures, not only do you have to find verses that seem to teach that (and I don't know which they are), more than that you have to reckon with every one of these verses that I quoted, and try to figure out, "Well, how do we read those?"

In Matthew 24, beginning with verse 21, it says that "Then there will be great tribulation, such as this world has never known." And then in verse 29 it says that "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven." In other words, the universe begins to collapse. "And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." It's the coming of the Lord, you see.

And then notice the next verse, which speaks just like I Thessalonians 4: "And He will send out His angels, with a loud trumpet call. And they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the skies (or one end of the heaven) to the other." The same elements are here that we find in I Thessalonians 4. There's the loud trumpet call, there's the activity of the angels, and there is the gathering of the believers. That's the rapture.

Instantaneously we are given our resurrected bodies, and we are caught up in the air to be with Christ.

CALLER: That means we have to live through the tribulation.

HC: Well, the Bible says, "In the world you will have tribulation." People who have been thrown to the lions and who have been burned at the stake, and who are rotting away in concentration camps - are they going through tribulation? Of course they are.

This idea that the Christian does not go through tribulation is absolutely foreign to the Bible. And it's developed because we live in a wonderful land, which is an unusual land in that we have the freedom to worship that we have. But that is not normative for the believers throughout time.

Thank you so much for sharing that. Good night.

Understanding the Rapture and Millennium (249C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: I was interested in what you said about Christians, that they would have to go through the tribulation. And I was curious on how you got your information. I've studied Scripture, and I always got the impression that we would

be raptured before. I thought out what you said, and I tried to look at Scripture in Revelation. And the Scriptures teach that there's a time of tribulation when the Holy Spirit will be taken away. And if the Christians are going to go through the tribulation, why would God take His Holy Spirit away?

HC: Your question is, if the Christians are going to go through the final tribulation, and if the Bible teaches that before Christ returns the Holy Spirit will be taken away, then how can it be that the Christians will go through that tribulation?

The verse you're referring to is II Thessalonians 2:7 or 8, where God teaches about the rebellion that must come. And then it indicates that "He that restraineth will be taken out of the way." And you're correct, of course, in assuming that "He who restraineth" sin is God the Holy Spirit, because God is the one who restrains sin.

Now there are those who read that verse, and they say, "Well, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, God indwells us. And if the Holy Spirit indwells us, and He is taken out of the way, that implies that the church must have been raptured." But you see, that's reading a whole lot more into that sentence than we find there. Actually, God the Holy Spirit is not confined to the lives of born again believers. God the Holy Spirit is active throughout the world, and He indeed restrains sin. But if He simply allows sin to multiply, in other words if He takes Himself away in that sense, that He allows wickedness to grow, as He teaches must happen, in Matthew 24 ("Wickedness will multiply and most men's love will grow cold"), that is not saying for a moment that therefore the believers have been taken out of the way. That is not suggesting that. It is not the believers who restrain sin. It is God who restrains sin.

CALLER: But He indwells each one of us.

HC: But just because the Holy Spirit indwells us, that doesn't mean that God the Holy Spirit is not active in the lives of the unsaved, restraining sin completely apart from us.

CALLER: How can the Holy Spirit be in me and be taken out of the world? I mean, I'm here.

HC: Well, it doesn't say He will be taken out of the world. Now there again, you see, that's reading more into that statement than is indicated. It says that He will be taken "out of the way." And that's all we have there. We don't have any other statement there. It doesn't say that God is going to leave this world. God will never leave this world. God the Holy Spirit has always been present in the world. There's never been a time that He has not been present. The rebellion must come, and He allows sin to multiply.

CALLER: He keeps His protecting hand on His own.

HC: Of course He does. He still cares for us. He says that He will never leave us nor forsake us. But that isn't what's in view there. The Christian is not in view there. In II Thessalonians 2 God is talking about the rebellion, and the revealing of the man of sin. It's talking about the fact that Satan will rule in the body of Christ. He will take his seat in the temple, and will be worshipped. This is the final period before Christ returns, which would be the tribulation period.

CALLER: Do you believe that we will be here?

HC: Yes. You see, everything in the Bible teaches . . . that same chapter teaches that. See how it opens up? "Now concerning the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ (this is II Thessalonians 2:1) and our assembling to meet Him." What's the implication? That we're going to assemble to meet Him when He comes. And so already God is implying

here that we will be there when He comes. And this is taught all through the Bible, that the believers will be here right up until the end.

CALLER: I have another question then on the same subject. In the Scripture it tells how we're going to meet Him in the clouds, and then it also says that He's going to touch His foot on the earth, and the mountains will split, before the Battle of Armageddon, I believe.

HC: The question that is raised is, how can we reconcile the two statements that we will be caught up in the air to be with Him, as I Thessalonians 4 teaches, whereas in Zechariah 14 we read that He will put His feet on the Mount of Olives?

Now first of all, when we read Zechariah, we must remember that this is very obtuse language. It is very difficult language. It is not nearly as plain, as direct, as what we read in Matthew 13 or Matthew 24 or Luke 21 or I Thessalonians 4, or I Thessalonians 5. All of those statements are without any symbolism. They're just the straight language of what Christ is going to do.

But Zechariah 14, or the whole book of Zechariah, is much more difficult. But let's look at this. When we look at Zechariah 14, He indeed is talking about the end of time. And before we look at His feet standing on the Mount of Olives, let's look at an earlier verse. He says, "Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in the midst of you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle."

Now what is Jerusalem here, that all the nations will be gathered together to battle? Well, repeatedly in the Bible Jerusalem sometimes is the literal city of Jerusalem. But also it is a figure of the body of Christ. We are finally the people that Satan most desperately seeks to destroy. And in Revelation 20 He speaks about gathering all the nations, Gog and Magog, from the four corners of the earth, to do battle against the camp of the saints, or the beloved city.

And here we see the same idea, that Satan will marshal his attack, by whatever means he can—politically, religiously, through other gospels—to silence the Gospel. "And the city shall be taken," it goes on, "and the houses plundered, and the women ravished." In other words, he will be very successful in silencing the Gospel.

Then notice, "Half of the city shall go into exile. But the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city." Now what does God mean by that? It means that all those in the body of Christ who are not born again (and in our congregations, every one has many people who are unsaved) will be snared into other gospels. They will actually depart from the true Gospel. They will be like half the city going into exile.

"But the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city." The true believers cannot lose their salvation. They will stand firm until the end. And then it says, "Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle." Now that's the language of Revelation 19, when He comes on a white horse. This is the language of Judgment Day, when He is going to judge the nations and cast them into hell.

And then He uses this language: "On that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, which lies before Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two." Now it's interesting that He uses the phrase, "the Mount of Olives." What is the body of Christ called in Romans 11? Do you remember? It's called an olive tree, isn't it? Into which we're engrafted. Do you remember that? It's called an olive tree.

CALLER: You're saying that these scriptures are not just to be taken literally.

HC: No, they're to be taken symbolically, only because when we search them out in the light of everything else in the Bible, we must. Now for example, it talks about His feet standing. Now when we search the Bible to find any other language that speaks about His feet standing, we find at least a couple of references. We find in Habakkuk 3 we read in verse 11, "The sun and the moon stood still in their habitation, at the light of Thine arrows as they sped, at the flash of Thy glittering spear. Thou didst destroy the earth in fury. Thou didst trample the nations in anger. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people, for the salvation of Thy anointed. Thou didst crush the head of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck."

Now this is poetic language, speaking of the wrath of God against the unsaved, and the salvation of those who have placed their trust in Him. And notice what language is used. "Thou didst destroy the earth in fury." And so God is indicating that this is the kind of language He uses when He is speaking of His wrath on the unsaved, and His salvation of those who belong to Him.

Or again, in Micah 1:2: "Hear, you peoples, all of you. Hearken, O earth, and all that is in it. And let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple. For behold, the Lord is coming forth out of His place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will be cleft. And it goes on to discuss what Judgment Day is.

Now again, you see, it's using language of trodding on the high places of the earth. This is the kind of language used here in Zechariah 14, where His feet are standing on the Mount of Olives. Now you see, it's language that is teaching that God is coming to deal with sin, to destroy the unsaved by judgment, and to save those who belong to Him.

The fact that the Mount of Olives is split indicates the same truth as the fact that Jerusalem, half the city is taken. The Mount of Olives really represents the body of Christ again. And the body of Christ is severed down the middle, because those who are unsaved in the congregation are going to stand for judgment, whereas those who are saved will go to eternally be with Him.

Now we know it's the end of time because it goes right on, in the last half of verse 5, "Then the Lord your God will come, and all the holy ones with Him. On that day there will be neither cold nor frost. And there will be continuous day. It is known to the Lord. Not day and not night. For at evening time there will be light." Now that's the language of eternity. That's the language of the end of time.

CALLER: Those that will come with Him, now who are they?

HC: Well, let's go back to 1 Thessalonians 3, in order to discover who these are. The question is, who are these holy ones who will come with Him? In 1 Thessalonians 3 He says, in the last verse, "He may establish your hearts unblameable, in holiness, before our Lord and Father, at the coming of Our Lord Jesus, with all His saints." Well now how did they get with Him? Good question.

1 Thessalonians 4 repeats the same thing in verse 14: "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. Well, now let's figure this one out. These are the dead in Christ. They have fallen asleep, but in their souls they've gone to live and reign with Christ in Heaven, have they not? And so they come with Him. Their bodies are in the grave, and their bodies are going to be resurrected at the same time those who have not died and who are believers will be raptured, as 1 Thessalonians 4 teaches.

And so we come with Him, if we've died, and we are resurrected when He comes if we've died. Both of these are truth. And we're reunited. And so all the believers are with Him in the air. See how all this ties together?

CALLER: It's very interesting, you know, because I've been brought up with the other teaching, and I'm not afraid. The Lord is my Lord, and if He chooses to put me through tribulation, I'm not afraid. But I just find it very interesting that you bring this out, a different look on it.

HC: Well, you'll notice that we're not pushing on Scripture, we're not forcing. We're just letting the Bible speak, going from passage to passage. And wherever we go, we find that it all ties together very beautifully. When you look at the rapture, for example, in 1 Corinthians 15, remember what it says? "We'll not all sleep, but we'll all be changed, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet." Well, there's a time clue, "at the sound of the last trumpet." So we begin to search the Bible. When is the last trumpet?

Well, in the Book of Revelation we find the seven trumpets, don't we? And finally we read in Revelation 11:15, "Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet." Now there's not an eighth trumpet. Nowhere in the Bible is there an eighth trumpet. The seventh is the last trumpet.

And what happened? "The kingdom of the world is become the Kingdom of Our Lord and His Christ. And He shall reign forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders who sit on their throne before God fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying, We give thanks to Thee, Lord God Almighty, who art and who wast, that Thou hast taken Thy great power and didst reign. The nations raged, but Thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged." Aha! It's Judgment Day, you see. "For rewarding Thy servants." That is, to give us eternal life in our bodies, which we were still waiting for. "The prophets and saints and those who fear Thy Name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth." So the unsaved, the wicked, are cast into hell.

This is the seventh trumpet. This is the time of the rapture, when we will not all sleep but we'll all be changed, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye.

CALLER: When does the Millennium come in on this then?

HC: When is the Millennium? Now you've opened up another question altogether.

CALLER: My whole teaching . . . and I just wondered, because we were taught that after the tribulation we were coming back with Christ, and that He would reign for that millennium time, and that life would go on. People would have babies, and there would be no influence of Satan during the millennium time. Then Satan would be loosed, and they would have an opportunity to make their choice. Now is that another thing that's been taught wrong?

HC: Yes, I'm afraid so. You see, let me ask you this question. What would Christ be doing on this sin-cursed earth to reign a thousand years? Now what would be the purpose of this kind of a reign? Here He's provided this marvelous salvation, and we've gone to live and reign with Him in Heaven in our soul existence. And now Christ is going to leave Heaven, where we are, and He's going to come to this earth. . .

CALLER: We're coming with Him.

HC: But we're in our souls, up in Heaven. Are we going to be on this sin-cursed earth in our redeemed bodies? Are we going to have to be in the presence of unsaved people, as people who are born again, both in body and soul? We've left this sublime wonder of Heaven, the glorious presence of Christ, and now are we going to have to be here on this sin-

cursed earth, with its floods and its terrors and anger and pestilence?

CALLER: It won't have that in it.

HC: It won't?

CALLER: That's my understanding.

HC: But this earth is still under the curse of sin. It's still subject to viruses and pestilence. And frankly, if He's bound for a thousand years, then why does Christ have to rule the nations with a rod of iron during this period? Why are they ready to rise against Him at the slightest notice during the Millennium? Presumably He's supposed to rule the nations with a rod of iron

What is this kind of salvation where Christ is going to rule on a political throne in Jerusalem? This is the kind of salvation the Jews in Jesus' day were looking for. They were looking for a Messiah who would reign in Jerusalem, free them from Roman rule, and they would be the glorious people. And when Christ said, "My Kingdom is not of this world," what did they do? They crucified Him. They didn't want His kind of salvation, a salvation that was infinitely more glorious than anything relating to this sin-cursed earth. And yet now we want to talk about the same kind of a political rule, with Jesus reigning from a physical throne in Jerusalem. I don't know anywhere in the Bible where it teaches that He's going to rule on this sin-cursed earth this way.

Now it does speak of a millennium. Yes, it does. But when we study this millennium of Revelation 20, we will discover that it's not talking about reigning at some future time. But it's talking about the whole New Testament period.

CALLER: It's really good. I've never looked at it this way.

HC: You call another time, and raise the question of how we're to understand the first three verses of Revelation 20, which speak about the binding of Satan, and I'll be very happy to compare Scripture with Scripture, and see what we are to do with this. Okay?

CALLER: Thank you so much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Is There Hope for Sinners After the Rapture? (316C)

CALLER: At the end of time, after all the Christians have been raptured, I was wondering if there was any hope of mercy for those left behind.

HC: The question is, When the Christians are raptured, is there any hope of mercy for those who are left behind?

Now let me pose a question to you. When Lot was driven or taken out of Sodom and Gomorrah, by the angels (and God uses this as a figure of a type or example of Christ's coming), was there any hope for the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah?

CALLER: Apparently not.

HC: Well, not "apparently not." There was no hope. Fire and brimstone rained down on them, on the heels of the rescue of Lot and his family. There was no hope.

Now when Noah went into the ark and shut the door, was there any hope for the people in the world at that time?

CALLER: Not that's recorded, no.

HC: There was no hope, no hope. Now those are the two figures that God uses in Luke 17, when He's speaking of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Last Day. "So will it be at the coming of the Son of Man." The believers will be raptured, the unsaved will stand for judgment. There will be no hope at all.

CALLER: What about the Prodigal Son?

HC: In the case of the Prodigal Son. It's talking about something altogether different. It's speaking there of the fact that mankind is like a prodigal. We were

created by God, we originally belonged to Him. But we have rebelled and gone our own way. If we will come back to God, if we will respond to the offer of salvation, we will find our Heavenly Father waiting for us, even as the Prodigal did. That is not talking there about the end of time in any sense.

The calamity that we discover in the Parable of the Prodigal Son is not the calamity of Judgment Day. It's not the end of time. It is the calamity that mankind experiences all through time, as they discover their terrible condition, that we're sinners, that we're under the wrath of God, that we're sentenced to hell. This is the condition of any unsaved person today.

When we come to our spiritual senses and realize that when we were trying to live like the world, and sought to have a better house and a better car, and a better this and a better that, and so on, we were really eating the husks of the swine. There was no future in all of this at all.

We come to our spiritual senses, and we cry to God for mercy and ask His forgiveness. But when we come to the account of Revelation 8 and 9, and the account of Judgment Day, as we find it in Revelation 19 and Revelation 20, and elsewhere in the Bible, then it's too late because the day of grace is past.

The Bible insists: "Now is the day of salvation." The Bible insists: "How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?" It is still possible to be saved. But if we wait too long, it's like the parable of the five foolish virgins and the five wise virgins. The five foolish virgins were not ready, and when the bridegroom came it was too late. The door was shut, and they didn't have oil in their lamps, which was a figure of the fact that they were not born again, that is, they were not saved. They were not ready. And therefore they were shut out.

And that is the condition of many many people in the world.

CALLER: But there are many people who don't believe in Christianity, but they really believe heartily in their own religion, whatever it is. But if somebody really came to his senses at that time, do you mean that there's no repentance possible, even if he wanted to?

HC: You see, we cannot dictate to God when we can believe. God gives us ample warning. God gave Pharaoh ample warning. And God even brought these great judgments. Incidentally, Pharaoh did not come to his spiritual senses. He just became hardened in his unbelief.

We may say, "Well, God ought to continue having mercy forever and every and ever." But actually, we're not entitled to have mercy for even a moment. Not one of us deserves to go to Heaven. We all deserve to go to hell. The fact that any of us are saved is incomprehensible mercy and grace upon God's part.

CALLER: But it's just until the time of judgment?

HC: Well, it's until the time that we die, ordinarily. Look. If you are unsaved, or anyone is unsaved, we're always living only one breath away from eternity. We have no assurance, we have no guarantee, no program, no promise of any kind in the Bible, from God, that we're going to live beyond one more breath.

At the same time God comes to us with the offer of salvation. And if we do not avail ourselves of it, and tonight we die, we can't blame anybody but ourselves, because God has given us the opportunity. God comes in His graciousness, through creation, to all mankind, indicating that they ought to repent. Man knows intuitively that he's a sinner, and yet he doesn't repent.

But man perversely continues to live his own way. And finally God takes him, as all men will die eventually, unless we happen to be living as the last generation. And then of course we'll

come right face to face with Judgment Day without dying. But the difference is the same. We cannot play with God. We cannot bargain with God. We cannot procrastinate with God. God insists that "now is the day of salvation." And I want to underscore these statements.

The Bible insists, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" So if we're not saved, we're taking the biggest risk that could possibly be taken. We're gambling eternity against a few more days or a few more months or years of pursuing our own life, getting whatever fun we think we ought to have out of our life. And that's a trade that I would never want to have a part in.

CALLER: Okay. Thanks a lot.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

The Coming of Christ and the Rapture (321A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I want to ask a question about the rapture, and looking for the coming of Christ. Now this person that told me this said, "Now you may not like what I'm going to say, but I'm not looking forward to the coming of Christ, but I'm looking to the rapture." And I wanted to know if there's any difference. Would that be the same?

HC: Let's read I Thessalonians 4. The question is, what is the rapture, or what is the coming of Christ?

In I Thessalonians 4:14 we read, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, then also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him," Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the believers that have ever died, are living and reigning with Christ in Heaven right now. Their bodies are in the grave, but in their souls they're in Heaven. And they will come with Him. They are the ones who have fallen asleep. Any believer, right up to the very present day, who has died, is in Heaven and will come with Him.

And then it goes on: "For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God." You see, the Lord Himself is coming. And with the trump of God, with the shout of command, every eye shall see Him. There's nothing secret about this. "And the dead in Christ shall rise first." All of the bodies of those who have been living and reigning in Heaven in their souls will be resurrected. "Then we which are alive [that is, those of us who have not died] and remain, shall be caught up together with them." In other words, the bodies of those who have previously died will be resurrected, and we who are believers will also be changed into our resurrected bodies and be caught up in the air with them, to meet the Lord in the air. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

You see, this is right on the last day. This is the end of time. This is the rapture. The rapture is the first thing that happens when Christ returns, the resurrection of all the bodies that are in the graves and the rapture of the believers to be with Christ. This will leave all the unsaved standing for judgment.

CALLER: Then the rapture and the coming of Christ are the same then.

HC: One and the same. It's exactly one and the same. There could be no rapture except Christ came. There could be no resurrection unless Christ came.

CALLER: I see. Well, you hear these things from the pulpit, and then you can't understand what it is.

HC: You can also read Matthew 24, where it speaks about the coming of Christ, in verse 29, where God says,

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from the heaven." In other words, the universe is beginning to collapse. "And the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn. And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

And notice the first thing that He does. "And He shall send His angels, with a great sound of a trumpet. And they shall gather together His elect, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Now that's saying the same thing as I Thessalonians 4. He's coming, and there's the sound of the trumpet, His angels are active, and He'll gather His elect. That's the rapture. He's gathering His believers from wherever they are.

CALLER: Thank you, Brother Camping.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

When Will the Rapture Take Place? (411A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: My question is, almost every minister I talk to, and they say about ninety-five percent believe this, that the church is going to be taken away to avoid the time of trouble they think is coming. Could you tell me, first of all, where this idea has come from, because all the places I've read don't talk about a rapture before the end of time? And second of all, could you give me some scripture that would indicate that we're all going to be raptured at the end of time, at the end of the world, instead of some Christians being taken away first?

And my second question is, when is the last chapter of Zechariah going to be fulfilled, where it talks about armies gathering around Jerusalem? And then the Lord has come back. But then after the Lord has come back, it talks about the world like it's still here, because it says what will happen, that all the nations will come up to Israel and they'll worship the Lord in Jerusalem, and the plagues that will come upon the people who don't go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, that they won't receive rain, that these things will come upon them, these plagues.

Do you understand my questions? I'll take the answer over the air.

HC: The first question is again a very common question today. When will the Rapture take place? Now we've talked about this many times, and I don't mind talking about it again and again, because there is very much confusion about this. Our caller raised the question, where did the idea come from that the church will be raptured before the final tribulation period?

I don't know the answer to that question. I am very very confident, and I don't say this arrogantly, proudly, or belligerently, or whatever, but just as a flat matter of fact, I am very confident that it did not come from the Bible. It did not come from the Bible. I've searched the Bible on this question, and I think I'm quite familiar with all of the passages that might remotely relate to the Rapture. And I find no evidence in the Bible of any kind that would indicate that the Rapture, the bringing of the believers into Heaven, or into the presence of Christ, would occur before the final tribulation period.

As you've heard me say many times on this program, and maybe you're kind of tired of it, maybe you even wish I would not say it any longer, because it troubles you, but you know, in my role I have to be as faithful as possible to the Word of God, every place I turn in the Bible I find that the Bible is crystal clear that the Rapture will be the last day. It will be at

the end of time. Let me just give a few passages. I won't develop this to its full extent, although I could easily talk for an hour on this.

In First Corinthians 15:51 & 52 we read, "We'll not all sleep but we'll all be changed, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye." Now that's talking about the Rapture. We'll not all die, but we're all going to receive our resurrected bodies, that is, those who are believers. And then it gives a time clue in that context, "at the sound of the last trumpet." Now when we search the Bible to find out when the last trumpet is, we turn to Revelation 11. There is where the seventh trumpet sounds. There is no eighth trumpet. It is the last trumpet, the seventh trumpet. And the context of Revelation 11, beginning with verse 15, when the seventh trumpet sounds, is that of Judgment Day. It's the end of time.

Or again, in John 6, in 4 places, it's an amazing thing, as a matter of fact, that four times Jesus, in this one chapter, declared that all believers will be resurrected the last day. All believers will be resurrected the last day. Read verse 39, read verse 40, verse 44, read verse 54. Christ made sure that we would get that, that all believers will be resurrected the last day.

Now in First Thessalonians 4 there's no question at all, but that the rapture of the believers will be a simultaneous event with the resurrection of believers. Therefore, if the resurrection of believers is the last day, the rapture of believers is the last day.

Now immediately you can begin to say, "Well, the last day of what?" Well, if it's the last day, it has to be at the end of time, doesn't it? It's not the last day of part of God's economy, or whatever. It's the end of time. The fact is, when Pentecost rolled around, in AD 33, in Acts 2:17, God declares that these were the last days. The whole New Testament period is the last days. But in John 6 Jesus said, "on the last day" the believers will be resurrected.

Well, if you want assurance that that is the end of time, you can read John 12:48, where Christ also declared that this Word will judge the unbelievers on the last day. Well, that means the last day is Judgment Day. And Judgment Day is at the end of time. Therefore, if the believers are resurrected the last day, they are raptured the last day. And therefore the rapture is the end of time.

We can find path after path that teaches this. In Matthew 24, when Jesus is talking about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, He talks about the final tribulation. He says in verse 21, "And then there will be great tribulation such as this world has never known, nor ever shall be. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened." For the sake of who? The elect. Who are the elect? They are the chosen ones. They are the born again believers. We are elect of God. We are chosen by God from before the foundations of the earth.

For our sake those days will be shortened. And Christ is talking about the great tribulation. And then He goes on in verse 29, and He says that "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shine, and the stars will fall to earth." In other words, it's the end of this earth's existence. It's the collapse of the universe.

And then Christ will come with power and great glory, and all the tribes will mourn, when they see Him coming. And what's the very first thing that Jesus will do? He will send out His angels, "with the sound of the trumpet, to gather His elect from the four winds under heaven." You see, the believers will be raptured as a first event upon Christ's coming.

Now I have to admit, and you've heard me say this before, but I still say it, I am utterly amazed. I don't know what word to use. I was going to use the word

flabbergasted, but I don't know if that's a very good word. But I'm really amazed that serious students of the Bible have trouble with this. I'm really amazed at this, because the Bible is so plain about it. The passages are so many that indicate that the Rapture is the last day, the end of time. And it fits precisely into everything the Bible teaches about the end time program. And so I really am amazed that serious students of the Bible are troubled by this.

Now I have to admit, of course, that lots of things I know today I did not always hold. Many of the things I can talk about rather glibly at times, I admit, as if anyone ought to know that, came to me only after years of very careful study and prayer for wisdom. And then of course once you have it in your hand, you see how it all fits so beautifully in the Bible, then it's easy to talk about, like anybody should have been able to see this. And so I admit that I have to be very very patient with those who might have another opinion about this.

But I do encourage anyone to read the Bible carefully. One of the serious problems going on today is that when people begin to face questions of this nature, they run to their library shelves and begin to pick this book or that book off the wall, and see what this author had to say, or that author had to say. And they'll read books that have lots of Biblical quotations. And these books will confidently assert that this is the way it's going to be. And because you trust the author of that book, you trust every statement that he is making.

But frankly, while these authors may be right in ninety percent of everything else they write, they have not done careful homework on the Rapture, if they conclude that the church is going to be raptured before the tribulation or before Judgment Day. This is not taught in the Bible. And I welcome anyone to try to show me where this is in the Bible. I've been teaching this matter of the Rapture being on the last day for more than ten years now, and I'm still waiting for someone to call me, to show me chapter and verse from the Bible where the Rapture is at some other point than the end of time. I'm still waiting. And anybody can call, anybody can do their homework, anybody can consult all of their authorities. They can set all the Scriptures in order, and they can call and I'll be glad to visit with them for a whole hour on the air on this program, to discuss this, if they can really show it to me from the Bible.

But no one has ever done this. Occasionally someone would dare to call with a verse or two, but immediately when we look at that verse very carefully we find that it's not talking about the rapture at all, or it's talking about something else altogether. And these same who would bring this kind of a verse have never faced these other verses that I've begun to talk about tonight.

Really, if I do nothing else on this program, I hope that I encourage you to read the Bible, read the Bible, read the Bible, read the Bible. Find out from the Scriptures what God has to say.

THE SECOND COMING

The Fate of Children at the Lord's Return (010C)

CALLER: Would you explain Matthew 24:13? And another one is Matthew 24:19, and I Thessalonians 16. Is He saying that those in Christ go when He first comes? I'm concerned because I have little ones that don't know anything yet. Will the Lord take them also?

HC: Actually, when Christ comes at the end of time, as we read in I Thessalonians 4, this is the way it will be. There will be one great resurrection of everyone who is in the grave. We read this in John 5:28-29: "The hour cometh

when everyone who is in the grave will hear His voice and come forth, some to the resurrection of judgment and some to the resurrection of everlasting life."

At that time the born again believers who have died and who have experienced the resurrection, they have been, previous to this, living in Heaven with the Lord Jesus in their souls. When they left the body at death, they went into Heaven to live and reign with Christ. Now they have come with Christ in their souls, and their bodies will be caught up in the air and be reunited with their souls, so they will be with Christ in the air.

Secondly, the believers who are still living on the earth at that time and who have not died as yet will instantaneously experience the resurrection of their bodies. That is, they will be given their resurrected, glorified bodies, and they also will be caught up in the air to be with Christ. This is what is sometimes called the Rapture. And this will leave all of the unsaved on this earth who have not received Christ, whether they had died previously or whether they are still living at this time. They will all stand here for judgment. At that time of course it's way too late to accept the Gospel. If anyone is unsaved at that time, he is going to hell for sure.

CALLER: What about the children, though? Those who have not reached the age of accountability?

HC: You see, we don't read anywhere in the Bible about the age of accountability. There is no place in the Bible that speaks about the age of accountability, just no place at all. The fact is, in Psalm 58 we read this in verse 3 (we may not like this, but it is God's Word – Psalm 58:3): "The wicked go astray from the womb, they err from their birth, speaking lies. They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like the death adder that stops its ear."

In other words, God is saying that from the very time a baby is born the natural desires of a baby are against God. He is already guilty before God. He is infected by sin and stands under God's judgment. And only if that baby is saved can he go to be with the Lord Jesus Christ.

CALLER: What about children that have gone to church all their life, that have always lived in a Christian family?

HC: Well, God promises that if we are Christian parents, then "I will be a God to you and your children." And this brings our children, if we are a Christian parent, in a very preferred position. If, let's say, Judgment Day came and we had some small children or babies in our home, and we're born again believers, we could believe with all our heart that they will go to Heaven right along with us.

CALLER: But only those in Christ. They wouldn't be in Christ then.

HC: Yes. You see, the work of salvation is Christ's work. Now look at John the Baptist. When was he filled with the Holy Spirit? From his mother's womb. He was saved already as a newborn baby.

CALLER: But I remember reading that the angel of the Lord came to his father and told him that John was to be a prophet, that he had something to do to prepare the way for Christ.

HC: Yes, but he still was a human being. And if John the Baptist could be saved as a newborn baby, so could your baby be saved as a newborn baby, if that's God's will. The fact is, in homes where both parents are saved, and they have claimed God's promise to be a God to them and their children, a percentage of their children will grow up, and they can never say when they were saved. They can only know that as they become more and more aware of what Christ has done and what the Bible says, they have an earnest desire to serve Him. They know that they are saved. And this is because they were saved as infants. The work of salvation is God's work, and the response of repentance and turning to the Lord is

the evidence that God has worked a work of grace within our hearts.

CALLER: But it says somewhere that if you confess with your mouth that you believe in the Lord, then you will be saved.

HC: Well, you're quoting from Romans 7, where it is the evidence of salvation. You see, there it says in verse 9: "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Now this is not saying that you're saved because you confess, but that's the evidence of the fact that you are saved. It's the same as the verse you asked about in Matthew 24:13: "Those who endure to the end will be saved."

Now you read that and it looks like we're saved by our good works, by enduring to the end, by tenaciously and stubbornly holding forth. As a Christian, if we can only hang on until the end, then we will be saved. But the fact is, the reason why we're enduring to the end is that we are saved, because God has already done a work of grace within our hearts. Only those will endure to the end, and the salvation that it speaks of there is the completion of our salvation, the fact that we still need a resurrected body. Only the born again believers will endure to the end. As things get very difficult, those who are not saved will fall away.

CALLER: I was just reading, too, in Matthew 24:19, where it says, "Woe to those that are pregnant . . ."

HC: All right, now that's another question. And it relates, of course. Now God has put within the heart of natural man a tremendous love for little children, and I can see why God did this. In this way it helps to guarantee that these children will be reared, and they'll come to manhood and womanhood, so that the human race could go on to its prescribed end. But what will happen is that at Judgment Day these unsaved parents, who couldn't care less about Christ, are going to see the greatest number of their children also under God's judgment. And there may be a few exceptions, God in His sovereign grace can make exceptions, but the general rule is that the children of the wicked will be cut off, as we read in Psalm 37. And this is going to bring horrible trauma to them. This is going to multiply their trauma as they themselves face the judgment throne, and they'll be wishing that they had never had any children.

This is spoken of in similar language in Luke 23, where Jesus is on His way to the cross, and the women are weeping after Him. And then Jesus said to them, "Daughters, behold the days are coming when they will say, Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never gave suck." You see, that's almost identical language to Matthew 24:19. And then He gives a timetable when this will happen. "Then they will begin to say to the mountains, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us." Now that's the language of Judgment Day. That's language taken from Revelation 6, where it speaks about the day of Christ's wrath, the wrath of the Lamb, when the unsaved will be calling to the mountains to hide them and the rocks to crush them. God gives us a little bit of an insight (and every time I read this, I shudder, but this is the language that God has given us), so that we can see this kind of trauma opening up.

In Deuteronomy 28 He gives us a word picture of hell and Judgment Day. And He's speaking to Israel of old, and He's using very literal language, but really He's pointing up His wrath and what it consists of. And notice verse 32 of Deuteronomy 28: "Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, while your eyes look on and fail with longing for them all the day." See the weeping there, and the trauma? "And it shall not be in the power of your hand to prevent it. A nation which you have

not known shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labors, and you shall only be oppressed and crushed continually, so that you shall be driven mad by the sight which your eyes shall see." And that's God's language, to indicate the awfulness of God's wrath.

Yes, these are only nonbelievers, of course. The saved ones, well, if a saved one saw his child, let's say we are a saved parent today, and amongst our children we have one or two who are not saved. And let's suppose that this is the situation at Judgment Day. Yes, that will bring trauma to the born again believer, to know that his child is not going to Heaven. But Jesus also says, "I will dry all of your tears." We read in Revelation 21: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And we read in Isaiah 55 that the former things will not come to remembrance. So even though that may be the last trauma for the believer, that will be completely removed from his memory.

CALLER: It seems to say in Matthew 24 that we will go through some tribulation.

HC: Well, actually, the Bible teaches that the Christian's lot in life is that of tribulation – "In the world you will have tribulation" – because we are strangers and pilgrims here, and because wickedness will multiply during the years before Christ's return, and Satan will be given the prerogative to be way more wicked, and unsaved men will be more wicked, as the world is prepared for Judgment Day. And the Gospel will be increasingly silenced. That will magnify the tribulation and affliction of the believers. And so the Bible speaks of this as being a time of great tribulation, such as the world has never known.

Now while this is going for the believer, God will also be bringing His last warning judgments upon the unsaved. And of course Christians are always present when warning judgments come. Every war is a warning judgment, and Christians suffer there, too. So this will add to the tribulation of the believers. But it will be especially grievous for the unbelievers, because there's no hope for them. They will not respond to the Gospel.

CALLER: It bothers me when I read this, and I begin to worry that my child is not going to go to Heaven.

HC: If you are born again, you pray for the salvation of your child and be obedient to the command of Ephesians 6: "Train up a child in the way that he should go."

CALLER: I talk to her about Jesus, and she'll say, "Thank you, Jesus" even now and she's only fifteen months old, you know. I want her to know, because it just seems like it's going to be any day.

HC: Yes. Well, you just keep praying for her salvation and trust God. God promises, "I will be a God to you and to your children." God says that His love continues to a thousand generations of them that love Him and keep His commandments. Those are wonderful promises, aren't they? And just rest in those promises.

Does Christ Know the Day and Hour of His Return? (101C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: On the question of Jesus' not knowing the day of His return, He said to His disciples that not even the Son of Man knows the day when He was going to return. But I've also read in Zechariah 13, where it says that the Lord would know when the day was. And I was wondering if you could explain if that is talking about Jesus Himself, or is there something else in view?

HC: Zechariah 13. That's a curious possibility you offer. I wonder which verse you're thinking of. It says in verse 1: "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness." Now that of course is talking about the day when Christ went to the cross. That is when He provided cleansing.

And then in verse 4: "On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his vision. When he prophesies he will not put on a hairy mantle in order to deceive, but he will say, I am no prophet. I am a tiller of the soil, for the land has been my possession since my youth." I'm not sure exactly what God had in mind in saying that.

Verse 7: "Awake, oh sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to Me, says the Lord of Hosts. Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered. I will turn My hand against the little ones." Now that's again talking about Christ on the cross, and the church is scattered. The disciples momentarily are without any kind of a leader, because their leader, Christ, has left them, to endure hell for their sins.

CALLER: I'm sorry but I couldn't give you the exact verse, but I know it was in Zechariah.

HC: Well, let's look at the verse in the New Testament. In Mark 13 we read in verse 32: "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Now the first thing we have to bear in mind is that it's talking about the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ does not know of that day or that hour. And that's a puzzle, because Christ is Eternal God. He is the one who created the universe. He knows the end from the beginning. And I just can't believe that Christ would not know the timetable of the end.

The other thing I'm wondering is, why does it emphasize the Son here, along with the angels and everyone else? I do know this, that in the Bible the word day and the word hour are frequently synonyms for Judgment Day itself. We read, for example, in Matthew 7, where it's talking about false prophets, "In that day they will say, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name?" and so on. Now the context there is very clear that it's speaking of Judgment Day.

The word hour is also frequently used in speaking of Judgment Day. We read, for example, in Revelation 18, where it speaks about the destruction of Babylon, a figure of the kingdom of Satan. And it says, "In one hour your judgment has come." Hour and day are synonyms, therefore, for Judgment Day.

Now we know this, that the angels were to come into judgment because of their sins (that is, the fallen angels are going to be removed into hell). We know that all mankind who are not saved are going to come into judgment for their sins. And we know that Christ was going to endure judgment because of the sins that He had taken upon Himself, the sins of those who were going to believe in Him. Yet at this point in time, when Jesus is speaking this, neither the angels, nor mankind, nor Christ had experienced judgment as yet.

And so I am inclined to believe that this verse 32 is not a time reference at all. It is simply a statement of the fact that no one has experienced judgment as yet, who is to experience it. The Father knows what that judgment will be, because it is the Father who is going to pour out His wrath on the Son.

The Battle of Armageddon (230C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I have a question on Armageddon. I would like to know

where and when and how it will happen. Will it involve the whole world?

HC: We read about the assembling for the Battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16. Now what kind of a battle is this? Who will fight this battle? Who will be on either side?

There are those who speak about this as some kind of a political battle, that is, a battled engaged in by nations of this world, where there will actually be tanks and rockets and guns, and so on, employed in this battle.

Of course the first question we must ask is, Who will be on God's side? What nation in the world is really on God's side? There really is no nation, is there? Except the nation of born again believers. But when we're on God's side, then we're not asked to take up the sword in defense of the Gospel. Oh yes, there is a sword we do take up. But it's the Sword of the Spirit, isn't it? And rather than fight with weapons, guns and literal swords and what have you, we are rather to endure persecution. We are rather to die for the sake of the Gospel. The idea of Christians, of any nation that really belongs to God taking up physical weapons is reprehensible, is contrary to the Bible altogether.

Well then, what is this? Well, when we look at the context in the light of anything else we can find, we know immediately what it is. It's speaking of Judgment Day. We read in verse 14 that the kings of the whole world will be assembled for battle on the "Great Day of God the Almighty." Now what's the Great Day?

Well, in Revelation 6 the Great Day is the day of God's wrath, when the unbelievers are quaking in fear because of the return of Christ, when the earth itself and the universe itself is collapsing because it's the end of time. And then we read in verse 17, "For the Great Day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?" The Great Day of God the Almighty has got to be Judgment Day.

Now this is reinforced by the next phrase, "Lo, I am coming like a thief." Anywhere in the Bible where it speaks about Christ coming like a thief, it is referring to the end of time. It speaks of this in Matthew 24, when He's talking about the Rapture and Judgment Day, "Lo, I am coming like a thief," or words similar to that. He speaks about this in I Thessalonians 5, when He says, "Men will say there is peace and security, and sudden destruction will come upon them," because Christ comes as a thief. But then He goes on and says, "But He will not come as a thief for you, brethren, because you are children of the light." In other words, He comes as a thief for the unsaved because they're not ready. They're not born again. They are not at all prepared to face Judgment Day and hell. And also in Second Peter 3, where it talks about the elements being melted with fervent heat, it's in the context of Christ's coming as a thief. That also emphasizes the fact that it's talking about Judgment Day.

And then it also says, "Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments, that he may not go naked and be seen exposed." Now who will be those who are naked and exposed? The unbelievers. They will be spiritually naked before God. Nakedness again and again is used in the Bible as a figure of being spiritually naked. They will be seen in their spiritual nakedness and will be judged for their sins and cast into hell. They are not awake. They are asleep. They are dead in their sins.

Now the believers, they have kept their garments. That is, we are clothed by the garments of Christ's righteousness. And therefore we are covered. We do not stand exposed before God. And therefore we do not come into judgment.

Now why is this spoken of as a battle? The reason is that in the Bible God constantly makes reference to the

warfare that exists between Satan and his forces on the one hand, and Christ on the other. Before we are saved, we are at war with God. We are enemies of God. And Satan, who is our master, is doing anything he can to destroy the work of Christ.

Now Christ came as the Prince of Peace. He came with the peace treaty, to provide a way of reconciliation with God. And when we are saved, we are no longer at war with God. As Isaiah 40:1 puts it so beautifully, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, speak comfortably to Jerusalem, that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been pardoned." You see, when our sins are paid for, when we are pardoned of our iniquity, we are no longer at war with Christ. We have joined Him. We are at peace with Him.

Now this warfare comes to conclusion at Judgment Day. Now ordinarily, when two nations are at war with each other, the end of that warfare is with a final decisive battle. And the vanquished foe lies in the field with all the corpses there, and the birds of prey feeding on them. And the victor stands on the necks of the enemy and is forever victorious. It's the final battle. And God frequently uses the figure of a final battle in speaking of Judgment Day, because it is at Judgment Day that Satan and all the wicked will be removed into hell. The end of the warfare has come, because once they are removed into hell, never again can they do battle with the body of Christ. And so this is spoken of as a battle.

That's the reason that in Revelation 19 it speaks about Christ coming to do battle. And it speaks about the birds of prey feeding upon the corpses. That's the reason in Matthew 24 it says, "Where the body is, that is where the vultures will be gathered together," the body referring to the unsaved, who are vanquished at that point, when Christ comes. And the figure follows that they will be prey for the vulture. This is speaking about Judgment Day, even as the Battle of Armageddon is speaking about Judgment Day.

Battle of Armageddon in Rev 16:16 (571A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Could you explain to me Revelation 16:16?

HC: Revelation 16:16: "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." The question is, how are we to understand Revelation 16:16, which speaks about this Armageddon?

Now in verse 15 God gives us a clue as to when this takes place: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

Now any place in the Bible where God talks about coming as a thief is talking about Judgment Day; He's talking about the end of the world. We read in I Thessalonians 5:2, where God talks about coming as a thief, and then He says, "Sudden destruction will come upon them, and there is no escape." He's talking about Judgment Day.

In II Peter 3 God is talking about the destruction of the world, that the elements will melt with fervent heat, and He talks about this happening at the time that He comes as a thief. And so this is Judgment Day that's in view.

Now He's speaking here of the final wrath of God being poured out upon all of the wicked of the world, and He speaks of it as a battle. In verse 14 He is talking about the unsaved of the world, headed up by Satan. And they're gathered together to the Battle of that Great Day of God Almighty. That's Judgment Day. And God insists that this is so because of the next phrase, "Behold, I come as a thief."

You see, ordinarily when two nations are at war with each other, they go along,

and they go along, fighting their skirmishes and their individual battles, and so on. And finally there is a final battle that ends the war. One nation has become decisively victorious, and the other nation is completely destroyed. And God of course is speaking here of the warfare that exists between the Kingdom of God on the one hand, headed up by Christ, and the kingdom of Satan on the other hand, headed up by Satan. This warfare has been going on.

But the end of this warfare is Judgment Day, when Satan is judged and all the wicked of the world are judged and removed into hell. And God speaks of this as a battle. And that is the Battle of Armageddon. God uses other language in Revelation 19, where He speaks about Christ coming on a white horse with His sword protruding from His mouth, which is the Word of God. And then He calls all the birds of prey to feed upon the corpses of the slain, that is, indicating that Judgment Day has come, and the wicked are destroyed. That is, they are removed into hell.

Now God uses the figure of Armageddon because the plains of Megiddo were a place where many decisive battles were fought. And particularly from the Biblical vantage point, this is pointing to the victory of the nation of Israel over the wicked Canaanites, headed up by Cicer, during the days of Judges 4 or Judges 5, when Cicer had 900 chariots of iron and the Israelites had none, but 10,000 of the Israelites marshaled together, and they brought great victory over Cicer and all his hosts. And this was in the plains of Megiddo. It was a type of Judgment Day itself.

THE MILLENNIUM

Understanding the Millennial Reign (029C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I've never heard you make too much mention of a thousand year millennial reign. Do you believe in such thing? If you do, will it be with Christ on this earth, or will it be on the New Heaven and the New Earth?

HC: There are only eight verses in the Bible that speak about a thousand years in connection with a reign of Christ. Now that passage does not speak about a reign of Christ on earth. It simply speaks about a thousand years during which Christ reigns. And that's found in Revelation 20:1-8.

Now we can't tell immediately from the context whether that thousand years is a literal thousand years or whether it is a figurative thousand years, because God sometimes uses the number thousand in a symbolical or in a figurative fashion, to indicate the completeness of His plan. We do know from the context that it is speaking about Christ reigning in Heaven, because in verse 4 it says, "I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded." In other words, these are disembodied souls. "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." And so we know that this is speaking about something going on in Heaven.

And we also know, incidentally, from the rest of the Bible, that there is no possibility of an earthly reign of Christ, that is, of Him coming down in His bodily presence to reign on this sin-cursed earth. That is not taught anywhere in the Bible. And so we know that that cannot be in view.

But insofar as knowing whether this thousand years is figurative or literal, and as to when it did begin or will begin, we have to examine the Bible to see if we can tell when it begins. And when we compare the language of Revelation 20:1 and 2 with Jude 6 and II Peter 2:4 and Hebrews 2:14 and Colossians 1:15, and a few other verses like this, we soon discover that the binding of Satan

occurred at the cross. And since we are now more than 1900 years after the cross, and since the thousand years spoken of there will end very close to Judgment Day itself, we know that it has to be understood symbolically.

If we were still in the year 900 AD, for example, we still would not know whether it was symbolical or literal. But because so many years have passed, we know that it has to be understood in a symbolical fashion. And so it is the whole New Testament period actually.

Is Zechariah 14:16-21 Referring to the Millennium? (034C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Brother Camping. I have a question about Zechariah 14:16-21 particularly, but also the whole latter part of the chapter. It seems to me it's talking about the thousand year reign. Yet I know that you say that there's not going to be any such thing. But it speaks previously about the great plague that will come upon the people, and the fighting around Jerusalem. And then it says of those that are left, if they don't go up to Jerusalem to worship the kings, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them. I wonder if you'd just explain this.

HC: We have two clues in Zechariah 14 that indicate that this cannot be read quite as simply as we might think. First of all, we have the major clue in the beginning of the chapter, where it says, for example, in verse 6: "On that day there shall be neither cold nor frost, and there shall be continuous day. It is known to the Lord not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light. On that day living water shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter."

Now these three verses are the language of Revelation 22. Christ becomes the sun, and there is no day nor night. And so we know from this that God is talking about the New Heaven and the New Earth. Now there are other clues that speak to this. We have the earthquake in verse 5, and we know that Judgment Day comes upon the earth in the context of a huge earthquake.

We have the fact that "the valley of My mountain shall be stopped up. For the valley of the mountains shall touch the side of it." In other words, there will be a movement of the earth itself. And that matches the language of Revelation 6, where it speaks about the cataclysmic events that are occurring upon the earth.

And so there are a number of these kinds of clues that point to the fact that this is talking about the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Secondly, speaking specifically about verses 10-21, we read here, threaded through this, we find this matter of keeping the Feast of the Booths, in verse 19. And we read about the pots in Jerusalem being sacred to the Lord, in verse 21. Now we know that the ceremonial law has been completely done away with. We're not to ever again come under the ceremonial law. And so when we read the kind of language we begin to sense that there is some symbolism here, that God is not talking about something literal, but that He is talking about something symbolical.

Actually, we are a priesthood and our priesthood is an eternal priesthood. And it goes on into the New Heaven and the New Earth. And in a sense we are a completion of the Levitical priesthood. We read in Jeremiah 33:17 "David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel." Well that's Christ, of course. He sits there eternally. "And the Levitical priest shall never lack a man in

My presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn cereal offerings and to make sacrifices continually" (forever is really the word that is in view here).

This is talking about the born again believers. We are an eternal priesthood, and it's using that figure here in Zechariah 14. Now verse 16 specifically: "Everyone that survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem." And you'll remember that Jerusalem is a figure of the Body of Christ. In fact, the Body of Christ in its fullness is spoken of as the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21. Now the nations that have come against Jerusalem, they are the world, that is, slaves to Satan. Remember Revelation 20:8 declares that the nations from the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, shall assault the camp of the saints. They are the peoples of the world that are found amongst the various political nations. They wanted to destroy Jerusalem.

Now out of these political nations, which comprise all of the peoples of the world, there are born again believers. They are sprinkled throughout the political nations. They are the ones that survive of all the nations because the nations, of course, are cast into hell. And they shall go up year after year to worship the King. Well, this is using again an Old Testament figure of coming to Jerusalem annually to worship, but actually it's emphasizing the fact that we are the only ones who will worship Christ as King, the Lord of Hosts, and keep the Feast of Booths. In other words, we are a priesthood that goes on forever.

"If any one of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, there will be no rain upon them." Okay now. Of all the people who have ever lived on the earth, only those who are born again will worship Him. The rest will be in hell. And here rain is used in the sense of God's blessings coming upon them. They will not be objects of God's blessings. They will not be in the presence of God's blessings. This is not a conditional kind of a thing. This is just putting it this way. But actually it is the nature of what eternity will be. Born again believers will worship Him. The rest will be in hell, where there is no blessing coming on them.

Then it goes on in verse 18: "And if the family of Egypt do not go up and present themselves, then upon them shall come the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths." Now who are the family of Egypt? Egypt was the house of bondage. It's the figure of sin, that we come out of when we are saved. And so the family of Egypt in this context, therefore, would be the unsaved. It's another figure speaking about the unsaved. And they are in hell. They are under God's judgment.

Verse 19: "This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths." And that is that no rain will fall upon them. In other words, God's wrath abides on them. And in verse 20: "On that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses HOLY TO THE LORD. The pots in the house of the Lord shall be as bowls before the altar, and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be sacred to the Lord of Hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the flesh of sacrifice in them."

In other words, the whole Body of Christ will be holy. Everything that they are involved in is holy, because we are now in the New Heaven and the New Earth where there is no sin. "And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of Hosts on that day." Now this is speaking of false prophets. Remember the moneychangers. They were cast out by Jesus, and they were called a den of robbers. And from Jeremiah 7 we know that this is a figure of speech used to

speaking about those who follow after other gospels. And so God is saying in this last phrase that there will be none in the New Heaven and the New Earth who are false prophets, who are bringing another gospel. Everything will be holy to the Lord.

Now there's nothing at all in this context that speaks about a millennium. There's no thousand years mentioned here, nothing related to that. And if Christ were going to reign on this earth and re-institute the priesthood of Levi and the offering of the ceremonial laws, then we would have a complete reversal of everything that the Bible teaches.

Will There Be An Earthly Reign of Christ? (139A)

HC: Now if our callers would be very, very patient, I would like to spend a little bit of time right now speaking about the thoughts that I alluded to on our last broadcast. We spent a little bit of time looking at the promises that were made to Abraham, concerning the fact that his seed would be a multitudinous progeny, that is, they would be a multitude of nations, and the fact that his seed would inherit the land of Canaan forever.

Abraham was told to look to the north, the south, the east, and the west. And all of this land would be given to his seed forever. Now we saw that while this promise had a literal fulfillment in relationship to the nation of Israel, and it was a complete, literal fulfillment, insofar as they were concerned, during the days of Solomon, yet there was a far more glorious fulfillment. And actually, the major focus of these promises was on the everlasting fulfillment, and that was through the Lord Jesus Christ, as He became the seed of Abraham, and became the head of all who are the true seed of Abraham. It is men of faith who are the seed of Abraham, we saw in Galatians 3:7. Those who believe in Christ are the true seed of Abraham.

And these are the promises that Abraham understood as he looked for a Heavenly City.

But now tonight I'd like to spend a few minutes with the question of the promise made to King David that one of his seed would sit on his throne. This is a very contemporary question, because there are many today who are convinced that this promise to David has never been fulfilled, and that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to come any time now, and He's going to establish a literal throne in Jerusalem, and He's going to reign not only over Israel, but over the whole world for a certain duration of time, and then, after that, the end of the world will come.

Now is this really possible? And I thought it would be very fruitful to look at quite a number of verses that relate to this question. And if you have a pencil, and would like to write down these verses, then in your spare time you can check them out, to make sure that what I am saying is trustworthy.

Now in I Kings 8:25 we find Solomon speaking. You'll recall that Solomon was the son of David, who actually sat on the throne of David. And there we read, "Now therefore, oh Lord God of Israel, keep with Thy servant David, my father, what Thou hast promised him, saying, There shall never fail you a man before Me to sit upon the throne of David, if only your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me as you have walked before Me."

Now let me put into this context what he said in verse 20 of I Kings 8. And again, this is Solomon speaking: "Now the Lord has fulfilled His promise which He made. For I have risen in the place of David my father and sit on the throne of Israel as the Lord promised. And I have built the house for the Name of the Lord, the God of Israel."

Now even as there was a literal fulfillment, a complete fulfillment, in a literal, physical fashion, of the promises that were made to Abraham, in this statement of I Kings 8:20 we find a literal fulfillment, physical fulfillment, of the promise made to David that one of his sons would sit on his throne, because Solomon sat on the throne of David, and he ruled over Israel. Let me read this again: "For I have risen in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised."

But there was another aspect of that promise, that was a conditional aspect. And that's what we looked at in verse 25. It says that, beyond the fact that someone would sit on the throne of David, his seed would sit on the throne forever, if only they walked righteously before God. "There shall never fail you a man before Me to sit upon the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me as you have walked before Me."

Now while Solomon was the fulfillment of that promise, this second aspect was not fulfilled in Solomon, because Solomon was not faithful to God. In his old age, he began to worship other gods. We read in Kings 11:11, "The Lord said to Solomon, Since this has been your mind, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your day. But I will tear it out of the hand of your son."

And so already God was taking the kingdom away from the line of Solomon. It began in a grievous fashion already with Solomon's son, Rehoboam, who was allowed to reign only over two tribes, whereas Jeroboam, someone totally unrelated to the line of David, was given the reign over ten tribes. This started in 931 BC. But worse than that, when we go through the line of Solomon all the way down to the third king to the last king over Judah, King Jeconiah, or Coniah, as he is called, he was cursed by God and told by God that none of his seed would ever sit on the throne of David.

And so the line of kings through Solomon came to a total end. We read in Jeremiah 22:30, "Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days. For none of his seed shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah." That was the end of Solomon's reign, insofar as his line was concerned. It began very brightly with Solomon.

But there's more to say about that. We look at Psalm 132. Or let me turn back to II Samuel 7, when God gave the original promise to David. Then he was told in verse 8, "Therefore thus [this is Nathan speaking to David] says the Lord of Hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel [in the Bible prince and king are used interchangeably in speaking of David's throne] that you should be prince over My people Israel."

And then it goes on in verse 12, "When your days are fulfilled, and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring unto you, who shall come forth from your body. And I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." Now because we know that Solomon's line did not continue to reign forever, we know that God did not have in mind Solomon here. God had somebody else in mind. God was thinking of some other descendant of David who would sit on the throne. It would be a descendant who would sit on the throne and whose line of reign would go on forever.

Now remember when we talked about Abraham the moment we find the word

"forever." We know immediately that God is not talking about this sin-cursed earth. He is talking about eternity. And the only kingdom that goes on everlastingly is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read in Psalm 132:11: "The Lord swore to David a sure oath, from which He will not turn back: One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne." Now notice the condition: "If your sons keep My covenant and My testimonies which I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit upon your throne."

Now Solomon did not keep the promise, and the kings that followed Solomon. And so their rulership was cut off, insofar as the throne of David was concerned. But Christ came, as we shall presently see, to sit on the throne of David. And His kingship lasts forever. We are the sons of Christ. We are adopted into the family of God. We become the children of God, and we reign with Christ. And it's an everlasting reign, because we have everlasting life.

This verse 12 of Psalm 132 is also emphasizing this term "forever." And so it has to be talking about the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm just beginning to build with one verse after another. And you'll see, as we go from one verse to another, how this picture develops, and how it all focuses on Christ. Now many of us are very familiar with Isaiah 9:6, where God declares, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." And immediately we know, that's talking about Christ coming as the Messiah. "And His Name will be called wonderful, counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

We know that almost by heart, many of us. But what we don't very often read is the phrase that is in the middle of this statement and the phrase that follows this statement which I have just read. Let me read it again, verse 6 of Isaiah 9: "For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And His Name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

You see, God is saying that this Messiah, this Child who would be born, would be a ruler. The government would be upon His shoulders. And then it goes on and says right in the next verse, "Of the increase of His government and of peace, there will be no end." In other words, it's an everlasting kingship that this Messiah would establish.

Remember, the context is, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." It's talking about the Messiah coming as a King. And it will be an everlasting kingdom. Now notice the next phrase, right in order. It says here, "His Name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it, with justice and with righteousness, from this time forth and forever more. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."

In other words, this eternal kingdom that Christ the Messiah was going to establish would be an everlasting kingdom, and it would be built on the throne of David. That's the biblical language. It would be built upon the throne of David. And so we immediately see that God, in very direct fashion, in very plain language, is focusing our attention upon Christ as the one who came to fulfill the promise that someone from the line of David would sit on his throne and reign forever.

Now interestingly enough, there were no kings between David and Christ. The line to Solomon petered out during the days of Jeconiah, around 595 BC, or thereabouts. But Christ's line goes from

David through Nathan and through a whole lot of other people, none of whom were kings. And finally we come to Jesus Christ. And His is an eternal kingdom. Incidentally, you know, throughout the New Testament we find that He is spoken of as the Lord Jesus Christ. Now Lord means that He is to be worshipped. He is to be regarded as the one who rules. So He came as a King. He is called the Christ, which means the Anointed One. Christ came as a King. And He established His Kingdom, of course, by going to the cross.

We go to Jeremiah 23, where we read in verse 5, "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch. And He shall reign as King and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the Name by which He will be called, The Lord is Our Righteousness." That's the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the branch, as we read in Isaiah 11. He is the one who is raised up for David. He is seated on the throne of David.

Now a couple of other Old Testament passages quickly, and then we'll look at the New Testament, to see there how all these things were fulfilled. Now in Ezekiel 34 we read about the coming of the Messiah, in verse 11: "Behold, I, I Myself, will search for My sheep and will seek them out, like a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad." That's talking about Christ coming as the Good Shepherd. We can't get away from that.

In verse 15 God said, "I Myself will be the Shepherd of My sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled." He is the one who is the Good Shepherd, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, as we read in the New Testament. And this is Christ Himself, who is God.

Now in verse 23 we find that Christ here is called "My servant David," because it says, in verse 23 of Ezekiel 34, "And I will set over them [that is, over these sheep] one Shepherd." Now remember in verse 15 He said, "I Myself will be the Shepherd." So there's one Shepherd. And then He says, "My servant David, and He shall feed them."

Now if God says that He is the Shepherd, and there's only one Shepherd, and "My servant David" will be the Shepherd, then God is saying, "I am My servant David." In other words, Christ was typified by David. David was a type of Christ. And He is called "My servant David." It isn't suggesting that David would be reincarnated. It's only saying that Christ came in the spirit and power of David, or better put, Christ was typified by David. He was a shepherd and a king.

And then it goes on in verse 24 of Ezekiel 34: "And I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David shall be Prince among them." That's Christ. Christ shall be Prince among them. "I the Lord have spoken." He is our King, of course.

Now let's go to the New Testament. And in the Gospel of Luke we find the angel talking to Mary. And she is told in verse 31 of Luke 1: "Ant behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son. And you shall call His Name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His Father David." You see how plain that language is? It relates right back to all these Old Testament statements.

And then it goes on: "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of His kingdom there will be no end." That's the language of Isaiah 9, that the government will increase and will never have an end. Remember we read that.

Now remember when Jesus stood before Pilate? He said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." His Kingdom as a Heavenly Kingdom. It was an everlasting Kingdom. When Jesus came, He said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." And that Kingdom is the Kingdom that we enter into when we are saved. In Colossians 1:13 we read that we have been transferred from the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son.

Now if you're going to have a kingdom, you need a king. And that King is the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is the fulfillment of these glorious promises that there would be a son of David, someone coming from David, who would sit on the throne of David. And he would reign, and his children after him would reign forever. We are the children, and we are those who reign.

Now in Acts 2 we find another New Testament statement that emphasizes this truth in a very direct fashion. It's talking in verse 29 about David, that he is in the tomb. And speaking of David, it says, "Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God has sworn with an oath to him, that he would set one of his seed upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of Christ."

David realized that when the Messiah came, He would be the fulfillment of the promise that one of his seed would sit on his throne, the throne of David, forever. And of course Christ came as a King. In Ephesians 2:20 & 21 it says that when He rose from the grave, "He sat down at the right hand of God and rules over everything, not only in this age but in the age to come."

And in Hebrews 1:8 we read that of the Son, God says, "Thy throne, oh God, is forever and ever." Now the Jews in Jesus' day made a colossal mistake. They read the Scriptures which they had, just as we have the Scriptures. And they couldn't get their mind off of an earthly kingdom, off of a political kingdom. They didn't read the Scriptures carefully and see all the "forevers." They weren't at all careful in what they were reading.

And so they got the idea that a progeny of David, a descendant of David, would arise as the Messiah, and he would establish a physical kingdom centered in Jerusalem, and he would free them from Roman rule. Now when Jesus, the true Messiah, came, He did not fit that description of what they were looking for. And so they rejected Him and crucified Him. Now this of course worked into God's plan. This was required in order that Christ would come as the true Messiah, to actually sit on the throne of David, to establish an everlasting Kingdom, to fulfill all of these Old Testament promises.

Unbeknownst to these Jews, the very thing that they were denying was actually happening. But the sad fact is that these Jews remained in their unbelief, because they were looking for the wrong kind of a king.

Now today we have a tremendous amount of activity by those who are speaking again of an earthly kingdom, a kingdom that cannot be a forever kingdom. No political kingdom on this sin-cursed earth could be a forever kingdom. That's an impossibility. Only a kingdom that is Heaven-related can be eternal.

And so to raise the idea that Christ is going to come and sit on a physical throne in physical Jerusalem, on this sin-cursed earth, is totally foreign to the Bible. Christ is not king over two kinds of kingdoms. He has already established a glorious Kingdom, an everlasting Kingdom, that fulfills all of the promises that relate to the throne of David, and the fact that a king would sit who would reign forever, and whose children would reign forever. All of these requirements have been completely fulfilled in this glorious Kingdom that Christ has already

established when He went to the cross.

And now to say there is going to be in the future some kind of a physical kingdom, with Christ ruling over, how can that make sense? How can that hold a candle to, how can that be related to this glorious Kingdom that is infinitely more wonderful and majestic than any physical kingdom? You see, if you really go through the Bible, and compare Scripture with Scripture, pretty soon it all begins to fall into place.

Let me read one more passage from Ezekiel. Remember we saw in Ezekiel 34 that the coming Messiah was called "My servant David," and that He would be the Shepherd and He would be the Prince over the sheep, or over Israel. Now in Ezekiel 37, we see in verse 23 that God is talking about the time when He would heal, "I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they shall be My people and I will be their God." And of course verse 23 was fulfilled in the Messiah. He came, and He provided cleansing. And those who believed on Him, the 11 disciples, Mary and Martha, and Mary Magdalene, and Simeon and Anna, and the 120, and so on, they did become the people of God and God became their God.

And then it goes on and says in verse 24, "My servant David shall be King over them [and remember, that's Christ], and they shall all have one Shepherd [that's Christ - He is the Good Shepherd]. They shall follow My ordinances and be careful to observe My statutes. They shall dwell in the land where your fathers dwelt that I gave to My servant Jacob. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever."

Now remember when we saw the promise to Jacob and Abraham and Isaac, about the land, that their seed would dwell there? And a lot of people focus on the land of Canaan? Well, here it says that when Christ would come, they would dwell in this land forever, forever! And so, again, it can't be referring to the land of Canaan, because nobody can dwell in the land of Canaan forever. This earth is going to end. Absolutely it's going to end. And the only way that this can be understood is that the land where the fathers dwelt, that "I gave to my servant Jacob," where "your children will dwell forever," has got to be referring to Heaven, or to its final fruition, the New Heaven and the New Earth.

The patriarchs were dwellers in Heaven, because they were born again. The moment we become born again we are citizens of Heaven, as Philipians 3 puts it: "Our commonwealth is in Heaven."

The Millennial Reign (146B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Where does the doctrine of the thousand-year millennium come from? People say that Christ is going to return and reign for a thousand years. Where is that found in the Bible?

HC: Where does the doctrine of a thousand year, a millennial reign of Christ come from? It comes only from one place in the whole Bible, and that's from the first eight verses of Revelation 20.

That particular doctrine is related by some to the first eight verses of Revelation 20. Nowhere else in the Bible does it speak of a thousand years, with Christ reigning. In II Peter 3 it does say that a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day. But it has nothing, in that context, to do with Christ's reigning.

But in Revelation 20 it speaks of the fact that Satan will be bound for a thousand years. And then it also says that in this vision John saw the souls of those who had been beheaded. And they lived and

reigned with Christ a thousand years. And it says that at the end of the thousand years Satan would be loosed. And he would deceive the nations again and martial the nations from the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, against the camp of the saints or the Beloved City. And then fire from Heaven would come down and destroy those nations. And then it goes on and talks about Judgment Day.

Incidentally, in this passage it says nothing at all about Christ reigning on earth. It says nothing at all here about Christ reigning in Jerusalem, in the land of Israel, along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The reference to reigning has to do with the souls of those who have been beheaded. That is, they are souls without bodies.

The Bible teaches that when someone dies, if he's a born again believer whether he's martyred or whether he just dies, in his soul he leaves his body and goes to be with Christ in Heaven. And therefore, if Revelation 20 is read very carefully, it's not talking about Christ reigning on this earth, in that context. But it's speaking about Him reigning in Heaven, that is, the souls of those who have been beheaded living and reigning with Christ.

Now actually, of course, the Bible teaches in Ephesians 1 and in Hebrews 1 that when Christ rose from the grave, He sat down at the right hand of God and is reigning over everything, not only in this age but in the age to come. He is King now. He's been King, by virtue of His redemptive work, ever since the resurrection in AD 33. And the Kingdom that He reigns over is a glorious Kingdom, the Kingdom of believers.

The Amillennial and Premillennial Positions (210A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Mr. Camping. With respect to the amillennial view of eschatology versus the premillennial view, of that, how can we interpret what the Kingdom of God means?

HC: Your question has to do with the difference between the amillennial and the premillennial position, and how does the Kingdom of God fit into this?

Actually, the premillennial position is that there is to be a thousand year Golden Age some time in the future. It will be a time when God's Kingdom will be manifested on this sin-cursed earth, with Christ Himself reigning from Jerusalem, as a political king over the nations of the world. It will be a golden age for the Christians, because the whole world will be under the rulership of Christ. It will be preceded by a seven-year tribulation period. And either at the beginning of this period, or in the middle of this period, or at the end of this period, the Christians will be raptured. They'll be caught up in the air to be with Christ. Now where they are to be and how they are to relate to this millennial period, I have no idea, because in my judgment the idea of a future 1,000 year golden age, with Christ ruling on this sin-cursed earth is quite foreign to the Bible.

In other words, the view there, however, is of a kingdom that is quite earthly in nature. It's a kingdom that is in the dress of a modern political kingdom, in which you have the earthly potentate, even though He is Christ Himself.

Now in the amillennial position, the word "a" simply means no millennium, that is, no future golden age, it looks upon the thousand years of Revelation 20 as simply the whole New Testament period. And the Kingdom of God in that view is the body of Christ. We enter that Kingdom at the moment we are saved. It is an eternal, spiritual Kingdom. It is as literal in existence as a political kingdom, but it is of a spiritual quality. It

is a kingdom in which the throne is in Heaven, and it is eternal in nature. It is infinitely more wonderful and mighty and marvelous than any political kingdom could ever be.

Christ is the King. He became the King by virtue of His going to the cross. And we enter that Kingdom by becoming born again, even as we read in John 3:5. We cannot enter the Kingdom unless we are "born of water and the Spirit." And we can't see the kingdom unless we're born again. And it is a Kingdom that begins in the fact that we have received our resurrected souls at the time we're born again. If we should die before Christ returns, we live with our King in Heaven, in our soul existence. And when Christ comes at the end of time, to wrap everything up, which is very close at hand now, it's not a thousand years away some place, then we will come with Him, and we will take part in the judgment process. And then we will live eternally with Him in the New Heaven and the New Earth, after He has renovated this old earth by burning it with fire and recreating it New Heavens and a New Earth.

CALLER: Then would you say that the premillennial view is developed on an excessive literalization of scripture, or from a Scofield type of thinking, or what?

HC: The question is, where did the premillennial position develop from? Was it developed from an excess of literalism in Bible interpretation, or how was it developed?

Well, I don't know exactly what the whole pattern of development is. But I think, first of all, that it is a slipping back into the same snare that the Jews were in when Christ came the first time. They were looking for the Messiah, but they were looking for an earthly kingdom. They were looking for a Messiah who would rule in Jerusalem and free them from Roman rule. They missed altogether the eternal spiritual nature of the Kingdom.

And so again the church is walking in precisely the same shoes. Now the reason the Jews came into this way of thinking was two-fold. One was the fact that they missed altogether the nature of salvation. They were looking at a salvation that was based on their works, their merits, rather than on the grace of God. They didn't understand the precise nature of the atonement, and the purpose of the atonement.

The second reason they missed the real meaning of the Kingdom was that they were listening to their commentaries. They had the Talmud, which was the Bible that existed in that day, together with all of the commentaries of the learned Jews. And they interpreted the scripture by these commentaries. Therefore they had lost their sensitivity as to the holiness and the uniqueness of the Word of God. And so consequently they were not really able to understand the true nature of salvation or the true nature of the Messiah and His Kingdom.

Now today the same characteristics prevail, to an alarmingly high degree. There is a vast misunderstanding of what salvation is. There are those who say that we can lose our salvation. They have no idea of the eternal character of salvation. They have no idea of the fact that Christ has paid for all of our sins.

There are those who believe that it is our work to believe on Him, and then Christ takes over from that point. And this again develops a salvation that is grace, but it also has our works added to it. And that again is not the salvation of the Bible.

And when you have a misunderstanding of what salvation is, then of course you also misunderstand what the Kingdom is. And it's very easy to slip into this kind of a situation.

Thirdly, today also we have the same situation. There are those who are listening to the commentaries, to their learned theologians. Now those theologians may be helpful, but they are not God. Incidentally, the fact that some Bibles have notes at the bottom has increased greatly the prevalence of doctrines that are in agreement with those notes, because those notes are looked upon effectively, even though when pressed with the question, they'll say, "No, that isn't the Bible," as being equivalent to the Bible. And the proof of it is that those who use Bibles with those kinds of notes on the bottom of the pages will find that their doctrinal position aligns with those notes almost to a "1", because they have accepted it as the divine Word. And this puts them in the same position with the Jews of the Old Testament, that read the Talmud as the divine Word.

CHAPTER 9 – GOD & THE GODHEAD

GENERAL

God's Name: "I AM" (210C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Mr. Camping. I'd like some scriptures on the "I AM." I'd like some scriptures from the Old Testament and the New Testament, so I can write a paper of it for my class.

HC: The question that's been raised is concerning the use of God's Name, I AM. Back in the Old Testament Moses was told by God to go to Egypt and lead the people of Israel to freedom. And then in verse 13 Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me, 'What is His Name?' what shall I say to them? God said to Moses, I AM who I AM. And He said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.'"

In other words, God is saying, effectively, that He is the Ever Present One. Now this same kind of language is also found in the New Testament, although it's not always greatly apparent. Sometimes we have to look very carefully to find it.

In John 8:58, for example, Jesus said to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I AM." There He's using His Name of Exodus 3. Furthermore, remember Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life." "I am the Good Shepherd." "I am the door of the sheep." (John 10:7) There are many of these in the Bible, and you can find these. I can't put my finger on all of them, but again and again He says, "I am" this, and "I am" that.

Now another place where He uses the words I AM is at the time that He was going out of the Garden of Gethsemane, on His way to be bound, to be crucified. And the temple servants have come to take Him. And then, as He left the Garden of Gethsemane, in John 18, Jesus asked them, in verse 4, "Whom do you seek?" They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I AM." Now in your Bible you might have "I am He," but the "He" is not in the original. It's just "I AM." Jesus said to them, "I AM." And then when He said to them, "I AM," they drew back and fell to the ground." In other words, Jesus was declaring Himself to be the Jehovah God of the Old Testament, when He said, "I AM."

Now these are the most important places in the Bible, I think, that speak about Jesus as being I AM.

Why is Jesus Called the "Son of God"? (257C)

CALLER: I've heard that Jesus is God, but why do they call Jesus the Son of God, if He is God? I can't understand.

HC: The question that is raised is, Why is Jesus called the Son of God if He is God?

Right now, with that question, we stand at the feet of Eternal God. And we cannot understand God. We have no way of comprehending all that God is He is an infinite Being. We read what the Bible says and accept it by faith, and realize that our finite minds are incapable of comprehending God.

And so while on one hand He repeatedly is spoken of as the Son of God, on the other hand the Bible indicates repeatedly that in every sense He is Eternal God: "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." And so we simply accept all of this because the Bible says so. This is an extreme and serious situation, where we must walk by faith and not because we know something.

Understanding the Name of Jesus (266B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi, Mr. Camping. You've been talking a lot about the Trinity and so forth. And I noticed, as I've visited different church groups, some of the people's reactions to different things. They seem to be a little different. For example, with regard to our relationship to God and our relationship to Christ. And I've been kind of troubled about this at times, because I've become born again, since I have had this sense of sinfulness and I realize I've got to repent, that I have to turn away from sin, and so forth.

I think I've seen some spiritual growth in my life over the last couple of years. But as I've been around here and there, sometimes someone will come up to you and say something like, "Well, how's your relationship with Jesus?" or they'll say in a Bible study, "Well, we're getting to know Jesus better." And I go home that night, and sometimes the phrases kind of hit me kind of funny, because I guess maybe my background would make me think something like, "Well, let's see. I have a relationship with Jesus. But yet I have a relationship with God, if I know Him."

And sometimes this spills over into areas that people have asked you about. When I pray, it comes more naturally to say, "Oh, Lord," or "Father." And people say, "Isn't Jesus wonderful?" And I don't react to it emotionally like they do, you know? And I think to myself, "Yes, Jesus is wonderful, isn't He? He went to the cross." And I realize He endured the wrath of God for me. And yet I guess when I'm praying I react to the term God, and sometimes it seems like, when so many people speak to me, He's a friend or something. You know? And I guess there's a truth to that, but He's God, too, if you know what I mean. And sometimes I think, "Well, I don't react emotionally like that to Jesus." Is that my pride, that I won't want to react that way? Now I've got to really trust what the Bible says. The Bible says Christ is the Savior, and that's what I've got to believe, because the Bible says so.

HC: Yes, I follow you. In other words, the question you're really posing is, How are we to relate to this phenomenon today where there is so much emphasis placed upon Jesus? We have songs that say, "Jesus." It's almost as if there is something superstitious about the name Jesus.

CALLER: And then sometimes I just can't react to it in that kind of sentimental type of way.

HC: You know, we get on safe ground when we look at the scripture. Now here

is the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, speaking in Colossians 1:3: "We always thank God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you." Now immediately we see two things here. First of all, he puts the Father Number One. We pray to the father. The fact is, in 1 Corinthians 11 God teaches that the head of Christ is God. Now we can't understand that, but that's the Biblical language.

Okay. And here we find that we're to pray to the Father. And the fact is, I could refer to all kinds of passages like this, as for example, Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ, with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places."

The second truth that shines through here is the statement, "The Lord Jesus Christ." Now the word Jesus is a perfectly good Biblical word: "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." But the word Jesus is not telling the whole story. There is also the word Lord here. And the word Lord indicates that He is the head of the Kingdom. He is the one who is not only the one who has saved us, but He is the head of the Kingdom that we belong to. And we are to recognize Him as head.

The word Christ means He is the Anointed One, that He has been anointed King by virtue of His redemption. Now this comes back to an observation you're making. There is a tendency on the part of some to put Jesus down on our human level, because Jesus was His human name. That was the name that was given Him by Mary and Joseph, Jesus. But He was the Christ.

Now they didn't give Him the name Christ. Christ is the Name that means Messiah. He was the Messiah of the Old Testament. And certainly they didn't give Him the Name Lord. But they were told to name Him Jesus.

Now a lot of people look upon Jesus as not much more than a friend, not much more than someone who was just a wonderful buddy to have around. And they fail to realize that the Lord Jesus is Eternal God, that He is King of kings and Lord of lords, that He is the Almighty Majesty. And we are to look upon Him with awe and reverence and trembling.

CALLER: I don't sort of envision Christ as the person who walked in Palestine 2000 years ago. He did do that then, but I tend to think of God as God Almighty, like you say, the Ruler of the universe. And it's easier for me to have that concept rather than the man as such, although He had to be a man, too.

HC: You see, this phenomenon is further encouraged by an altogether different question. And that is the pictures of Jesus. We have these pictures of Jesus, which are flatly contrary to what God teaches in Exodus 20, that we're not to have make any likeness of God. And yet the picture of Jesus conveys the idea of a benevolent individual, a compassionate man, a longsuffering man. And no picture could ever, ever convey the fact that the Lord Jesus is Eternal God Himself.

CALLER: You don't think there's too much of a problem, then, just stick with the Bible and try to just pray to God, because Christ is God Himself.

HC: Well, yes. We're always on safe ground when we follow the scriptures. Now Jesus was asked how to pray. And He says, "Pray thusly, Our Father, who art in Heaven."

CALLER: Now we should be thankful to Christ for saving us, so they'll say, "Thank you, Jesus, for saving us." It seems to come easier to me to say, "Thank you, Father, that Christ paid the price for my sins."

HC: I always wonder why people want to improve upon the scriptures. Why not follow the rules of the scripture? Why not follow what God has given us examples of? And then we know that we in the will of God. Now if we're going to formulate our own language and try to be more holy and more direct than what God indicates, well, who do we really think we are? And I wonder why men would want to do this.

CALLER: I thought I'd share that. I didn't know whether it was an unusual thing that I might have experienced. You know, you hear so many different opinions on things, you know. It's hard sometimes to separate your own pride from really wanting to respond to God.

HC: And you see, there's another factor here. Now God has very carefully given us His Word. And by praying to God the Father, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and recognizing that it was the Father who so loved us that He gave His only-begotten Son, and so on, this cautions us that we do not make a caricature of the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not say things about Him that are not so. We just use the Biblical language.

He says, "I and the Father are one." Fine. "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." I don't understand that. I don't understand that. All I know is that it's so, because Jesus said so. Jesus and the Father are one, and yet the Lord Jesus prayed to the Father. He was not praying to Himself.

And when the Lord Jesus was on earth, dying for our sins, He was not in Heaven. The Father was in Heaven. Jesus left Heaven. He emptied Himself of His glory and came to earth, in order that He might pay for our sins. These are things we cannot understand.

CALLER: The same thing with the Holy Spirit, when we read about the Spirit. He's also Eternal God.

I appreciate your clearing that up for me. I worry about that sometimes.

HC: And incidentally, you mentioned the Holy Spirit. And there are those today who are making a caricature of the Holy Spirit. It's the "Holy Spirit" this, the "Holy Spirit" that, the "Holy Spirit" the other thing. And they are never talking about the Father. They are almost suggesting that nobody knew about the Holy Spirit until we came along.

Actually, we're only going to be on safe ground when we carefully read the Bible and let the Bible be our guide. And when the Bible tells us to speak of the Father, let's speak of the Father. And if the Bible is speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, it's speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. And let's just follow what the Bible says, even though much of it we cannot understand.

CALLER: There are so many books on this subject, on the Spirit, and so forth. When you start looking at all these, you can get pretty confused. I was thinking the other day, and I've heard you say, that it's better to just stick with the Bible. You don't get so confused.

HC: Yes.

The Identity of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:1 (325C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like to ask about Melchizedek. Who was he? Also, if Jesus died on the cross, how is He God, too? I do believe in Jesus Christ, but I'm being confronted with Jehovah's Witnesses constantly, and I cannot answer the question about His death and being God at the same time. Thank you.

HC: The first question that's raised is concerning Melchizedek. Who was he? And the second question is: How can Jesus be God if He could die on the cross?

Let me answer the second question first. If Jesus was indeed God, as Christians claim that He is, how could He have died

on the cross? I could phrase the question a little bit differently: If Jesus had not been God, how could He have been our Savior? If He had simply been some kind of a super man, a very good man at that, how could He have endured the wrath of God so that it effectively became the equivalent of an eternity in hell? Because you see, that is required to save us.

Now of course many people deny the eternal nature of hell. They teach that judgment is really, ultimately, nothing more than annihilation. But that is not taught in the Bible. The Bible indicates that the wrath of God is poured out forever and ever on those who are unsaved, and their torment goes on forever and ever, as we read in Revelation 14.

In order for Christ to redeem us, it was necessary that that grievous penalty be paid. If Christ were anybody but God, He could not have paid for our sins. Only God would be able to absorb the awfulness of God's wrath to such a degree that in the space of three days and three nights of suffering He endured the equivalent of an eternity in hell for us.

The fact is, if anyone believes that Jesus was not God, they do not have a Savior. They can call Jesus Savior all they want, but they have a savior of their own making, who is unable to save them, because anyone other than God could never have paid for our sins.

Now when we speak about Jesus dying on the cross, some have the idea that the Roman soldiers or the Jews actually killed Jesus. And in a sense they did. That was their purpose, to take His life. Certainly the two thieves on the cross were killed by the Roman soldiers, as punishment for their crimes. And Jesus was put on the cross as a common criminal, also to die there on the cross.

In another sense, however, they did not kill Jesus. Remember, Jesus said, "It is finished," when He hung on the cross. And then remember, He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." After He had suffered all that was required while hanging on the cross, Christ gave Himself up to the Father. He left His body and went to be with the Father.

He did this of His own will. His life actually ultimately had not been taken from Him. The two thieves next to Him had their legs broken because it was the night before the Sabbath day, or the afternoon before the Sabbath evening, and it was necessary that they be taken from the cross before the sun went down. To hurry their death their legs were broken. When the soldiers came to Jesus, they did not break His legs, because He had already died. Did He simply die more quickly than the others? No. No. When He had suffered as He was required to suffer, to pay for our sins, He said, "It is finished." And then He declared, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Christ gave up His life willingly altogether. He willingly went to the cross, He willingly suffered for us, and He willingly let His body be put into the grave.

The intent of the Jews, the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas the High Priest, the Roman soldiers, was to take His life. In actuality, Christ gave His life.

Now the other question has to do with Melchizedek. We read about him in Hebrews 7. And in connection with Melchizedek we understand from Hebrews 7 that he appeared to Abraham back in the Old Testament. In the language of Hebrews 7, however, we discover that Melchizedek was actually God Himself. The language will not permit any other understanding but that He was God Himself.

We read in verse 1 of Hebrews 7, "For this Melchizedek, King of Salem, Priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first

being by interpretation King of Righteousness [now the only King of Righteousness is God, the Lord Jesus Christ], and after that also King of Salem, that is, King of Peace."

Remember what the angel declared when Jesus was born? "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." Remember what Isaiah said concerning the coming Messiah? That He would be the Prince of Peace. More than that, in verse 3 of Hebrews 7 He declares, "without father, without mother." Do you know anyone else who was without father or mother, except Adam and Eve? No. Nobody at all was without father or without mother. Only Adam and Eve.

But it also says, "having neither beginning of days nor end of life." Now Adam and Eve had beginning of days and had end of life. And therefore it cannot be referring to Adam and Eve. It can only refer to God. He has no beginning, He has no end, He is without father or mother. He is from everlasting to everlasting.

"but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually [or forever]." He was a figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a type of the eternal priesthood of Christ Himself. In order to establish typology in the Old Testament, God did set up a great number of types in the Old Testament. Abraham was a type of God, Moses was a type of Christ, David was a type of Christ, Elijah was a type of John the Baptist, and so forth.

In order to establish a perfect type of the character and nature of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, there was no man who would be a perfect type, and so God Himself appeared in the form of a man. He did not take on a human nature, He did not become man as He did when Jesus Christ became man, but He did appear in the form of a man, in the person of Melchizedek, in order to set up a type, a perfect type of the eternal character of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Permissive and Desirous Wills of God (340A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I wanted to raise a question with reference to God's omniscience. It is said that God has a permissive will and a desirous will. And many times this statement is abused. And I was wondering, with relation to the believer, how are we to understand God's desirous will for us in our life, and His permissive will?

HC: The question is, what is the difference between God's permissive will and God's desirous will? Now these are terms of course that are not found in the Bible. These are actually theological terms. But we can see, as we study the Bible, why we might make this kind of a distinction.

Let's think, for example, of the brothers of Joseph. They hated Joseph, and finally they sold him as a slave into Egypt, a terribly terribly sinful thing to do. Now God permitted this. This was allowed because of God's permissive will. Through this God was going to accomplish His purpose to eventually save this family, because eventually Joseph would become prime minister of Egypt and would provide grain so that Jacob and his brothers would be saved. That was God's permissive will.

Now God's (to use your term) desirous will would be that God says that we are not to commit adultery. We are not to steal. We are to love God above all. This is the positive declaration of God's will for our lives, that we are to live holy lives, that we are to be obedient to the commandments that God has laid down. That is the will of God for our lives.

Now when we sin, God permits this in our lives, and frequently He'll work out His plan through our sins. That's God's

permissive will. It is never God's holy will that we will sin. Sin is rebellion against God. But God permits it and works out His plan through our lives even though we are living sinfully.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much. I was wondering about that. It seems like, in terms of Christian life, many times the situation will come up, even in terms of people being unequally yoked. A friend of mine said she felt it was the will of God for her to marry outside of the Christian family.

HC: Now in a case like that, when someone goes against God's rules that we should not be unequally yoked, God permits this. He doesn't strike us down. He doesn't stop that marriage. He doesn't cut that person off, right there, because he persists in violating God's rules. God permits this sin to be engaged in. Of course it's a terrible terrible path to follow because all kinds of bad repercussions can come from it.

Any time we engage in sin God allows it, because of His permissive will. But you can depend upon it that we're under the wrath of God because of that sin. It gives us absolutely no encouragement or incentive for this kind of action just because we might recognize that there is such a thing as the permissive will of God.

God also permits Satan to rule the hearts of unsaved men. God permitted Eve to fall into sin in the Garden of Eden, but think of all the evil and terrible consequences that came out of that action.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Is Jesus Part of the Godhead? (394A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Recently I read an article about a group of British theologians who are trying to make Christianity more salable (I guess, you'd say) to modern man, by changing Christ's status from the Son of God to a great teacher, and not divine. And they produced a book called, I believe, "The Myth of God Incarnate." In conversation with a friend of mine about this, who is supposedly a man learned and a Christian individual, he actually, surprisingly enough, tended to agree. He said that references to the word Trinity specifically are not found in the Bible, which I guess I agree with.

However, he went on to say that the reference to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as mentioned in, for instance, Matthew 28:19 in the King James Version, is not found in the original text from which the Bible was translated. Now it appears that my friend wasn't denying that Jesus could be called the Son of God, but rather he was indicating that he doubted that Jesus and the Holy Spirit were equal parts of the Godhead, so to speak. Now this struck me as being rather surprising, because I had always looked at things like John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." I was wondering, what is your opinion about this?

HC: Well, I could almost answer kind of sarcastically, and I don't like to be sarcastic, but I could almost say, "What else is new?" For 2,000 years people have tried to downgrade Jesus Christ as being someone else than Eternal God Himself. The Jews of His day, the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin, put Him to death because He claimed that He was God. The Bible is very clear, absolutely clear, that He is Eternal God. There is no question at all about this.

But men go to the Bible and find verses that they think add up to what they want to believe and simply do not let the whole Bible speak to the question, and then they arrive at the conclusion that He

is not God. Well, that's their privilege to believe anything they want to believe. But that doesn't change the fact of the matter.

The fact is, if He were not Eternal God, we would have not a Savior. If He were not Eternal God, how could He as a super-man of some kind, quite a bit more holy than the rest of us, endure, take upon Himself all of our sins, the sins of everyone who would ever believe on Him, and then endure the wrath of God to such a degree that it became the equivalent of an eternity in hell for all of us? This of course was required in order that God's justice be completely satisfied.

They can downgrade Jesus. Many people try to do this. But in so doing they are without a Savior, altogether without a Savior. Now in Titus 2:13, for example, the Bible speaks of "the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ." Now that's not language that you can struggle with. It's saying it very plainly. And there are many verses of this nature in the Bible, where it is emphasized.

In Titus 3:4: "After that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared." And it goes on and discusses the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 6 of that same passage: "which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior." Jesus Christ is the Savior and the Savior is God. So Jesus Christ is God. There's no way out of it.

We can find abundant references in the Old Testament and in the New Testament that relate to this.

CALLER: Do you suppose if I point some of these verses out I will run into the rebuttal, "But that's not in the original text"?

HC: You will experience this. If you point out certain verses, there are some that they will try to rationalize by saying they're not found in the original text, or that that means something different, or whatever. There will be some that they will not give answer to. They'll simply look at you and wait for you to go to the next verse, because those who deny the Bible invariably cannot speak to every verse in the Bible. And therefore they will simply not answer when you come to certain verses that are especially troublesome. And you, in your enthusiasm and in your trust in the Bible, will go right on to some more verses, until they can find one more that they can rationalize. But they will not face the verse after verse after verse. They simply will not square off on each and every verse that you would offer.

CALLER: Very good. Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Was Jesus God? (521A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I heard a liberal pastor talk, and he said that Jesus was not God because He prayed in the Garden, "Not my will but thine be done," which showed that He was separate from God, and that when He prayed in John 17, "that they may be one as we are one," which showed that they were separate. And he said when they asked Jesus why He came, He said He came that they might have life and have it more abundantly, so that He was more concerned about teaching for this life rather than eternal life. And I wonder if you could give me some scriptures where Jesus Himself said that He was God, and why He came.

HC: The question is, was Jesus a man or was Jesus God? The fact is, of course, that God very clearly indicates that Jesus was not God the Father. Jesus was the Son of God. Christ repeatedly spoke of Himself as the Son of God, as well as the Son of Man. And yet from everything we read in the Bible we know that He was God in every sense.

Let me use the verse of John 8. We read in verse 58, as Jesus is talking to the Jews: "Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." "I am." Now that was a very astounding thing for Him to say, because if we go back to Exodus 3, when Moses is being addressed by God, Moses says, "Who shall I say sent me?" and God says, "You tell them that I AM has sent you." That's in Exodus 3:14. "And God said unto Moses, I AM that I AM. And He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you."

Now when Jesus said in John 8:58, "Before Abraham was I AM," he was saying that He is Eternal God, because you see, He is using the same language as Exodus 3. He's not only saying that He already existed when Abraham was, which is of course characteristic of God, but He's also taking on the name of God, I AM. "And for this reason they took up stones to cast at Him," because they realized that He was making Himself as God.

Not only that, but He forgave sins of different individuals. And only God can forgive sins. Now of course the whole Bible is the Word of God, and there are many passages that say very clearly that Jesus is God. I was trying to find a statement that came from His lips. But for example, in Titus, a little book just before the Book of Hebrews we find there in Chapter 2, verse 13, where God declares: "Looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," a very straight statement, you see, that He is God.

Hebrews 1:8, God declares: "But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy Kingdom." In the Gospel of John we find that God introduces this particular Gospel with the statement that "The Word was God and the Word was with God. And the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." And then we read in verse 14 of John 1, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Then in John 17, notice this language, where Jesus is saying in verse 5: (notice this language) "And now, O Father (He's praying), glorify Thou Me With Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." You see, Jesus is indicating that He had the same glory as the Father from before the foundations of the earth. This is from the lips of Jesus.

I hope this will help a little bit.

CALLER: Thank you very much. **HC:** Thank you for calling. Good night.

Why Does God Get Angry? (543A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Why does God get angry? If He knows that somebody is going to sin, why does He go through the motion of getting angry? I can understand why He does not like sin. Why not just say something about it, as opposed to getting angry about it?

HC: That's an interesting question. The question is, why does God become angry? Insofar as God shows the fact that He is angry, God deals with mankind as a Father. He's the Creator, of course, and God says on the one hand that He is merciful, on the other hand that He is jealous, and that jealousy is not a sinful jealousy such as we have, a jealousy of envy. But it's a jealousy that He wants no one worshipped but Himself, because we are created to glorify Him, and anything less than that is rebellion against God.

And God indicates His anger to warn us of the coming wrath of God, that will come upon us. It's an anger that is for our benefit, really. It's an anger to show us that we're in trouble if we rebel against God, and if we don't do something about our sins. We've got hell to pay, and that's not a cliché. That's absolutely a fact.

CALLER: Okay. I appreciate that very much.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

When Did the Holy Spirit First Make Himself Known? (010A)

CALLER: At what time did the Holy Spirit make Himself known to the world?

HC: The Holy Spirit made Himself known at creation. We read in Genesis 1:2: "The Spirit brooded upon the face of the waters." The Holy Spirit, who is Eternal God, was already present at creation, and repeatedly we find references in the Old Testament to the Holy Spirit. We find that the Holy Spirit came upon Saul, to qualify him to be a king. We find that He came upon wicked Balaam, to qualify him to speak about blessings from God. And this was back in around the year 1409 BC.

The Holy Spirit spoke through Noah, the Bible says in the New Testament. This was back in 4990 BC. So the Holy Spirit has been present throughout time in the world. He is Eternal God.

Now God the Holy Spirit made Himself manifest in a very special way at Pentecost, back in AD 33, fifty days after the cross, when He began His work, which was actually a two-pronged work. First of all, He qualified every born again believer to be a witness. Beginning at that point in time, every born again believer received that ability, to be a witness. This was not so before that time. Only occasionally God so qualified a person. And secondly, at that time it was God's purpose that the Holy Spirit would bring the Word of God into power, so that it would free men from the shackles of sin. And so we see this very dramatically at Pentecost, when 3000 are saved. The power of the Gospel became manifest in the new and wonderful way that had not been so to the same degree before.

The Work of the Holy Spirit (013B)

CALLER: I'd like to know, how does the Holy Spirit work?

HC: The Holy Spirit is Eternal God. The Holy Spirit has always been present on the earth. He is active in every aspect of God's program. He was active at creation, Genesis 1:2: "The Spirit brooded upon the face of the waters." The Holy Spirit came upon various kings of Israel, to qualify them as king. The Holy Spirit came upon saved as well as unsaved men, so that they might declare God's Word. Balaam would be an example of an unsaved man. The prophets would be examples of saved men.

The Holy Spirit restrains sin in the world. God keeps mankind from being more sinful than they are. Otherwise mankind would destroy themselves. And then, particularly in relationship to the born again believer, the Holy Spirit cleanses us from our sins. He is the One Who takes the shed blood of Christ, as it were, and applies it to our lives. He is the One who washes away our sins, as the Father draws us to Himself. And then the Holy Spirit indwells us and fills us so that we are qualified to be a witness. This is all the activity of the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit who is the One who gives us various gifts, so that we can be used of the Lord. He gives us the gift of faith, so that we might believe on Him. He gives us the gift, if we have it, to be a preacher, or an evangelist, or whatever.

These are all part of the activity of eternal God in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

CALLER: Is it your conscience that bothers you after you read the Word of God, or what is it?

HC: Well, God works through our conscience. And this is because God's laws are written on our hearts. If we are saved, or if we are in the process of being saved, God Himself will prick our conscience and apply that Word to our heart. It's the Word itself that becomes the Living Word. As we read the Word, it's a two-edged sword, and it pierces right into our hearts and exposes us. It cuts us open, so that we are face to face with our sin. And because we were created in the image of God, and therefore we know intuitively that this is sin. And then if God has given us the faith to draw us to Himself, we'll become very sensitive to this sin, and exercised by it, so that we will begin to call out to God for help.

CALLER: I still don't understand how the Holy Spirit works, though.

HC: You're thinking in relationship to salvation? The Holy Spirit is Eternal God. Let's get that before us, number one, He is Eternal God, and God deals with mankind. The Holy Spirit restrains sin in natural man. Otherwise man would destroy himself. "Out of the heart of man comes murder, adultery, fornication, thefts," and so on. And unless God the Holy Spirit actually kept the lid on, so to speak, we'd all become Stalins and Hitlers in the shortest possible time.

The Holy Spirit also is the Person of the Godhead who is used of God to apply the Word of God to our lives, to make us sensitive to it and to be conscious of it. It is God the Father who actually draws us to Christ.

CALLER: Well, could it be like an inner voice or something like that?

HC: Well, God does not articulate to us except through the Word, but when we get under conviction, when we really begin to have a real sensitivity in our soul that we're sinners, and that we're under the wrath of God, this is because the Holy Spirit has put it there. He has begun to apply God's Word to our life.

Who is the Holy Spirit? (093D)

CALLER: Good evening. Would you please explain what the Holy Spirit is? And is the Holy Spirit with you all the time, whether you're good or bad?

HC: The question is raised: Who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is Eternal God. God manifests Himself as one God, but He also manifests Himself as three Persons. And this is a divine mystery, which no man can unravel. Our finite minds are not capable of understanding an infinite God, and certainly not this particular aspect of Infinite God.

But while there is one God, yet God reveals Himself to us as God the Father, who sent the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is also Eternal God in every sense of the word. And He also reveals Himself as the Holy Spirit, or as the Spirit of God, or as the Spirit of Christ. And the Holy Spirit is Eternal God, although He is a separate Person from the Son or from the Father.

Now the Holy Spirit has been present in the world from the very beginning. We read about Him in Genesis 1:2: "The Spirit brooded upon the face of the waters." We read about Him as He qualified Balaam to prophesy. Balaam was a very wicked man, and yet he prophesied very beautifully things of God, because the Holy Spirit came upon him. You can read about this in Numbers 23.

The Holy Spirit came upon an unsaved king, Saul, so that Saul was qualified to be a wise king, at least to some degree, a wise king over Israel. The Holy Spirit was active in the Old Testament in speaking through the prophets, through

Noah, or through Isaiah, as they declared the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit was busy writing the Bible. The Holy Spirit spoke through men of old, and so what they wrote down became our Bible. This was all the activity of God the Holy Spirit.

Now the Father finally sent the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is where the second Person of the Godhead puts in His appearance, when He was born as a baby. And He went to the cross for our sins, and then He returned to the Father.

And then the work of the Holy Spirit began in earnest. And the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit being poured out, or the Holy Spirit being sent. This is language to indicate that the program of God to save the world, to save people from every nation, began in earnest. And so, beginning with Pentecost, every born again believer was qualified by the Holy Spirit to be a witness. He was filled by the Holy Spirit. This was the way he was qualified to be a witness.

And the Holy Spirit is busy breaking down the hard hearts of those who are being saved. Now the Holy Spirit is also active in restraining sin in the lives of the unsaved, so that they will not be so sinful, which is their basic nature. And such utter sinfulness would make them destroy themselves. Actually God the Holy Spirit is restraining sin in their lives.

So the Holy Spirit is very much present throughout the world. He's present within us, He fills us so that we are qualified to be a witness. He is busy in the world dealing with the unsaved, both in saving them as well as restraining sin in their lives even if they are not saved. God the Holy Spirit is Eternal God, just as much as God the Father or God the Son, who is the Lord Jesus Christ is Eternal God.

The Invisible Workings of the Holy Spirit in Jn 3:7-8 (379B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Just what is meant by Jesus in John 3:7 & 8 when He's talking to Nicodemus about being born again, when He says you can hear the wind but you can't tell where it comes from, or whether it will go next, and so it is with the Spirit, that we will not know on whom next He will bestow His life from Heaven?

HC: Yes. That's a very good question. That's not a question that's asked very frequently. Generally people are concerned about John 3:5, where Christ said you have to be born of water and the Spirit. Your question has to do with verses 7 and 8, where He is saying, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit."

Now you see, when Christ gives us salvation, when God gives us salvation, the Holy Spirit does not work so that we can see or feel His presence. There is no manifestation. There is no burning sensation. There is no falling over backwards. There is no sensation of any kind. But we know that we're born again because the results of being born again are there.

The same as with the wind. We can't see the wind, but the results are there. We see the leaves blowing, and so on. And so it is in our life. The Holy Spirit does this work of grace in our life. It's very quiet; it's very mysterious. We actually become a new creature.

Now just think of it. In our soul we are a real personality. The apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said in II Corinthians 5, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." And when you're absent from the body you're in your soul existence. And so he's speaking of his soul as if his soul is his

whole personality. And so our soul has real substance.

Now think of it. Before we're saved, in our souls, as well as in our bodies, we're dead, spiritually dead. We're sold under sin, but we still exist as a personality, both in our soul and in our body. And of course in our soul and in our body we're completely interrelated. But at the moment of salvation, when we're born again, that soul of ours is effectively put to death and it's resurrected a brand new soul. Now that's a fantastic transformation. Our body has not been changed yet, but our soul has been altogether made into a brand new soul.

Now you would think that when this happens there would be all kinds of sparks and sensations and activity going on in our personality, as God is doing this dramatic miracle in our life. But the fact is, we don't even know the moment when this happens, ordinarily. All we know is that we begin to sense an earnest desire to live for Christ. We find that we are tremendously interested in the Word of God and all that it teaches. And we discover that there's a real urge in our life to be obedient to it.

The effects of what God has done are seen. The fruit of the Spirit is seen in our life. But we certainly were not there to witness the work of the Holy Spirit.

CALLER: And I was wondering if this means that salvation comes when God wills it to come rather than we may will it to come. As we would say, "Tonight I'm going to go to church and take an altar call and be saved tonight."

HC: Yes. You're right, of course. God is the one who is sovereign in this matter. He is the one who saves us in His timetable. Now He of course works through our will. He works through our prayers. He works through our listening to the Gospel.

Frequently, when He expects to save someone, as He draws us to Christ, as the Father draws us, God may be getting our attention by sending chastisement into our life. But it is the Father who is doing the drawing, and it is the Holy Spirit who is actually effecting that salvation in our life. And this is done in God's timetable.

CALLER: Yes. I see.

THE TRINITY

The Mystery of the Trinity (146C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open forum.

CALLER: Yes. I have a question I'd like to ask. What I want to know is something about the Trinity. I don't understand how Jesus could pray to the Father if He is God. And I'll take my answer over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. Good night.

The question has been raised concerning the Trinity. How can we understand that Jesus is Eternal God, and the Father is Eternal God, and the Holy Spirit is Eternal God, and yet there is one God? If there is one God, how could it be that Jesus can pray to the Father, or that the Father can pour out His wrath on the Son? We have all kinds of problems that would arise.

The fact is, I can't understand this, either. And no human being can understand this, because when we are talking about God we are talking about His Eternal Majesty. We are talking about the Creator of the world, who is infinite in His being, who is the Great I AM, who is from everlasting.

Now let's look at the creation. Can you understand that? Do you know how a seed that you put in the ground germinates, and produces a very beautiful plant? Do you know how conception takes place, that is, how that baby grows in the womb? Do you know how that baby is formed in the womb,

so that after a few weeks you have every aspect of a whole child in the womb?

There are all kinds of things that we see that we do not understand in the creation. And by the same token, therefore, we can never expect to understand the Creator. God is the Creator. Now He makes certain statements about Himself, and they're a puzzle. We cannot tie them together and make sense out of it, because we are in the presence of God Himself.

He absolutely insists that there is one God, only one God. And yet He absolutely insists that there are three Persons, each of whom is Eternal God in every sense of the word. Our minds cannot take hold of this. We simply accept it by faith. This is the way we are to trust in God, by faith.

The Trinity and Abraham's Bosom in Luke 16:22 (257E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I was talking to someone at lunch today, and He said, "How can the Trinity be three Persons in One, when Christ sits at the right hand of God?" And I didn't really know how to answer him.

CALLER: And the other question I have is, when the Bible speaks about Lazarus being in Abraham's bosom, it uses he feminine gender. And there are other places in the Bible where it uses the word bosom. Does God have a dual gender, or what?

HC: I'm not certain about that latter question.

CALLER: Bosom, that's a feminine term. And there are other feminine terms in the Bible. Could God indeed be both genders?

HC: Let me try to speak to that.

The question is raised: How can it be that Christ is seated at the right hand of God, if actually there is only one God? Now this is all part of the mystery of the Godhead. The Bible clearly points out the fact that there is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. But the Bible also insists that there are three Persons in one, or that there's only one God. It really puts it that way. There is only one God.

Now I know this, that when it uses the phrase, He is "seated at the right hand of God," we must not conjure up the picture of two thrones, with God in the center one and the Lord Jesus at His right hand, seated on another throne. That's a human picture. That's a picture related to this earth. That's a creature picture.

But we must remember, God is Spirit. Can you imagine a spirit sitting on a throne? That will help you to see the difficulty we have here. Actually, when we study this language, to be seated is language the Bible uses to indicate that we rule, or that God rules and has authority. "At the right hand" implies that . . . well, I'm not sure of everything that the right hand implies. It implies, actually, that He is equal in power, He is Number One in a relationship to this matter of rule or authority.

Now we can't explain God. And if anyone doesn't understand, simply say, "Well, join the party. No human being understands." Now there are plenty of people who claim they understand God. But invariably you'll find that they do not face, really, all kinds of verses in the Bible. They claim they can answer all the verses. But when they're really pinned down, they cannot face all the verses of the Bible, because we have very finite minds, while God is infinite.

The other question that was raised was concerning a phrase in Luke 16, where it talks about Lazarus, who was the beggar, whose only friends were the dogs that licked his sores. In other words, he was a poor man, without any helper of any kind on this side of the grave. And he

ends up in Abraham's bosom. Now we use the word "bosom" in a feminine term, in a feminine context. But I'm not really sure. I have never researched this particular word, but I'm not really sure that it has to be a feminine word, necessarily, even though we normally use it as a feminine word.

I might do the same thing with the word breast. Now ordinarily the word breast is a feminine word. And yet we sometimes use it in relationship to a man. I think that's correct, if I know the English language at all. So I don't really think that bosom is necessarily a feminine word.

Abraham, incidentally, in this context, is a figure of God Himself. Now why do I say that? Remember what Romans 4 says? That Abraham is called the "father of all believers." Now who is our Father? Well, God is our Father. And if Abraham is called the "father of all believers," then we know that Abraham is a figure of God Himself.

And so Lazarus was brought into the very most intimate relationship with God Himself, typified in this parable that Jesus is offering in Luke 16 by Abraham. Well, I hope this helps a tiny bit.

The Mystery of God's Personality (262B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Brother Camping. In the Book of Genesis, God said, "Let us make man in our image." And then in the New Testament, Jesus was always saying, "I must be about My Father's business." And in the 17th Chapter of John Jesus was praying to His Father in Heaven, and He said something to the effect of, "Glorify Me now, Father, like You did before the world was." And also Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." And He also told Mary, when He was raised from the tomb, "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to the Father."

My question is this. It seems to me that this all indicates that Jesus and God are two separate beings. I don't understand. I don't even know how to ask the question. But it seems to me that when you get to Heaven, there'll be God and there'll be Jesus, because Jesus said He was going to sit at the right hand of God. He's our Mediator so why would there have to be a mediator between He and Himself? I just don't understand it. I wonder if maybe you could shed a little light on that.

HC: The question is raised, and it's a question that has troubled many many people: How can we understand the personality of God? On the one hand we have all of these passages that seem to clearly indicate that Jesus is one person, and that God the Father is an entirely different person. And this is also reinforced by such passages as Genesis 1, which uses the plural, "Let us make man after our image," implying again at least a dual and probably a triple personality, because when we introduce the Holy Spirit into this discussion, then we see a third person of the Trinity.

And yet, on the other hand, we have these passages that speak so emphatically of the truth that there is one God. How can we possibly understand this?

Actually, we cannot understand it. As we look at this creation around us, how much do you know about this creation? How much do you really know? Scientists, for example, try to understand light. Now they can do things with light. They can make it accomplish certain purposes. And yet they don't know what light is. And yet light is one of the most common things all around us. It behaves with a wave motion. It behaves like particles of energy. And they can't

reconcile these together. They don't really know what light is.

Scientists look out into the universe with their powerful radio-telescopes, and seemingly they can find no end to the universe. On the other hand, they use their electronic microscopes, and whatever other tools they may have, trying to find the smallest particle of energy, the smallest particle of matter. And again, they have never been able to find that smallest particle. There's always a smaller part, it seems. Wherever they look, they cannot understand this creation altogether.

Even when they look at the phenomenon of life, the phenomenon of growth, or whatever, they must do lots of speculation. They don't really understand.

Now when we realize that Eternal God is the Creator of this universe, therefore He must be infinitely greater than the universe He created. That's very obvious, isn't it? If you make a chair, as an intelligent being, or make an apple pie, or whatever you're going to make, you exercise your mind to do this. Now certainly you are far, far greater than that apple pie. That apple pie doesn't begin to approximate the marvelous mind that God has given you, and which you used in order to bring those ingredients together to make that apple pie, or to plant that garden, or whatever else that we do. The one who is taking the action is much much greater than that which has been made.

And so it is with creation. God, with His divine, infinite mind, has created this universe. And therefore He must be infinitely greater than the universe.

Now with this in mind, we begin to realize that if, in our finite minds, we understand so little of this universe, of this creation, we really understand so little of it, how could we ever pretend or expect to understand God Himself?

Now the principle in reading the Bible, that God has laid down, is that we read by faith. We live by faith, not by sight. We don't live by our understanding. We live by faith. Now that's not an uncommon principle. Actually, in all of our lives we live by faith.

When you sit down in that chair over there, you without realizing it are living by faith. You are trusting that that chair will support you, and you're not going to fall to the ground. When you walk into a building you have never been in before, what a tremendous faith you are exercising! How do you know that that roof isn't going to cave in? How do you know that the builder who build that building was careful that it would be strong enough? How do you know that the contractor put all of the seal into the foundations that he should have, and so on?

Well, we trust that all of these things happened. And so we confidently walk into that building, even though we have never been in before. And there isn't the slightest suggestion in our mind that maybe the roof is going to cave in on us. We live by faith.

Well, this is the way God wants us to live in relationship to the Bible. We live by faith. Now the fact is that when we are reading the Bible, we are in the presence of Eternal God. The Bible is a revelation right from the pen of God. God is the Author of the Bible. Yes, He spoke by human beings. But they were qualified, they were instruments of the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit, as they wrote. And so obviously there are going to be all kinds of things in the Bible we cannot understand.

And this is going to be particularly true when it speaks of God Himself. Now one thing we know about God is that He is from everlasting to everlasting. The Bible says so. But what is that? Can our minds understand eternity? Not really, because we are created to understand

time. We can understand seconds and minutes and days and years. In order to get hold of something, we try to relate anything we're touching to time. And the moment the Bible begins to talk about a God who is from everlasting to everlasting, this is beyond the ability of our minds to really get hold of. God did not create our minds with an ability to altogether understand it. So we accept that statement by faith, without understanding it.

Likewise we are creatures of space. When we think in terms of something, right away we try to visualize it. We think in terms of length and width and height. But when we talk about God, we can't talk about space, because God is everywhere present. And God is a Spirit, so He cannot even be seen. And so immediately we're left out in the cold. Our minds can't fathom that. We were not designed to be able to understand these concepts. But we read about it in the Bible. And therefore we use these words of the Bible and say, they are true. They are absolutely trustworthy. God has said so. By faith, by faith we know it to be so, even though we haven't the slightest understanding of what it really is.

Now the same thing is true when God is describing Himself. On the one hand, constantly and consistently in the Bible He speaks of Himself as three separate persons. The Bible is very clear in this language. And yet He comes through again and again with the fact that there is one God. We can't reconcile these two statements at all. Our minds are not able to grapple with this, to take hold of this. And so we simply stand aside and say, "Oh God, You have said so. We believe you with all our hearts. We have faith that this is really so. But we don't understand. And we are not going to try to understand it because we realize that we are the creation, and You are the Creator."

And so there are some things in the Bible that after we've tried to put every verse to bear on it, we have to say, we don't understand, but we accept it because the Bible says so. And this is particularly true of the person of God Himself.

Actually, when we think about salvation, do you understand salvation? Oh yes, we can understand something about the justice of God, which is required to be satisfied, and Christ enduring the wrath of God for our sins. We can understand a little bit about the concept of love. We can figure out some words to describe grace, by saying that that's unmerited, undeserved favor. We can get somewhat of an inkling of the nature of salvation. But really now, can we really comprehend this salvation, that Eternal God, who is perfect and holy and blameless in every way, and who created mankind good and holy and after the image of God, and mankind of his own volition rebelled against God and has gone deep into sin and is in his every thought antagonistic to God, that God would leave Heaven and become man, and take upon Himself our sins, and endure all of the humiliations He endured, and all of the reviling, and the wrath of God Himself on our behalf? Can we really understand that kind of love? Of course we can't.

We can say we have some understanding, but really, really, it's an incomprehensible love. It's beyond our minds to really take hold of. We really say by faith, "We know it happened because the Bible says so." Why God would take this kind of a grievous path to glorify Himself, that's beyond our ability. We simply say, "We believe it because the Bible says so."

And this is the nature of God. He is infinite. He is far, far, far beyond the ability of our minds to get hold of. We get one little picture of this in the Book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 55 God is explaining there that no matter how we have sinned, if we will repent and return to the Lord,

in verse 7, He will have mercy on that person, and He will abundantly pardon. That's again talking about salvation.

And then God explains how incomprehensibly great this idea is, incomprehensible in the sense that our minds can't really take hold of it. He says in verse 8 of Isaiah 55 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord." And now He gives an equation, or a comparison: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Now how high are the heavens above the earth? Well, if we think of our atmosphere extending up a hundred miles or so, that's still part of the earth, we could think. But how far do the heavens extend? Well, man, with his instruments, peers out into space, and it seems to go out for billions upon billions of light-years out into space, hundreds of millions of miles. It just seems like it's infinitely greater than the distance of our earth.

And so is the proportion of God's mind, God's love, God's grace, God's justice, God's wrath, God's being, to our finite minds. Any time that you begin to feel proud of who you are, proud of your accomplishments, well put these accomplishments and all in the crucible of who God is. And then we'll come back to a proper understanding of ourselves, that really, after all, we're not much, are we?

CHAPTER 10 – HEAVEN AND HELL

GENERAL

Where, Exactly, are Heaven and Hell? (191C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I was wondering. I was talking to some fellows today, and they said they believed in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, but they did not believe in the Bible. And they want to know if there's a physical Heaven on earth, and where the physical hell is. And I couldn't explain to them exactly where the physical hell was. Could you give me some Scripture on this please.

HC: Let me see if I can help you. First of all, let me make an observation. You indicate that someone says that they believe in Christ but they do not believe in the Bible. Well, then they don't really believe in Christ, that is, not insofar as saving faith is concerned, because the Bible indicates that if we say we know Him and do not obey His commandments, we are a liar and the truth is not in us.

Now the commandments of God are the Bible. And so if we don't believe the Bible, then we're not obeying the commandments. And this is evidence that we have not become born again. But that was not the thrust of your question.

The thrust of your question is, Where is Heaven and where is hell? Now the Bible speaks of hell as a present reality, in the sense that Satan and all the wicked are committed to hell. Christ endured hell for us, however, just by being in the garden of Gethsemane, and standing before Pilate and hanging on the cross. He didn't actually go to a place called hell, because the essence of hell is the wrath of God, to be under the wrath of God for our sins. And so in that sense all of the unsaved of the world are children of hell. They are identified with hell.

But as a place probably it doesn't exist at this moment, when we think very literally about this. Satan and all of his hosts, all of his evil spirits, his fallen angels, they are busy in this earth, as they seek to deceive mankind. They are on this earth. They are the evil

spirits. This is the reason that we have occult activity, both in the secular world and in the church, because Satan and the fallen angels, the evil spirits, are busy.

Now the unsaved who have died, throughout time, have not gone to hell, because they have not been judged as yet. The Bible teaches that judgment is on the Last Day, at which time they will be resurrected to stand and give an account of all of their sins.

The unsaved, in their body, when they die, whether we're talking about Cain, 13,000 years ago, or whether we're talking about Pharaoh, or somebody who died last year (it's exactly the same truth), went into the grave to return to dust, and their soul went into the place of silence, which is also called Hades. It is not a place of torment, however. It's simply a place to await the Judgment Day.

And we read in Revelation 20, when Judgment Day comes, that Death and Hades will be cast into the lake of fire, that is, cast into hell. This place called Hades will no longer serve any useful purpose.

Now in the case of the saved people, and this is true of saved people in the Old Testament (it's true of Abel or Abraham or Isaac or Jacob or David), and it's true of people who live today who die, when they die, in their body they go into the grave and return to the dust. But in their soul they go to live and reign with Christ in Heaven. Jesus said, "I am not the God of the dead. I am the God of the living."

And so Christ didn't go down to some lower hell, or lower heaven, or something, and bring people forth. He went to the cross, in order to lead captivity captive. He went down to the lower parts of the earth. And the lower parts of the earth is a figure of speech to speak about the suffering of hell that He endured, in order to rescue us from bondage to Satan. And He claimed us and brought us forth from bondage to Satan into eternal life.

And so when we die, we go to live and reign with Him in Heaven. And Abraham was in Heaven before Christ went to earth to the cross.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much. I sure appreciate it.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

HEAVEN

Tears in Heaven? (147E)

CALLER: When the Bible says that there'll be no tears in Heaven, does that mean that there will be no tears of joy?

HC: A question is raised concerning Heaven. The Bible does say that there will be no tears in Heaven. That is, God will wipe away all our tears. Does the Bible speak about tears of joy? No I'm not at all aware of anything in the Bible that speaks about tears of joy.

The fact is, I don't think the Bible ever uses the idea of tears of joy. I think that wherever we find tears in the Bible, insofar as I can recall right now, it's always in the context of sorrow. We go forth weeping as we bring the Gospel. Why are we weeping? Because we are in sorrow, as we look at the terrible fact that our fellow humans are under the wrath of God because of their sins. They are heading for hell, because the wages of sin is death. God's wrath abides on them. And as we bring the Gospel, for everyone who listens and who is encouraged by the Gospel, there are ninety or ninety-five or some huge number who could care less about the Gospel. They continue in their unbelief, in their antagonism against God. And these are fellow humans. These are loved ones. These are neighbors. These are friends. These are those whom we love. And yet they persist in their sins. They persist on their downward path toward hell.

And so, as we bring the Gospel, we bring it weeping. And by the same token, when Jesus was on earth He was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Why was He a man of sorrows? Because He understood the awfulness of the wrath of God. He knew that God meant exactly what He said, that His judgment would come upon this world. And this is why He wept over Jerusalem. He knew something of the terrible of coming under the wrath of God.

Anyone at all just has to read the Old Testament, and read how God's judgment came again and again and again and again, against the nations, to know that's an awful thing to come into the hands of an angry God.

Now in Heaven, if there are any tears, it will be because we are taking part in the judging process. And maybe because of that there may be some tears. I don't know. But we have the complete assurance, in Revelation 21, that He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Revelation 21:4: "He will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and death shall be no more."

Well, thank you for that question.

The "Kingdom of God" and the "Kingdom of Heaven" (162E)

CALLER: I have some friends (and I can't see where they find this in the Bible) who seem to think there's a difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. I find no Scripture in the Bible that supports this. I thought you might have heard something on that.

HC: The question is raised concerning the "Kingdom of God" versus the "Kingdom of Heaven." And I've read books on this, where the authors will make a great deal of the fact that the Kingdom of God is a different kingdom, than the Kingdom of Heaven. Actually, if we research the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, we'll find that in one gospel it will speak of a certain event and speak of it as the Kingdom of God. Then in another gospel it will speak of this same event and it will speak of it as the Kingdom of Heaven. Actually where does God dwell? God dwells in Heaven, doesn't He? If it's the Kingdom of God, it is the Kingdom of Heaven. There is no distinction whatsoever. Anyone who wants to make a distinction, I'm afraid, is really pulling and pushing on the verses, trying to prove something or other.

Actually there are two kingdoms essentially that the Bible has in view. On the one hand there is the dominion of darkness, and that is made up of all the peoples of this earth, with their political kingdoms and with whatever kind of rule they may have. That is the dominion of darkness. All the unsaved belong to it. And we actually are citizens also of these political kingdoms, but we are not citizens of the dominion of darkness. We live here, but we are strangers. We are pilgrims here, the Bible says, insofar as political rule is concerned.

Now on the other hand, there is the nation that Christ established, and that nation is the nation of believers, or the kingdom of believers. Jesus said, when He came, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Why did He say that? Because He is the King, and when the King is there, the Kingdom is there also. You can't have a king without a kingdom, nor a kingdom without a king. And Jesus came as the King. And we enter that kingdom by being born of water and the Spirit, as we read in John 3:5. We cannot see the kingdom unless we are born again, we read in John 3:3.

In Colossians 1:13 we read that "He has transferred us from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son." That's the same kingdom, the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven. In all these parables Jesus has said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like" so and so, and so and so. Or, the

"Kingdom of God is like" so and so. It is the heavenly kingdom that we enter into when we are saved. It is an eternal kingdom because it begins now in our own life, when we become born again, when we have actually received eternal life, and we enter that kingdom and remain there forever. It goes beyond this sin cursed earth. Presently it's in our lives. When we die and go to Heaven, we continue in the Kingdom of Heaven in Heaven. And after Christ is finished with this earth as it now exists, then it will continue eternally in the New Heavens and the New Earth.

This is the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God. If you have become born again, you are a citizen of that kingdom. The Bible says in Revelation 1:8 that we are a "kingdom of priests." In I Peter 2:9 it says that we are a "royal priesthood, a holy nation." We are the one nation in the world that is unique. We are sprinkled all through the political nations, but we are a nation that's unique because we are an eternal nation, or an eternal kingdom.

What Is Heaven Like? (188A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I wanted to talk about a thirteen year-old child asking, "What is Heaven like?"

HC: The question is raised, "What is Heaven like?" The Bible gives us word pictures of Heaven. Actually, it's talking about the New Heaven and the New Earth, which is Heaven after we have received our resurrected bodies. But the principle is the same, because we are in the presence of Christ. And if you read Revelation 21, we read there in verse 3: "Behold the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. And God Himself will be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning or crying or pain anymore. For the former things have passed away."

And then again it says in verse 22 of Revelation 21: "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God, the almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it."

CALLER: I teach Sunday School, and that's why I'm asking. It's sometimes kind of hard to get their attention. And they're more interested in the earthly material things. So it's kind of hard. One would ask if there are bowling alleys, or if there is an age that you can choose to be. Is there somewhere you can read about these things in the Bible? Doesn't it say somewhere that we'll never grow old? Would you explain that to me?

HC: Actually, our problem is that we, on this side of the grave, think in terms of bowling alleys and tennis rackets and roller skates and buildings and dresses, and chocolate pudding and apple pie. All of these things are what our minds think of as being real, tangible, wonderful to hold onto. But in Heaven our focal point is not on these things. The Bible says God is Spirit, "and they who worship Him worship Him in spirit and in truth." In Heaven our focal point is on His Eternal Majesty, the Lord Jesus Christ. We're beyond time, and we're outside of all of these physical things. We're not going to be thinking of physical food and physical pleasure and all of this. It's something that is infinitely more glorious and wonderful than anything that this earth can provide.

We can only read the Biblical language and know that it's just a word picture. The Bible can't really give us the truth about Heaven, because our minds are not conditioned to know about Heaven. It's too glorious for us. For example, when Christ comes again, He comes from

Heaven. And when He comes again, He's going to take us to Himself, to be with Him forever.

And notice the language of Matthew 24. This will get a youngster's mind really to open up to this. Matthew 24:27: "For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." In other words, His presence will be felt all over the world. Now a youngster will say, "Well, how can that be, if the earth is a globe, if the earth is a sphere? How can everyone see Him?" Because it says in verse 30, "Then will appear the Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven. And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn. And they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and with great glory."

Well, this is because God is the Creator of the laws of the way the light travels, and so on. The fact is, when He comes everyone will see Him. He is all glorious, and everyone on the whole earth, whether you're on the other side or this side, will see him, so glorious it's going to be. And He's coming as King of Kings and Lord of lords. It will be a majestic sight, but only for the born again believers. For the unsaved it will be a terrible coming, because it will be the time of God's wrath, of course, and that's another subject.

CALLER: Well, I guess my students are really just at that age.

HC: Yes. Let me give you one other figure to maybe help you. In I Corinthians 15 it speaks about the kind of bodies that are raised from the grave. Now you can tell your youngsters, "If one of you would die, your body that you have now will be put in the grave. On the Last Day, if you belong to Christ, you're going to receive your resurrected body. What kind of a body will it be? Will it be like your present body? Maybe you died of disease. Maybe you had certain disfigurements in your body. Is that the kind of a body it will be?"

The Bible says it's like when you put a grain of wheat into the ground. It's just a little dry pebble that you put into the ground. It's a grain of wheat. And it dies. But then what happens after a little while? A plant comes forth. And that plant is beautiful. It's green and alive, and it looks nothing at all like that pebble that was put into the ground. It's just far more wonderful.

Well, that's what it's going to be with our resurrected bodies. Our resurrected bodies will be spiritual bodies, whatever that means. The Bible doesn't tell us. It just uses the phrase "spiritual bodies." And our resurrected bodies will be far, far, far more glorious than the bodies that we now have. And time will be no more. So we don't think in terms of a person being 60 years old, or 30 years old, or 20 years old. We'll simply be with Christ, to live and reign with Him forever.

Now we can only use the language of the Bible. We can't go beyond that. I hope this helps a tiny bit.

CALLER: Thank you.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

What is the Relationship Between the Church and Heaven? (192D)

CALLER: Do you think that the church and the Kingdom of Heaven are synonymous terms? Or what is the relationship between the church and the Kingdom of Heaven? I do believe in an eternal Heaven, but in these last times is the church a type of a manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven, to be used as a witness to those who don't understand the Kingdom of Heaven?

HC: A question was raised, which is a very contemporary question. What is the relationship in the Bible of the church to the Kingdom of Heaven? First of all, what is the church?

Well, the Bible indicates that the church is the body of believers. When did it really come into existence? Well, it came into existence from the very beginning of time. People are surprised, you know, when you call the Old Testament believers a church. But the Bible itself does this.

We read, for example, in Acts 7, where the deacon Stephen, a man well learned in the Scriptures, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says, in verse 38: "This is he who was in the congregation" [or in the church; it is the same word *ekklesia* that is found throughout the New Testament, that is translated church], "This is he who was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with Our Father." You see, the Old Testament congregation was a church. And throughout the Old Testament you find the word congregation or assembly. It was the body of believers, which consisted primarily of Israelites, but it was augmented by the proselytes, like Rahab the Harlot, or Ruth the Moabitess. It was the church.

In the New Testament the church was vastly increased, so that it included primarily people from every nation in the world, with Israelites, blood descendants of Abraham, having a much smaller part, percentage-wise. But it's still the same church. It's headed up by Christ. He is the one who said, "I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The church was very small in the Old Testament, but it was Christ's intention to build it, so that it would become a great and glorious body, consisting of believers from every nation.

Now what's the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of Christ? Actually, the Kingdom that we enter into when we are saved is the Kingdom of Christ. He is our King. He is our Head. That's why when Jesus came, He said, and John the Baptist also said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The King had arrived. And in order for the Kingdom of God to be effectuated, it was necessary for Christ to go to the cross.

There are those who say, "You know, the Jews rejected Christ as their King. And therefore God put into the works an alternative plan where He has the church age." Well, I often think, supposing that the Israelites had accepted Jesus as King. Where would they ever have gotten eternal life? Where would we receive eternal life? If they had accepted Christ as King, then there would have been no cross. And without a cross, there could not have been salvation.

The fact is, the Jews did want to accept Him as a political King. They were all rejoicing when He went into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, ready to accept Him as a political King. They misunderstood altogether, even as many people misunderstand today, that the Kingdom of God is not a political Kingdom. It is a spiritual Kingdom.

We read in Colossians 1:13: "We have been transferred from the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son." In John 3:3 it says, "We shall not see the Kingdom unless we are born again," and we "cannot enter that Kingdom unless we are born of water and the Spirit."

So the fact is, the church and the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of God, are one and the same, one and the same. The church has to do with the body of believers. The Kingdom of God has to do with the body of believers. The church is headed up by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God is headed up by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the fact that Christ only went to the cross in AD 33 does not mean that He wasn't the head of the Kingdom in the Old Testament. Christ is the Great "I AM," and the impact and the efficacy of

the cross reached all the way back to Adam and Eve, even as it reaches all the way forward to us. There is only one Kingdom.

It's interesting, you know, that Israel was a figure of the church in a literal sense, and it was also called a kingdom. Jesus said in Matthew 8, "The sons of the kingdom will be cast out." Because we are a member of the church does not mean we are saved. We can be cast out, if we're not born again.

If we are a member of the church, corporately we're a member of the Kingdom of God. But that doesn't mean that we have eternal life, that we are personally related to the Kingdom of God, in the eternal sense. Only when we've been born again will we live forever in the Kingdom of God.

But if we are a member of the congregation, if we are a child of believing parents, then corporately we have entered the Kingdom. Corporately we have entered the church. But only when we personally have become saved do we have eternal life and will we remain forever in the church, or in the Kingdom of God.

Now once we catch this, we don't have to fuss with trying to find nuances and slight differences between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Christ. They're all one Kingdom, because Christ is God, and Heaven is only where God is. It is the citizenship that we receive, as Philippians 3 puts it: "Our commonwealth is in Heaven." That is the Kingdom that we belong to when we have become saved. And we belong to it eternally.

Well, thank you for that question.

Is Heaven a Physical Place? (206A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: The Bible describes Heaven as a place where there is a river and there is a tree that gives a different kind of fruit every month, and Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also." Isn't this a physical place?

HC: The question is raised, what is the nature of Heaven? Is it a physical place?

Well, let me assure you, it is a physical place. It is a place where people go to when they have died, if they have placed their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the place where the Lord Jesus Christ is, and where the angels come from.

But if we're going to speak about material things, we've got another problem. It can be a literal place, but it's not necessarily something that is connected with material. When we think of material, we're thinking of that which we can take hold of, that which we can see, that which we can feel. We're thinking of rocks and iron and wood and trees, and all of these things. This is what we have in mind.

Actually, the Bible says, "God is Spirit and they who worship Him worship Him in spirit and truth." The inhabitants of Heaven are either angels, who are spirit beings, or they are people who are there in their souls. Or if they are there in a body, as Enoch is or Elijah or Moses, then it's in their spiritual body, their resurrected spiritual body, whatever that is. The Bible simply speaks of it as a spiritual body, and I don't really know what it is.

But I think the important thing we have to realize is that it is not a material kind of a place such as we have on this earth. It's outside of our dimension of thinking. Our minds can't really take hold of it.

Now let's go one step further and look at the New Heaven and the New Earth. Our caller made reference to the Tree of Life, and water flowing, and so on. And we do have language in the Bible of the New

Heaven and the New Earth. Now again we have to be very careful. We're talking of course about a place. God very clearly indicates that this universe will be burned by fire, and it will be recreated New Heavens and a New Earth, where righteousness dwells. That is in the Bible, and there are no verses that modify this statement in any way.

Now what this New Heaven and New Earth really consists of, that's another question. We can't really know. We know, for example, that the Tree of Life is a figure of Christ Himself. He is the Tree of Life. We eat of Him in order that we might live eternally. The water that flows from the Tree of Life is the water of the Gospel. It is the Word of God. It's not necessarily material water of some kind. Now I'm not saying that the New Heaven and the New Earth won't have water. Maybe it will. I don't know. The Bible is silent about that.

The caller made reference to the Gospel of John, where Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you. In My Father's house are many mansions." Now let's be a little careful as to how we understand this. Jesus is speaking a year or two before He went to the cross. And He is telling His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." Well, where is the place that we eventually are going? The Bible says that we're going to Heaven, and Heaven is the abode of God. We will dwell forever in Him, in His presence.

Now how are we going to get into Heaven? Well, we have to have a place prepared for us. We can't just go into Heaven. It has to be prepared for us. Now did Jesus go into Heaven and build some houses there? That's what a lot of people have the idea of, of course, that He's up in Heaven and He's building mansions. He's building rooms, He's building a city. And then they carry it one step further and they say that Revelation 21 teaches that after that city has been built, it's going to come down out of Heaven and it's going to be 1,500 miles by 1,500 miles by 1,500 miles. And speculation is made that it's going to have so many floors, and it's going to have so much area, and it's going to have so much room for all the believers in this . . . totally a materialistic, earth-bound idea of this whole thing.

But let's think about it. When Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you," where did He go? He went to the cross. That's where He went to prepare a place for us. Unless He died for our sins, unless He paid God's penalty for our sins, we couldn't go to Heaven. And once our sins had been paid for, then we can go to Heaven.

Now where we go into Heaven? Do we go into a building of some kind? No. Our abode is in God Himself. In Psalm 90:1 we read, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Christ Himself is the temple in which we dwell. We are in Christ. We are not going to some materialistic place that is related to this earth.

I might also say (and maybe we talked about this another time) that when it speaks about the New Heaven and the New Earth it says that there's no sun there, because Christ is the Sun. It's an entirely different kind of universe. I don't know what it is. I don't think any man can describe it. I think it's far beyond our human abilities to describe. We still are earth-bound. We still think in terms of rocks and soil and all the things that we see around us.

Rewards in Heaven for Believers? (224A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Somebody was asking you about the rewards of believers. And I want you to please look at six references in connection with this, and explain them if you can. Revelation 22: 12, 1

Corinthians 3:11-15, and I Corinthians 4:4, and also, I Corinthians 9:25.

HC: Now what is your question about these verses?

CALLER: The rewards of believers. And 2 Timothy 4:8, and I Peter 5:4-10.

HC: All right. Fine.

CALLER: Thank you very much. Good night.

HC: Now the question that has been raised is a very important question, and a very provocative question. It's a question that troubles many people very greatly. And I'll explain why in just a moment.

The question that's raised is, don't we receive certain rewards based upon our conduct on this earth? And our caller has offered a number of verses to suggest this. And I'll just look at a few of these with you.

In Revelation 22:12 we read, "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing My recompense, to repay everyone for what he has done." Now that verse seems to be very plain. What's the argument? When Christ comes, He's going to pay us for what we have done.

Now let's look at I Corinthians 9:25, where Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is saying, "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable." In other words, there is a crown that we're going to receive because of our activity. II Timothy 4:8: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will award me on that day. And not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing." Let's look maybe at one or two more. I Peter 5:4: "And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will obtain the unfading crown of glory."

Now we might read some of these verses (and there are other verses also, like I Corinthians 3, and I'll look at that in a little more detail in a moment), and we might get the impression that God has certain rewards or certain pay for us. The word rewards in the Bible normally means pay. And these rewards or this pay would be for the things that we have done after we have been saved. If we have lived good lives, then we will receive rewards for that conduct. And if you isolate these verses from the rest of the Bible, you can very readily arrive at that kind of conclusion.

Now let me warn you, right at the outset, that the Bible was written so that what appears to be is very frequently not what is. That is, God has written the Bible to foster unbelief. I know that sounds pretty awful, but this is exactly the way God wrote the Bible. We read in the Gospel of Mark that Christ spoke in parables, in order that "seeing, they would not see, and hearing, they would not hear." God is emphasizing that the Bible is written therefore so that what appears to be is not what is.

Now let me give you an analogy. I can prove to you from the Bible, without any shadow of doubt, that we are saved by our good works. And you'll notice the similarity to the question at hand. I can prove to you that we are saved by our good works. You read Matthew 25, beginning with verse 31, where you have the account of a judgment scene. The sheep are on the right hand, the goats are on the left. And the sheep are invited to come into the Kingdom of God, and the goats go into eternal perdition. On what basis, in Matthew 25, beginning in verse 31, are the sheep invited into the Kingdom of God?

They're invited in because they have fed the poor, the hungry. They have clothed the naked. They have visited the sick. They have given water to the thirsty. And therefore, because they have done these good things, they are able to go into the Kingdom of Heaven. There's no question at all that God is teaching, in this passage, that we are saved by our good

works. If we will do certain good things, then we are entitled to go into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now the same is true in Romans 2. In verse 6 we read, "For He will render to every man according to his works. To those who by patience and well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, He will give eternal life. But for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, or obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek." Now this again teaches, very plainly, that if I do certain good things, and I obey the truth, then there is going to be immortality for me. I'm going to be saved by my good works.

The only problem, however, is that that conclusion is diametrically opposed to what God teaches about salvation. The Bible over and over again emphasizes the truth of Ephesians 2 that we are saved by grace, not by works, lest any man should boast. It is what Christ has done for us. And there's nothing that we can do to add to the work that Christ has done. And therefore, when we read these passages, like Matthew 25 or Romans 2, we read them this way, that those who are saved will do good works. And the good works that follow are the evidence that they have been saved, they will be given eternal life. They have been given eternal life. They will live eternally with the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, under no circumstance is eternal life an effect or a result of good works. Rather it is a result of the fact that we have been saved, even as our good works are a result of our being saved.

Now I use this analogy because it is very pointed in this matter of rewards. You read some of these verses about receiving a crown and receiving a reward, and so on. And you could very readily develop a doctrine (and many have) that we will work in this life after we have been saved. God will take note of these things, and there will be pay for us in Heaven. There will be rewards for us in Heaven.

But that is foreign to the Bible. That is foreign to the very nature of salvation. Salvation is a gift of God. It is by grace, not of works. And the moment that we try to add anything at all of a works idea to our salvation, we are thereby coming under the curse of the law.

Now perhaps you've heard me speak of this before, but let me offer this again. In the Old Testament God has given us the account of a woman who picked up sticks on the Sabbath Day. The Old Testament Sabbath Day was a day on which the Israelite was to rest. He was not to make a fire. He was not to do any work at all. So when this woman picked up sticks, she was, in a very mild way, violating the Sabbath Day. It wasn't a grievous thing. She wasn't going to her job, or anything. She was just picking up a few sticks.

But as a result of this violation, Moses commanded that this woman be stoned to death. Now that's an astounding punishment for a very minor kind of a sin. Why was she stoned to death? Now the reason for this is that in the Old Testament, the Sabbath Day was a figure of salvation, or the rest that we enter into when we are saved. Even as the Jews were not to work on the Sabbath day at all, but were to rest, so we who have been saved are saved not because of our works, but because we're resting altogether in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the woman who picked up sticks violated that rest in a very minor way. But she is like someone who adds a little tiny bit of this own work to the salvation that God has provided. And by virtue of the fact that this woman was stoned, it indicates that when I have added a little work to the salvation Christ has provided by grace, I too am still subject to hell. I am subject to God's wrath even as this

woman was subject to God's wrath. That's how important this question is.

Now the Bible teaches, for example, in Genesis 15:1, that God is our reward. If you want to turn to Genesis 15, God is talking to Abraham there. And He is saying to him, "I am your exceedingly great reward." In Luke 18, Peter raises a question. And the implication in the context there is, "Isn't there something that we're to be credited with?" Because he said to Jesus in verse 28: "Lo, we have left our homes and followed you." And He said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come, eternal life."

Now the "manifold more in this time" is all that is connected with salvation. We become a child of God. We have eternal life already. We have the promise of God. "I will leave you nor forsake you." We have the promise that all things will work out together for good for those who love Him. We have the promise that we can go to Him without ceasing, and can come boldly to the throne of grace. We've got everything going for us, because we have turned our life to Christ.

And we will receive the completion of our eternal life. That is, our bodies will also become eternal, when we enter into the New Heaven and the New Earth. Or again, in Colossians 3:24 we are told to work diligently: "Work heartily, as serving the Lord, not man. And we will receive as our reward the inheritance." The inheritance is that which is the completion of our salvation.

Now in Romans 4:4 God speaks to this question in a slightly different way. In verse 3 He says, "Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Now to one who works, his reward (and the word reward here is the same as pay) is not reckoned as grace (or as a gift), but as his due." In other words, the idea of working to obtain wages or a reward is foreign to the idea of grace.

And it goes on: "And to one who does not work, but trusts Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. So also David pronounces a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works."

And so the moment that we start thinking about working, in order to merit something from God, we are violating the idea of grace. That's an impossibility. That is another gospel. That's not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We work because we love God. Those who love God keep His commandments. And this is what good works are, to keep His commandments. We don't do it to merit something, to get a higher position in Heaven, or to get a crown of some kind, or to be a ruler over many cities, or whatever. We don't obey God for these reasons.

The moment we do that, then we are substituting a works gospel for the gospel of grace. Then we have a Gospel that is not the gospel of the Bible. Now God warned the church of Galatia of this very fact. They began with grace, with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the Judaizers came along, and insisted that they had to be circumcised. Now that was a work. That was going back to some of the laws that were commanded in the Old Testament which had been set aside by God. And God says, "Look, if you're going to start working, then you're under the curse of God."

And so we don't work for pay. We don't work for rewards. The word reward in the Bible is the reward of grace. It is part of the salvation package. And we can see why this is so. The very work that we do is a gift of God. Faith is a gift of God, but so are our works a gift of God.

Notice what Ephesians 2 teaches, around verses 9 and 10. In verse 8 we read (and we're all familiar with this), "For by grace you have been saved, through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." You see, the whole package belongs to God. To Him goes all the glory.

Now in I Corinthians 3, which was referred to by our caller, God is not teaching rewards there, either. He is saying, in verse 14, "If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward." Well, now, remember. Watch out now. The reward, the pay, is not a result of work, even though this sounds like it. That can't be. That's like the idea of good works being sufficient to get us saved.

The reason a man has built on the foundation something that survives is that he is born again, because he has the true Gospel. He has been witnessing, and therefore there is eternal value in what he has been doing. The reward that he receives is not related, in the first instance, to the fact that he has been doing good things. It's not a result of this. But it also is a gift of God. He will receive a reward because he has been saved. He will be building on the foundation that survives, because he has been saved. And so we want to be very clear about this. Rewards are not pay for something that we have done. Rewards are part of the gift of salvation. It's part of the Gospel of grace which God has so freely bestowed upon us.

Now what is the problem? Why is it that we have so much difficulty with the matter of rewards? And some really struggle with this. Actually, there are three areas particularly in view today, where men and women have special difficulty. One is the matter of predestination, the second is the matter of eternal security, and the third is the matter of rewards.

Now if we look at these for a moment, we'll see that they all have one thing in common. There is one thing in common in all three of these areas. And that is that there is a struggle to obtain some kind of worthiness or standing before God. Now those who are troubled by predestination, when it gets right down to the basic problem, the problem is this. Predestination, as it's taught in the Bible, gives us the sad truth and yet the absolute truth that we contributed nothing toward our salvation. The faith with which we turn to the Lord Jesus Christ is a gift. In no sense was it a product of our own will.

Those who are struggling with predestination want to believe that somehow I was a little more worthy than my unsaved neighbor, who didn't become saved, because I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, God has got to credit me with a tiny bit of worthiness, because I believed in Him.

Now the same thing is true with those who preach that we can fall from grace. They are saying, effectively, "Yes, Christ went to the cross and saved me. But I have to hang on. I have to do good works in order to guarantee my salvation." So again, it's a claim for God's recognition of my personal worthiness in some sense.

And the same factor is present when we hold the idea that God has certain rewards for us if we will only do good works. We are insisting that somehow there is something worthy about us that God has to give us merit for. Now in all three of these cases, we've added something to the salvation idea which is foreign to the Bible, and which actually shatters the whole salvation picture, because our salvation from A to Z is the work of God. It is the gift of God's grace, and works are to be kept out of it

altogether. Now works must be present. But they are the evidence, they are the fruit, they are the proof of our salvation. They are the evidence that we have become born again, that we have become a new creature. They are the evidence that now we love God. But under no circumstances are those works in any way, in even the slightest way, entitling us to just a tiny bit more insofar as God's salvation is concerned.

I hope that this will help just a little bit.

Understanding Paradise (410A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Brother Camping. In Luke 23:43 Jesus tells one of the men who is to be crucified with Him that "today you will be with Me in Paradise." Knowing that Jesus was to go to Abraham's Bosom, I'm not quite sure about the meaning of Paradise as it concerns the man who is to be crucified with Christ.

HC: Where did you read in the Bible that Jesus was to go to Abraham's Bosom?

CALLER: Obviously I'm wrong there.

HC: I'm not saying you're right or wrong. I'm only asking if you read that in the Bible.

CALLER: Probably not. I probably got it in a discussion group.

HC: You actually are not wrong, but neither are you right. In other words, it has to be explained a little bit.

Let me see if I can help you. There are three places in the Bible where the word Paradise is used, only three. One is in this instance, the other is in II Corinthians 12, where the apostle Paul is speaking of an experience he had where he was caught up into the third heaven, which he calls Paradise. Therefore Paradise is where God is. And in Revelation 2, it speaks about Paradise as the place where the Tree of Life is. And the Tree of Life is a figure of Christ Himself. So we know that Paradise is Heaven.

Now Jesus also said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." In His spirit Christ went into Heaven when He said, "It is finished," when His life ended and His body was put into the grave. He went into Paradise, or He went into Heaven, where the Father is. Now that's precisely where the thief on the cross went also. In his body he went into the grave. In his soul or in his spirit he went into Heaven. And we go into Heaven, if we're believers, upon death.

Now the reason that I said that you were right in your statement concerning Abraham's Bosom is that in the parable of Luke 16 God is talking about the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus, who had nothing going for him on this side of the grave except that he was saved, went into Abraham's Bosom. And Abraham in that context is really a figure of God Himself. Abraham is called the father of all believers. And certainly this is the kind of a statement we would ascribe to God. He is the Father of all believers. Abraham is a figure in that context of God Himself. And to go into Abraham's Bosom means that Lazarus went into the highest felicity. He went into the divine presence of God Himself, where all is joy and wonderful. Abraham's Bosom therefore would have to be equivalent to Paradise. It would have to be equivalent to Heaven itself, where we go when we die.

CALLER: Okay. Then just one other question. There is no actual physical area within the realm of the earth as we know it which would be considered Abraham's Bosom.

HC: None whatsoever.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night. Let's just make a further comment on this.

There are two destinations when we die,

and only two destinations. If we are believers, we go to be with the Lord. We have eternal life. We continue to live and have conscious existence in a soul existence, of course, but nevertheless it is conscious existence. Christ said, "I am not the God of the dead but of the living. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

There is no intermediate state for the believer at some point between here and Heaven. The Old Testament believer when he died went into Heaven. Think of Elijah. He was caught up in a whirlwind into Heaven. If he could go to Heaven, in anticipation of the atonement of the cross, then so could all of the other believers of the Old Testament.

The unbeliever's ultimate destination is hell. But he will not be cast into hell until after Judgment Day, which is on the last day of this earth's existence. Therefore he in his soul goes to a place of silence, which is also called Hades in the Bible, a place of soul sleep, if you will, to await the resurrection of the last day.

There is no other intermediate position of some kind. That just is not taught in the Bible, I'm quite sure.

Could Heaven be in Outer Space? (576A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I've been listening to your program, and I have a question. Do you believe that Heaven could possibly be in space? I mean, could it be in the stars, like eternal stars?

HC: The question is, where is Heaven? Now we look at this universe, that stretches out apparently billions of light years into space, and it boggles our minds. We can't really envision how big the universe is. Is Heaven out there someplace?

Well, we must remember that we think in terms of time and of space, of length, width and breadth. And these are the only dimensions we know. We reckon everything by days and months and years, and we reckon everything by dimensions. So we can say that a star is a billion light years out in space, or whatever our telescopes and other means tell us.

But when we talk about Heaven and God, we are talking about something that is an entirely different phenomenon. It has a different existence altogether. Heaven is not confined to time or space. God is Spirit, for example. And we don't know what a spirit is. You can't see a spirit. You can't describe a spirit. There's no way that we could describe an angel, which is a spiritual being. There is no way we could describe Heaven. God does give us word pictures, but they're only word pictures. They don't really tell us what Heaven is. Our minds are not designed to be able to think of what Heaven is.

So when we attempt to say, "Well, Heaven is someplace out there," or I've heard people say, "Well, Heaven is that space occupied between all the molecules, that the atoms are rattling around, and between all of this there's a lot of vacant space, and this is where Heaven is." And you hear all kinds of theories of this kind. But none of this makes any sense.

Heaven is beyond our ability to imagine or think about. We don't know where Heaven is or what Heaven is, really. All we know is that God gives us the picture that it's "up there." Christ ascended. And that's the only picture God gives us. And we know that this universe, as big as it is, is going to collapse on the last day, it's going to burn with fire, the elements will melt with fervent heat. And for all of its size it will come to an end at the same time. And in so doing it's not going to affect Heaven at all.

CALLER: Doesn't it describe Heaven in the Book of Revelation?

HC: The Book of Revelation, in Revelation 21, describes the New Heaven and the New Earth. In II Peter 3 God indicates that this present universe will be destroyed, and God will recreate it a new universe. But it is a spiritual universe. And I don't know what that is. I say it's a spiritual universe because it will be occupied by spiritual beings. We will have spiritual bodies. Do you know what a spiritual body is? I haven't the slightest idea what a spiritual body is. And this is what the new universe will be.

And so God again gives us some word pictures. He indicates that there's no suffering or sorrow. He indicates there's no sun, that Christ is the Sun. There is no temple; Christ is the Temple. And immediately we begin to sense that then this is something altogether different than anything we know, because we can't envision a place without the sun to shine and give its warmth. And yet God insists that there is no sun. He says the seas are no more. Well, we know on this present earth that the seas are exceedingly important in maintaining a temperate climate, and helping to balance the atmosphere so that it's livable, and all of this. And it serves all kinds of functions. And yet God says the seas are no more. And so again God is describing something that we can't envision at all.

ANGELS

Understanding Guardian Angels (371B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, would you explain guardian angels for believers? Do believers have guardian angels? Does the Bible teach this? Or do we not have guardian angels? And would you please explain why or why not? I've been a little confused on this lately, because I had thought we did have guardian angels, but I heard a preacher recently say that Christians do not have guardian angels. And I would like to know what you think from what the Word says. And I'll take my answer over the radio.

HC: Thank you very much for calling and sharing that.

The question is concerned with guardian angels. What does the Bible teach about them?

In Hebrews 1:14, the last verse, we find a reference as to what angels are. There we read, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" God is teaching therefore that angels have a very distinct role in relationship to those who are saved. They minister to the needs of those who are being saved.

This verse is not particularly saying that they are guardian angels. But nevertheless this verse is teaching that they are particularly concerned about those who are being saved.

In Psalm 91 we have additional information. In Psalm 91, we read in verse 9, "Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation [this is a statement referring to those who have become saved], there shall no evil befall thee. Neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder. The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because He has set His love upon me, therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high because He hath known My Name."

Now you see, this statement does indicate that God sends His angels to care for us, to guard us, so that we will

not become enslaved to Satan, so that Satan cannot have anything on us. The reference to the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon, these are synonyms for Satan himself, and his evil spirits. He cannot assault us. He cannot have us.

Now sometimes it is God's providential plan that we might be persecuted. And Christ did say, "Do not fear him who can destroy the body," because Satan is permitted by God, perhaps, to take our lives in death through persecution. But that is no victory for Satan at all. That is simply the moment when we leave our bodies to go to be with Christ in Heaven.

Actually, I think the implication here is not so much physical, although God also cares for us physically, and He gives His angels charge over us. I am sure there are many times in the life of people, and certainly in the life of believers, when they could have died, or they could have gotten into an accident, or whatever. And it almost seems miraculous that we did not get into it. And it could be that the angels were active in setting aside what could have been a disaster.

But I think the larger focal point is one of spiritual safety. Do you remember in Revelation 12 we read about the dragon and his angels, that they fought with Michael and his angels. And the dragon was cast out of Heaven. The angels stand as God's servants, between the believer and Satan. They stand between the believer and the evil spirits, to keep the evil spirits, to keep Satan away. Satan has nothing on the believers anymore. We are citizens of God's Kingdom. Satan cannot assault us. He cannot come into our lives.

He of course can tempt us through others. But God keeps us. Remember what Jesus said in John 10:28, "We shall not perish." No one can snatch us out of his hand. And I think this is really the larger sense of Psalm 91, where He speaks about His angels having charge over us, to keep us in all the ways of God, in all "Thy ways." You notice that language, in the path of God, in the path of righteousness.

Well, thank you for that call.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

Where Do We Go When We Die? (221A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: In Luke 16:23 it talks about Lazarus, and how he was carried by angels to Abraham, and how the rich man woke up in hell. And in II Corinthians 5:8 Paul said that as soon as he would die he would be with the Lord. And that seems to say that we'll be with God immediately. And in a book I read it said that we would all be escorted, at the point of death, to Heaven, to be with God.

And then there are scriptures like I Thessalonians 4, where Paul says that at the second coming of Christ the dead in Christ will be the first to rise to meet Christ. And then those who are left on the earth will be the second to rise and meet Christ. And there are other scriptures that talk about how we are asleep in Christ at death. So how is it? When we die, do our souls go into sort of a state of limbo? Or do we go immediately to the throne of God?

HC: All right. Let me see if I can help you. Your question is, "Where do we go when we die?" And at this particular point you're talking only about the saved people. Unsaved people, that's another matter.

Now in Luke 16, there we have a parable. This is not an historical event. If we try to make an historical event, then we're going to find that it's in flat contradiction with some things in the Bible. "Abraham's bosom" here is a

figure of God Himself, to come into the highest felicity. Abraham was the father of all believers. Therefore he is a type of God the Father Himself.

And so when Lazarus died, he did go into the presence of God, although in this parable (and I say it's a parable) we see that he's there in his body, because the rich man is saying, "Let Lazarus dip his finger in water." And if we're in Heaven in our soul, then we don't have a body. We don't have a finger. So we know that it is a parable.

But when we synthesize everything that the Bible offers concerning the death of the believer, we find this, that the moment we die, we leave our body and we go in our souls to live and reign with Christ. Now the reason that this can happen is that at the moment we were saved, at the moment we were born again, in our souls we experienced the resurrection. We became a new creature, an eternal creature. Therefore in our souls we cannot die.

And so when our bodies die, because our bodies haven't been saved as yet, our souls, which are eternal in nature, leave our bodies and go to another place of residence, which is in Heaven, to be with God. And so there is no such thing as limbo, or a place of soul sleep, or whatever, for those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why the thief on the cross could be told so confidently by Christ, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." And when we search out the word "Paradise", we find that Paradise refers to Heaven itself, where the Father is.

CALLER: When Paul is talking in I Thessalonians 4, he says, "I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, for the dead in Christ shall be the first to rise."

HC: Yes. All right. Now let's look at this again. Before I die I am an integrated personality. My body and my soul are not separated in any sense. Now let's say a born again believer dies, and we'll call his name Mr. Jones.

And we say, "Mr. Jones died last week, and we buried him." Now all we buried was his body. But we say, "We buried Mr. Jones." By the same token, correctly, we can say, "Mr. Jones died last week, and he has gone to be with the Lord." Now in his whole personality he didn't go to be with the Lord, but only in his soul. In other words, at death he has become a divided personality. He is living in Heaven in his soul. In his body he is asleep in the grave.

Now in I Thessalonians 3, the last verse, God speaks of the fact that when He comes He will come with all His saints. He's going to come with Mr. Jones, in his soul. Or in I Thessalonians 4:14 it says that those who have fallen asleep will come with Him. And that will be Abraham in his soul, and David in his soul, and Mr. Jones in his soul existence. Each of them will come with Jesus.

Now at the same time, their bodies, which have been asleep in the grave, will arise and be caught up in the air, so they will be reunited with their souls and become again a complete personality.

CALLER: So what about the new bodies?

HC: They will be new. Our bodies will be resurrected a perfect spiritual body, whatever that is. It will be a glorified body.

CALLER: Not the same type of body then. I know He would have to make any type of body new, because our old ones would be decayed.

HC: Yes. A more than that, God uses an analogy, in I Corinthians 15, of a grain of wheat. You put a grain of wheat in the ground. Now that's analogous to our bodies that have died, and are put in the ground. Now that grain of wheat doesn't bear any resemblance to the plant that springs forth, does it? And yet the plant that springs forth is totally related to that grain of wheat. And so when the

question is raised, in I Corinthians 15, "What kind of bodies will we be resurrected as?" God says, "You foolish man." In other words, it's a question we shouldn't even ask. It's to be such a glorious body, actually an eternal body, that our minds can't really take hold of this. We see Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they're glistening, and they're in their eternal bodies. But you can believe that they're not there in their full glory, because anything from Heaven is too glorious to look at.

CALLER: Thank you. That really had me puzzled.

HC: Yes. The term "falling asleep" is simply a synonym for death.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

How Do We Know that Our Soul Lives After Death? (266A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I have a question. You know, we talk about eternal life. And I just wondered how we know that our soul does live after we die. I mean, how does God tell us that?

HC: Are you speaking about someone who is saved?

CALLER: No. I mean, how do we know this?

HC: The question is raised: How do we know that our soul lives after death? Well, outside of the Bible we have no real evidence. We know deep in our heart that probably this is so, because God has put the knowledge of eternity, or the sense of eternity, in our very make-up, because we were created in the image and likeness of God.

And this is proven when we look at pagans. The Egyptians, for example, when they died, the Pharaohs would be buried with slaves and with certain utensils, and so on, that were to be used in the after life. The American Indians frequently, when they died, were buried with their bows and arrows, so that they could use them in the Happy Hunting Ground. There is the sense of eternity in the heart of man.

But we can't look at eternity, we can't look at our soul. There's no way we can prove that there is an after life by any physical evidence of any kind. But when we go to the Bible, then we have all kinds of proof that there is an after life.

For example, in John 5:28-29, Jesus said, "The hour cometh when all who are in the tombs will hear My voice and come forth, some to the resurrection of judgment and some to the resurrection of everlasting life." That indicates that there is a resurrection on the Last Day. And either we're going to go to hell at that time, or we will receive our resurrected bodies and live eternally with the Lord in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Now we read of the believer, and we have some pretty wonderful things to discover in the Bible concerning his destination when he dies. True, his body goes into the grave. But his soul goes to be with Christ.

In Philippians 1, the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is writing about his impending death. And he said in verse 21, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose, I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account." So he confidently believes that when he dies, he will go to be with the Lord.

In II Corinthians 5 he goes on to say in verse 6, as God speaks through him, "So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body,

we are away from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him."

So again, you see, he confidently expects to leave his body at death and go to be with Christ in Heaven. Jesus Himself said of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, "I am not the God of the dead. I am the God of the living." And so they are in Heaven with Him. And that is where we go if we have had our sins covered by the Lord Jesus Christ.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

The Intermediate State and the Final Judgment (268B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. At work tonight I was talking to this fellow about when the soul leaves the body, and about judgment. Where does the soul go at death? I gave him the scripture in Hebrews, "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment," and he said, "Well, there's no time. It could be any time after death, according to that scripture." And where would the believer be at the judgment, and how would the believer be judged at the judgment? And are there any scriptures in the Old Testament that relate to this in any way? In I Corinthians 5:8-10 it talks about the fact that everyone will be judged, for the evil and good they have done. Does the believer get judged for the sins he's committed since he's been saved? And I'll take this answer over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. Good night.

The question is raised: "Where does the soul go at death, and how does this relate to Judgment Day? What is the situation of the believer at judgment? Does he come into judgment in any way?"

Well, in the case of the unsaved person, he is under the judgment of God because his sins have not been covered by the blood of Christ. "The wages of sin is death," and the death that God has in view is eternal damnation. But the Judgment Day, when the sentence will be passed on this unsaved person, will not happen until the Last Day.

In the meanwhile, in his soul he can't go to be with Christ, of course, and he is separated from his body. And so, while his body goes into the grave, to return to the dust, in his soul he goes down to a place of silence, or to a place called Hades, a place of soul sleep, if you will. And there he waits until he will hear the call of Christ on the Last Day. In John 5:28 and 29 we read, "The hour cometh when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth, some to the resurrection of life and some to the resurrection of damnation." And he will be included amongst those who come forth to the resurrection of damnation. And it's at that time that he will experience judgment. He will give an account of all of his sins before Christ, and he will be judged in the light of the statement of the Bible that "the wages of sin is death," and he will be removed into hell, to spend eternity paying for his sins.

Now in the case of the believer, at death, he already has passed from death into life in his soul. He's already experienced the resurrection of his soul. And so instantaneously he can leave his body and go to be with Christ in Heaven. "To be absent from the body," we read, "is to be present with the Lord." And he will remain there, in Heaven, living and reigning with Christ, not sleeping, but being completely conscious and working with Christ until Judgment Day.

And then he will come with Christ on the clouds of glory, as we read in I

Thessalonians 4:14, and at that time his body will be resurrected, as a simultaneous resurrection with those who are unsaved. But in his case, his body will be caught up in the air to be reunited with his soul, and so he'll always be with the Lord.

Now will he come into judgment? Of course not, not a bit. Why? Because in order to be saved, it means that all of our sins were taken by Christ. And He paid for all of our sins. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Those who believe in the Father have passed from death into life, and do not come into judgment. They have eternal life, we read in John 5:24. There is nothing to give an account of to God. All of our sins, whether we sinned before we were saved, or after we were saved, have all been paid for. And so our role at the judgment throne of God is not to stand for judgment for any reason whatsoever. Rather we will take part in the judging process, as we read in I Corinthians 6:2 and 3, and in Revelation 2.

Well, I hope that this helps just a little bit.

What Happens When We Die? (282A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I was wondering. I'm a born again Christian, and I believe that born again Christians are going to Heaven. But I understand that all born again Christians won't reign with God. Would you explain this? And will the born again Christian's body, that he has now, be in Heaven after the Judgment Day? And if so, will we see Jesus' body in Heaven, too?

I'll take my answers over the air.

HC: Fine. Thank you. The question is raised concerning Judgment Day, are the believers judged? And when does the believer's body go into Heaven? And so on. And I think if I would just outline what happens when we die, and how this relates to the last day, I think these questions will be answered.

Let me begin with this observation. The Bible teaches that all mankind are created in the image of God, and are created responsible to God, accountable to God for their moral actions. The Bible teaches that we were created to walk perfectly before God, to be in fellowship with God, and to be completely obedient to Him. But it also indicates that "the wages of sin is death." And the death that God has in view is not only physical death, but eternal damnation in hell.

Now the Bible decrees that on the last day every human being must give an account before God of how he has lived on this earth, whether he lived for a few days or whether he lived ninety-nine years. He must give an account, and his whole life will be judged. And if there's any sin found at all, then he will be judged by the law which declares that the wages of sin is death, and he will be removed into hell, to pay the penalty for his sins.

And since the infection of sin has invaded the whole human race, the fact is that the whole human race, when viewed from this vantage point, stands guilty before God.

Now let's just carry the unsaved person through to the end. So what's going to happen is that an unsaved person lives his own way, and he dies. Because he is subject to eternal death, because he is a sinner, and because he is estranged from God because of his sin, upon death, while his soul, the inner essence, the spiritual essence of man, separates from the body, in his soul he cannot go into God's presence. In his body he goes into the grave, so that his body returns to the dust. But in his inner essence, in his soul, his spirit existence, which is just as real a part of him as his body, he goes

down to a place of silence, or to Hades, as it's sometimes called in the Bible.

And there he waits, in silence, we could call this soul sleep, if you will, until the end of the world. At the end of the world, on the last day, Christ is going to come in judgment, and this unsaved man will be resurrected, and stand on this earth, and stand before the judgment throne of God, and begin to give his account of all of his life. And each count of sin against him will cause more sentence against him in hell. And he will be removed into a place called hell, to spend eternity, as penalty for his sins. Now that is the account of what God has laid out for mankind.

But in God's love, God has provided an alternative solution to man's eternal existence. If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if we have placed our trust in Him, throwing ourselves on God's mercy, and acknowledging our sins, and crying out to God for mercy, then we are included amongst those who are saved, that is, those who have had their sins taken upon the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says that He became sin for us.

And on our behalf, back there in AD 33, He stood before God, guilty of our sins. He was found guilty, He was condemned, and God poured out His wrath upon Him, the equivalent of an eternity in hell. And so He became our substitute. And God no longer can ever bring judgment against us if we are in Christ, because He has already paid for our sins.

In other words, He took our place back there, in effect taking our place where we should have stood at the judgment throne of God on the last day. In other words, on the last day we will not come into judgment. The Bible says this very plainly in John 5:24. Those who believe in the Father have eternal life. They do not come into judgment. They have passed from death into life. As Romans 8:1 teaches, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Now when Christ saves us, not only are we forever exonerated, so we need never stand before the judgment throne, but also He gives us eternal life. That is, we will never be subject to death. Now you know, Jesus said this to the Pharisees, and they didn't know what to do with this. He said, in John 8:51, "Verily, verily, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, He will never see death."

Now what did Jesus mean by that? Do believers not die? Well, physically they die, yes. There comes a time when their body is put in the grave. But they don't really die. Why not? Because at the moment they were saved, at the moment Christ became their sin-bearer, and they in turn became the righteousness of Christ, God gave them a brand new resurrected soul. And in this soul, this inner essence, this spirit existence, which is as real a part of a man's life as his body, this soul is eternal in its life. So when the moment of separation comes, of the soul from the body, which is called death, or physical death, it's at this point that his body is put in the grave. But in his soul he does not go down to the place of silence. He does not enter into some kind of a soul sleep. He does not go someplace to await the judgment throne of the last day. Instead he simply changes his residence and goes to live and reign with Christ in Heaven. And so that is where he will be until the last day, living and reigning with Christ in Heaven.

Now to be in Heaven in his soul existence is not foreign at all. Heaven is populated by spirit beings. The angels are spirits. God Himself is a spirit. And so it's not at all a foreign idea to be in Heaven with God as a soul existence. The Bible says, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." The Bible teaches that when Christ comes on the last day, He will come with His saints. He will come with those who

have fallen asleep.

Now these are those who have died, that is, who have fallen asleep. Physically or humanly speaking, they have fallen asleep. But in actuality, in their soul, they simply went to live and reign with Christ in Heaven. And now they are coming with Him.

Now at the very same time that the graves open and the unsaved are resurrected and stand for judgment, the believer's body also is raised. But it's not to stand for judgment. The Bible teaches that his body is caught up in the air to be with Christ. And since he is with Christ in his soul, there must therefore be a reunion of his body and soul. So now he is a complete personality with God.

And instead of coming into judgment, the Bible actually says that he will take part in the judging process. In I Corinthians 6:3 we read that we will judge men, because you see, we have passed from death into life.

Now what's going to happen right after this? We have risen in our resurrected bodies, which are not like our present bodies. It's a spiritual body. It is far more glorious and wonderful and marvelous than words could ever describe, and it's in this body that we will live and reign with Christ forever more, in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

No, it will not be on this sin-cursed earth. Immediately after the unsaved are judged and removed into hell, then God will burn this earth with fire, and He will recreate it New Heavens and a New Earth where righteousness dwells. And then Christ will come with us, as Revelation 21 teaches so beautifully, with us as His bride to this new universe, these New Heavens and New Earth. And He will live with us eternally in our glorified bodies.

He, too, when He comes on the clouds of glory, to resurrect us, will come in His resurrected, glorified body. We read that He will come with power and great glory. And this again is a spiritual body.

What is a spiritual body? I don't know. The Bible doesn't tell us. But it will be a body, nevertheless.

Now one last note, and then we'll complete this tiny dissertation on what happens to those who are living at the time of Christ's return. If we're unsaved, we will simply continue to stand here for judgment. We will be augmented, of course, by the unsaved who had previously died and now who have become resurrected. And all of the unsaved will stand for judgment. And then we'll be removed into hell.

If we are saved, however . . . And there will be believers on that last day who have not died as yet; the Bible teaches in I Corinthians 15:51 & 52: "We'll not all sleep, but we'll all be changed, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet." And so there will be those who are born again. And even though they have not died, they will instantaneously experience the resurrection of their bodies, even as they experienced the resurrection of their souls at the time they became born again.

And in their resurrected bodies they will, too, be caught up in the air to be with Christ, right along with the bodies of the believers who had previously died, and which bodies are now resurrected and going up into the air to be reunited with their souls in the presence of Christ.

And so you see, all the believers will be in the air with Christ. All the unbelievers will be on earth, to stand for judgment. All the believers in the air with Christ, we read in I Thessalonians 4, in the last verse, will always be with Christ. Never again will there be a separation, such as exists today, with Christ in Heaven and we on earth. We will always be with Him.

And so throughout the judging process, we will be with Him. And when the earth is destroyed by fire, and God creates

New Heavens and a New Earth, we will remain with Him. And when Christ comes to this new universe, we will come with Him, and we will be with Him throughout eternity. And what a glorious and wonderful future that is for those that place their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Where Does a Believer Go When He Dies? (338A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: Yes. My question is, when a Christian dies, does he go directly to Heaven, or is there some place in the Bible where it says that after Christ comes back the dead in Christ shall raise from the dead? Do you know what I'm talking about? I know that Christ said to one of the thieves on the cross, "Today you shalt be with Me in Paradise." So that made me think that when a Christian dies he will go directly to Heaven. But then I heard that there's something else in the Bible that says that after the second coming of Christ the dead in Christ will raise.

HC: You are correct in both cases. Let's see if we can reconcile this. The question is, where does the believer go when he dies, one who is a true Child of God? How can we reconcile the idea that he might go to Heaven directly with the fact that on the last day, when Christ returns, he will be resurrected from the grave?

The Bible very clearly teaches that when we die we go to Heaven. But in Heaven we are there not with our bodies. Our bodies obviously are in the grave. But we are there in our souls. We never see a person alive today as a disintegrated being, with their body separate from their soul. We see a unified personality, a totally integrated personality.

But at death something leaves the body, so that at one moment there's life, there's vitality, there's a person. And a moment later there's a corpse. There's just a dead body. The soul of that person, the inner essence, the spirit essence of that body, or of that person, has left the body. And that spirit essence, or that soul, is as real a part of him as the body. In his soul he has gone to be with the Lord, to live and reign with Christ, as we read in Revelation 20:4.

Now on the last day, when Christ comes again, we read in I Thessalonians 4:14, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Now Mr. Jones died last week. He's a believer. He fell asleep in Christ. Now what does that mean? According to the Bible, it means that his body was put in the grave. In his soul he went to live and reign with Christ in Heaven.

Now on the last day he comes with Christ. He in his soul has been living and reigning with Christ in Heaven, and in his soul he comes with Christ. This will be true of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and David and Noah, and of Peter and James and John, and Mary Magdalene, and all of the believers who are in Heaven in their souls. They will come with Him. And then their bodies will be resurrected, and caught up in the air. And obviously their bodies will be reunited with their souls, and now they will be a complete personality again.

CALLER: So I guess this will be their glorified bodies, because obviously the body is no longer there, after thousands of years, in some cases.

HC: Yes. They will be resurrected with their glorified spiritual body, whatever that is. The language of I Corinthians 15 describes this, and it just indicates that it will be a wonderful glorified body, a spiritual body, in which we will live and reign with Christ forever and ever in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

CALLER: When an infant dies, do you think that he will be an infant in Heaven?

HC: The question is, when an infant dies—and it's a believing infant, that is, an infant who is a child of God—will it be eternally an infant? I don't think there's any possibility at all that it will remain a baby forever and ever, or even be a baby in Heaven.

You see, on earth here we think in terms of time. God has designed men to procreate. And in this way the various people who are to be born come into existence. Same live out their lives so that they die very aged and crippled, and their body is really wasted away. Some die as infants. Some die in the prime of life.

But in Heaven, and in the New Heaven and the New Earth, we're outside of time. We're all sons of God. The age at which we die really is immaterial. We will be there as sons of God. There is neither male nor female, and I'm sure there are neither children or adults, because children and adults implies time. It implies that one is older than another. And in eternity we're outside of time. This could not be.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

HELL

Will There Be Degrees of Punishment in Hell? (243E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I was wondering if you could help me with scripture on the different degrees of punishment in hell.

HC: The question, is raised concerning the degrees of punishment in hell. In Luke's Gospel, in Chapter 12, God gives us an insight into this. Let's look at that, and then we'll reflect on it a moment and see why this is so.

In verse 47 God declares, "And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required. And of him to whom men commit much, they will demand the more."

Now we can see why there would be degrees of punishment. The Bible declares, "The wages of sin is death." Now every sin that I commit is going to have to be answered to on Judgment Day, and it will have its share in the hell punishment meted out. If therefore I have committed two sins, my judgment will be greater than if I have only committed one sin.

Actually, we are human beings, and so we sin all the time. So the judgment is very severe, ordinarily. The judgment magnifies particularly when we think of those who have known the way of salvation, that is, they have read the Bible, and they know about Judgment Day and about the wrath of God. And they know that in Christ there is a way of escape. And yet they willfully continue to go their own way. They don't want the salvation God has provided. And so they are sinning in the face of much more knowledge than, let's say, someone who has never read the Bible. And so for that reason we can see that their punishment would be much more severe.

CALLER: Is there no other scripture that speaks of that? Only in Luke?

HC: Yes. Luke 12 is really the best passage, although I'm sure that there are other passages, although I have to admit, nothing comes to my mind right at the moment, that teaches the same thing. We find it implied, for example, in Luke 10, where Jesus is faulting Chorazin and Bethsaida, cities that were in existence at the time that Jesus was bringing the Gospel. And they, in the hardness of their hearts, in the presence of the Messiah Himself, as He was personally there, rejected Him.

And we read in Luke 10:13: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted in Heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades."

This language again, you see, is emphasizing the degrees of punishment.

CALLER: Hell is being away from God. I don't see how there could be different degrees. Do you know anything about that? What the degrees would be?

HC: Now are you raising the question, or are you suggesting that hell is to be cut off eternally from God, and how could there be degrees of this? We don't have that much information about God, about hell. God uses a lot of language to describe the awfulness of hell. But because it is in eternity, and because it is in a situation that no human being has ever experienced, that is, it is in an environment where we are cut off eternally from God, language can't really be found that we could understand, that accurately describes the horror of hell, because, you see, there's no man today who has experienced hell, no matter how bad their situation may be. They may say, "I'm experiencing hell," but they don't know what they're talking about. No one really could ever be entirely without the sustaining presence of God on this side of the grave. God is always caring for His universe. And even the man in a dungeon someplace, with no space to turn around in, and never seeing the light of day, is still in the presence of a God who supports this creation by His power, and keeps this man so that he is able to endure the troubles he is enduring, and so on.

But hell is to be without His presence. And there we not only are without His presence, but we are under His torment, whatever that may be. Now God speaks of it as a place where the worm dieth not.

That is, the maggots are forever crawling in and out of the dead corpse (the spiritually dead, of course), a figure of speech to indicate the eternal deadness of the unsaved. He speaks of it as the lake of fire. And we all sense the horror of fire. To be thrown into a fire, or to be burned, it's a horrible thought at best. He speaks of it as a place of outer darkness, as a place of eternal torment. All of this language is to convey to us in a very small way how terrible it is.

And so you can depend upon it. It's not going to be better than the language of the Bible. It'll be everything that the Bible declares. You read Deuteronomy 28, which is a description of curses that would come upon Israel, if they disobeyed God. Now that description is a description of an event that actually did occur on this earth, in which they ate their own children, and it goes on and on, in the most ugly kind of language. But really it is language to indicate the wrath of God against sin. And it's a word picture of the awfulness of hell.

And so just how this punishment will be meted out, I don't know. I don't know. But I know I don't want to be there.

What Will Happen to Those Who are Not Saved? (286A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. Now some will be saved, and others will not be saved. What will happen to those who are not saved?

HC: The question that has been raised is, What will happen to those who are not saved? Now there are only two kinds of people in this world. There are only two kinds, insofar as salvation is concerned. There are those who are saved, who are born again, and those

who are unsaved.

Now what did Jesus say? "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Only through the Lord Jesus Christ can we be saved. Why is this? Because only if our sins have been paid for by Christ, can we stand without condemnation before God. If we do not have Christ as our Savior, then there is no payment for our sins. Then we must atone for our sins on our own behalf.

Now what does the Bible say about the payment that we must make? "The wages of sin is death." Now when we just look at that verse as it stands alone, we might think that it's simply talking about annihilation. And in fact, you read a verse like John 3:16, and there it also suggests annihilation. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And frequently we associate the idea of annihilation with the word perish. If someone has perished in a gruesome fire of some kind, he is pretty well annihilated. He ceases to exist.

Actually, in the Bible God gives us further information. First of all, when God created man and angels, and incidentally, God did not create an imperfect world. He did not create imperfect angels, either. The fact is, God created men and angels not as robots, but that they did have a will. And both Lucifer and man did rebel against God. Now why God permitted that, that's another question altogether. But nevertheless they did rebel against God, and so we have the whole matter of sin in the world.

Now when God created man, what did He say to Adam and Eve? "In the day thou eatest of this tree, thou shalt surely die." Now think about that for a moment. We realize, therefore, that God had created Adam and Eve, that is, mankind, with a potential to live forever, because had they not rebelled against God, then of course they would never die. And then you have the implication of living forever.

Moreover, the Bible says that God created man in the image of God. Now the image of God results in all kinds of relationships. We're in the image of God in the sense that we can think in terms of God. We have a sensitivity toward the worship of God. Animals don't have these things. The fact that we have a mind that can create, that we can imagine things, that we can build things, that we can analyze, that we can think out, that we can talk and communicate as we do, with some of the intricate thinking that goes on, are all evidences of the fact that we have been created in the image of God.

But perhaps also included in this image of God is the fact that man was created to live forever. Now when man rebelled against God, and God said, "Thou shalt surely die," God did not imply by that, even though we might gather that, just looking at this simple language, that man would cease to exist, that he would be annihilated. God is simply indicating that "if you sin against Me, you're going to exist somewhere else, apart from Me." But to be apart from God is death. To be apart from God is death.

We see this very vividly when Christ went to the cross. Now there He endured the equivalent of an eternity in hell for us. And yet He didn't die physically when He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In fact, when He died physically, He didn't really die physically, because He said, "father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

And so physical death is not the real essence of the suffering that we are to endure. It is an aspect of it, but not the real essence. The real essence is to be separated from God. Man was created in the image of God, and he was created to have fellowship with God, and to enjoy God's blessings.

Now there's no man, regardless of how wicked he might be, who really understands what it means to be altogether separated from God. There are people who speak rather glibly about the fact that they have endured hell because of some suffering they experienced. Maybe their suffering was very traumatic, and terribly grievous. But it was not hell, because even though they may have suffered physically very greatly, it was never suffering that would be so intense as to be forever separated from God's presence.

You see, as long as we're on this side of the grave, as long as we're on this side of eternity, of Judgment Day, we're always in the presence of God. God's blessings are overshadowing us. God restrains sin in our lives. I'm talking about unsaved, wicked men and women. God brings other blessings, like the warm sunshine at time, and the benevolent rains, and the fragrant flowers, and the sound of the meadowlark. One blessing or another blessing is always going to be present. And many times we're not even aware that any of these blessings are there. Even under the most difficult circumstances there are certain blessings that accrue to mankind simply because God has not abandoned His creation.

But hell is to be abandoned by God. Hell is to be cast away from Him forever. And our minds can't comprehend that. Our minds can't get hold of the awfulness of this, because there's no way that we can imagine what it means to be without the presence of God, because God is always present in the world. We just can't imagine it. We can talk about it and speculate about it, but we can't really come to grips with it.

Now God gives us word pictures of hell. And the word pictures are pretty terrible. Jesus, oh yes, whom we always want to say how He loved, and how He wanted the very best, what does He say? In verse 41 of Matthew 13: "The Son of Man will send His angels, and they will gather out of His Kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers." And this means everyone who has not been covered by the blood of Christ, everyone who's not born again. And this actually is going to include the bulk of the earth's population, because there's only a remnant chosen by grace that really do become saved.

And what will He do? "and throw them into the furnace of fire. There men will weep and gnash their teeth." That's kind of ugly language, isn't it? We read in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 66, in verse 24: "And they shall go forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against Me, for their worm dieth not. Their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." Now if this was annihilation, the maggots couldn't continue to live forever, on an annihilated body. There would be nothing to live on. But these maggots, these worms, in this spiritual figure here, go on forever. The spiritually dead, those who are forever removed from the presence of God, who are abandoned by God, this is hell. And this is the kind of ugly language that we read concerning them.

We read in Revelation 14 another word picture of hell, in verse 9 "If anyone worships the beast [the beast is a figure of the kingdom of Satan] and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or his hand [that is, he is a slave of Satan, which is of course characteristic of every unsaved person], he also shall drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of His anger. And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. And they have no rest, day or night, these worshippers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

I don't know why it says here that they will be in the presence of the holy angels

and in the presence of the Lamb. While God will abandon them, yet God will be aware that hell is being paid. I suppose that this is the way we would have to look at it, even as Christ went to the cross and endured hell for us, in the presence of God and in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the believers, too. They also were there and witnessed at least some of the suffering of Christ.

Well, hell is the least pretty picture that anyone could paint. There is no language that you could talk about that would describe the enormous awfulness of hell.

If I were unsaved tonight, and I knew what the Bible said about hell, as I do know, and realizing that I have no guarantee that I'm going to breathe until tomorrow morning, I would be so frightened, I would be so panic-stricken, that I wouldn't sleep tonight, until I had made may peace with God.

Now some would say, "Oh, Oh, I see. You are trying to offer a gospel that is a fear gospel, a gospel where you're scaring people into Heaven." Well, suppose that you had knowledge that a friend of yours, if he stayed in that house, there was a bomb there, and that at ten o'clock it was going to blow, and it was such a large bomb that the whole house was going to be destroyed, and your friend would surely be killed. And it's already nine-thirty, or nine forty-five. It's going to go off in fifteen minutes. You desperately want to save your friend, because you certainly don't want to see him be killed by that bomb.

So you go into the house, and very sweetly, very kindly, you say, "Friend, I love you. And you know, we're having a good time outside. Why don't you come and join us?" You never mention the bomb. You never mention that death is just around the corner. You just talk very graciously, very sweetly. And your friend says, "I appreciate your kindness, but I'm enjoying what I'm doing in the house here, and I've got to finish what I'm doing. Maybe later on I'll come out. Okay?"

That isn't the way you'd go to your friend, is it? You'd go running into the house, and you'd say, "Friend! You've got to get out of here! There's a bomb here, and it's going to blow up, and it's going to destroy you. And you only have a few minutes. You've got to leave right now" Are you scaring him? No, you're not scaring him. Well, yes, you are, in a real sense. But not really. You're telling him the truth; you're telling him what his desperate plight is, what his condition is. And he'd better get with it and get out of there. How is he going to get saved if he doesn't realize what he has to be saved from?

And so it is when we bring the Gospel, and we start talking about the imminence of hell. We're not scaring people, to try to force them into the Gospel. We're telling them the truth about what their actual situation is. And only because they know the truth, perhaps they will be exercised to begin to seek a way of salvation.

And wonderfully, God has provided that way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Right tonight, if w will abandon ourselves to Him, if we will cry out to Him for mercy, if we will acknowledge that we're sinners, that we're under the wrath of God and there's nothing we can do about our sins, and plead the mercies of God, and cast our lot with Him, we can be saved just as quickly as anyone else in the whole wide world.

And salvation can come tonight. It doesn't have to wait until tomorrow morning. This is what I would desire for all of us who are listening to this program.

Questions Concerning Hell (314A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Brother

Camping. I'd like to ask you a two-part question concerning hell. Where is hell referred to in the Bible as a place of eternal separation from God? And does an unbeliever go to hell as soon as he dies?

HC: All right. Two questions are raised. First of all, where does the Bible speak of hell as eternal separation from God? I think in II Thessalonians I God is speaking about the return of the Lord in verse 7: "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints." That's one passage that suggests this very strongly.

A second passage that suggests this is in Revelation 22, where it's talking about the New Heaven and the New Earth. And in verse 15 it says, "For without are dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loveth and maketh a lie." This would include all of the unsaved, who are slaves of Satan; they are outside.

Now in the New Heaven and the New Earth we have the beautiful information here that the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it (verse 3 of Chapter 22). And so the unsaved are excluded from the presence of God.

CALLER: Where does this concept of fire and brimstone come from?

HC: Where does the concept of fire and brimstone come from? It comes from the Bible. In describing hell God uses this kind of language. We find this, for example, in the Old Testament, in Ezekiel 38, for one place that comes to my mind. We read in verse 22 of Ezekiel 38: "And I will plead against him [that is, against the unsaved who have been assaulting the church and trying to silence the Gospel] with pestilence and with blood. And I will rain upon him and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him an overflowing rain, and with great hailstones, fire and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself and sanctify myself."

The same picture is picked up in a slightly different way in Revelation 20, where it speaks of hell as a lake of fire: "Whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (verse 15). Or again, the lake of fire is spoken of in connection with brimstone in verse 10 of Revelation 20: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever."

The Bible speaks of hell as a place of burning. Now actually, it uses other language, too. It speaks of it as a place of outer darkness. It speaks of it as a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, or as a place where the worm dies not, that is, where the maggots are crawling in and out upon dead corpses.

All of these word pictures are to give us a clear indicator of the awfulness of hell, the absolute awfulness of hell. That's not a place that anyone would want to go to. In Revelation 14:10 we have this language, speaking of the unsaved: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation. And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. And they have no rest, day or night, Who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." The language of hell is terrible.

Now, actually, an unsaved person does not immediately go into hell. He goes into a place called Hades, which

sometimes is translated hell in the King James Bible, there to await the Judgment Day of the last day. It's really a soul sleep situation for the unsaved. For the believers, of course, when they die, in their soul they go to be with the Lord Jesus Christ, to live and reign. But for the unsaved, they simply wait in Hades.

Then at Judgment Day, when Christ returns, the graves are opened and everybody comes forth. The believers of course are caught up in the air to be with Christ. And the unsaved stand for judgment. And then, after they're judged, they're removed into hell.

CALLER: Thanks a lot.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Did Jesus Actually Descend into Hell? (323A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Ephesians 4:9 & 10 say, "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth." And I Peter 3:19 says, "By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." Jesus said, when He was on the cross, when He died, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Now there is some teaching that says that Jesus did suffer for men the penalty of sin, and that He also went to hell for us. And then there are some who say that because Jesus said, "It is finished" and "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," that He did that, and that He did not go to hell for us. And I'd just like to know which is correct. And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine.

The question is raised: How are we to understand passages like Ephesians 4, which indicates that Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth, and from there led captivity captive? Or I Peter 3:19 or 20, where it says that in the spirit He preached to the souls in Hades, who formerly did not obey in the days of Noah? How do we put all this together?

I think most of the misunderstanding on this particular question is a result of a lack of understanding of what Christ did for us on the cross. A lot of people talk about the fact that He shed His blood for our sins. That's a very Biblical statement. A lot of people talk about the fact that He died for our sins. That's very Biblical. A lot of people talk about the fact that He hung on the cross. That's very Biblical.

But when it comes to the fact that He descended into the lower parts of the earth, or as Jesus put it in Matthew 12, "I must be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," they have no understanding really of what this is. You see, the problem that Christ faced was the judicial statement of God that "the wages of sin is death." And the death that God had in view not only was physical death, but eternal damnation in hell. This is the penalty that had to be paid if He were to be our Savior.

Mankind is destined for hell, he is committed to hell, because we're all sinners. And in order to save us, it was necessary for God not only to find us in our depraved and desperate condition, sentenced to hell. But He also must pay the equivalent of an eternity in hell on our behalf.

Actually, therefore, from the time that He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," and He threw Himself to the ground, and the sweat was pouring off His body like great drops of blood, into the ground, until Resurrection morning, Christ was enduring hell for our sins. He was enduring the wrath of God for our sins.

Now it is true that at the end of the world there will be a place called hell, where all of the unsaved will be cast, along with

Satan and all the fallen angels. Presently there is no hell, at least insofar as we can determine, as an actual place. The Bible teaches that the unsaved, when they die, go down into a place of silence. This is also called Hades in the Bible.

It is not the place "hell," however, where the unsaved go eternally. At least they are not suffering there. At least they're not experiencing the wrath of God there. They are simply waiting for the judgment of the last day. However, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus found in Luke 16 eternal damnation is spoken of as Hades.

The angels who have fallen, along with Satan, also are spoken of in the Bible as being in pits of hell, or consigned to hell. But in physical location they are active in the world, deceiving the hearts of men. So neither are they in a physical, literal place called hell. They're identified with hell because there is no hope for them. They are consigned to hell, and therefore the Bible speaks of them as if they are in hell. But in actuality, in physical location they are not in a place called hell.

Insofar as I can tell from the Bible, a literal place called hell will only be in existence at Judgment Day, and it must be there because the unsaved must be removed from this earth so that God can redeem it, so that He can destroy it by fire and recreate it New Heavens and a New Earth. And so there has to be a place where the unsaved can exist eternally, under the wrath of God. And that is a physical place called hell.

Hell, however, in its actual essence is not a place. Hell is a relationship with God. Hell is to be under the wrath of God and to experience the wrath of God. Hell is described in the Bible in all kinds of ugly language. But ultimately it is all focusing on this point, that those who are subject to hell are in terrible trouble with God, and His wrath is being poured out upon them.

This is what Jesus experienced, from Gethsemane until the resurrection morning. He experienced the wrath of God, so that He was enduring hell. It was as if He had gone down to hell while He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and while He stood before Pontius Pilate, and while He hung on the cross. And we of course see this in its climax as the cry is wrenched from His lips, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" That's hell.

Specifically, therefore, when we look at Ephesians 4, and it declares that He descended into the lower parts of the earth, it is simply indicating that He had to come where those who are destined for hell dwell. That's in our presence. He rescued us from the path that was leading directly into hell. And in order to rescue us He had to Himself endure hell for our sins.

"He led captivity captive." Before we are saved we're slaves of Satan. We are entirely under his jurisdiction and his domain. He is our master. But when we are saved, we are freed from bondage to Satan, and we become bondservants of the Lord Jesus Christ. We become His captives, and He takes us out of hell. And He did this by going to the cross, so that we have eternal life and are forever His people.

Jesus, therefore, never did go to a place called hell. The fact is, when we look at Him on the cross, when would He have done this? He was a complete personality until He finally said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." And He said, "It is finished." But at that time, in His spirit He went to be with the Father. His body, however, was put in the grave, where it did not see corruption. And this was part of the suffering that was involved in paying for our sins. For this reason Acts 2:31 indicates that Jesus' soul was not left in Hades. Hades in this context has the meaning of eternal damnation. The fact that His body did

not see corruption seems to emphasize that the victory of the cross was accomplished. The fact of the resurrection emphasized that the penalty of eternal damnation had been paid in every sense.

But at no time is there a time when He could have gone down to some place. Now I Peter 3:18 or 19 is not saying that He in His spirit descended into hell. It is simply saying that in His spirit, at one time, He spoke to the spirits in prison. Actually, the word hell is not found in I Peter 3. It's actually the word prison.

Now in I Peter 1 we read in verse 10: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching for what manner of time the spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."

In other words, the spirit of Christ spoke through the Old Testament prophets, including Noah, to the prisoners (the spirits in prison) in their day. Now the spirits in prison were the unsaved of their day. Jesus in His spirit did preach to the spirits in prison, but not when He was on the cross, not when He was paying for our sins. He did this all through the Old Testament period, as He spoke through Noah, and as He spoke through Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Abraham, and so on, even as today the spirit of Christ is speaking to the spirits in prison, as we bring the Gospel. This does not require a physical descent of Christ into hell.

I hope this will clear up that question just a little bit.

Purgatory & Locating the Garden of Eden (338B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Mr. Camping, I've got a couple questions I'd like to ask you. Do you know whether or not the Bible says anything about a place like Purgatory?

HC: The question is raised concerning a place like Purgatory. If you mean a place where there is a second chance, where a person goes and his eternal destiny has not yet been resolved, and there is the possibility that he can come out of that and still go to Heaven, absolutely not. There's nothing like that in the Bible.

If you mean by Purgatory a place where unsaved man goes to await the judgment of the last day, yes, the Bible does speak of Hades. It's called a place of silence. And all of the unsaved, whose sins have not been covered by the blood of Christ, go there. There's no way of getting out. There's no possibility of saving a person who is in Hades. He will be resurrected on the last day to stand for judgment, and then will be cast into hell.

CALLER: I see, okay. The other question I wanted to ask you was, do you know whereabouts the Garden of Eden was here on earth? And I'd also like to ask you a question which relates to another caller. You said that at the end of time there would be no children, and there would be no males and females. I don't understand that statement.

HC: All right. Let me answer your second question first. The question is, in Heaven there will not be males or females, nor will there be children. I answered this, first of all, because of what Jesus said. Remember the Jews tried to snare Him, and they said there was this man who was married, and his wife died, or, no. There was this woman who had a husband, and the husband died. And then, according to Jewish law her brother had to marry her, to raise up seed for her, and so he married her, and he in turn died. And then this went on until seven brothers had all taken their turn in marrying her. And so then they asked Jesus the question. Now in eternity whose wife will she be, having had seven

husbands? And then Jesus answered. He said you don't understand the resurrection. In the resurrection there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

The fact is, the Bible speaks of us as being sons of God when we are saved. The sexual relationship, male and female, the bearing of children, is in the context of time, when God is bringing into existence a great host of people, during a period of 13,000 years, so that all that He planned to save could be saved. This is all in the framework of time.

But once we leave this earth, we're outside of time, and we're in eternity. There is no procreation, there is no multiplication of the human race. We are sons of God, and we remain His sons eternally. Our focal point is not on a wife or a husband, or children. Our focal point is on the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and whom we serve totally, because we have been made perfect.

I find very frequently in our lives that we are so conditioned by this world that we always think in relationship to this world. We always try to bring our thoughts of this world to bear into eternity. We try to think of eternity in the sense of buildings and cities. We try to think of eternity in terms of marriage, husbands and wives and mothers and fathers, and all of this. But eternity is a new world. It's a brand new existence. We have spiritual bodies. I don't know what spiritual bodies are, but they're like Christ's spiritual body, not like His resurrected body. That wasn't His glorified body. But we will be Like His spiritual body. Remember on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared with bodies that glistened. And certainly the disciples didn't see them in their full glory any more than they saw Christ in His full glory at that time. Had they seen Christ in His full glory, they would have perished.

We will have glorious bodies. I don't know what it is, what they're like, only God knows. But it's something that we need not speculate about. It's too wonderful for any words of this world to describe.

Well, the other question is concerning the location of the Garden of Eden. Now the Bible uses some very interesting language that makes us think that we might know where the Garden of Eden was. We read in Genesis 2 that there were four rivers around the Garden of Eden. It says in verse 14, "The name of the third river is Hiddekel; that is, it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates." And then in verse 13 it says, "The name of the second river is Gihon; the same as that that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia."

Now these are names that are common in the world: Ethiopia, Assyria, Euphrates. They're all common names. And so immediately we think that the Garden of Eden must have been somewhere in the location of these countries.

We must, however, keep our bearings. We must keep our perspective. The Garden of Eden existed 13,000 years ago. It existed at a time when there was one continent. Later on, 6000 years later, in the Flood of Noah's day, the whole world was utterly destroyed by a flood that changed the appearance of the world to a very high degree, inasmuch as there was a great amount of mountain building, and so on.

A couple of thousand years later the earth was divided. We read about this in Genesis 10. In the days of Peleg the earth was divided. At that time the continent was split up into the continents that we have today. So there were vast changes in the continents since the days of the Garden of Eden.

The fact that we see these names—Euphrates, Ethiopia, Assyria—does not mean that it relates to present day Ethiopia, Euphrates River, or

Assyria. But it simply means that these names were selected by the descendants of Noah when they gave names to a river or to a land, or to a people. These were names that were carried down from father to son through the generations as being identified with the Garden of Eden, and then would have been given to a river, which now is called the Euphrates River, or given to a land, which is now called Ethiopia, or given to a land which is now called Assyria, or as was called Assyria in the days of the Bible.

The river Euphrates that now exists, the land of Assyria, or the land of Ethiopia, does not relate to the Garden of Eden, not in any way, except that these names were chosen that originally related to the Garden of Eden. There's too much change in the continents that has occurred to permit this possibility.

Why Do Unbelievers Have to Be Judged? (346E)

CALLER: What would be the reason for judging unbelievers at the Great White Throne judgment? I thought that these unbelievers were already lost. So what would be the purpose of judging them?

HC: An excellent question. Why is it that we read in Revelation 20 about a Great White Throne judgment? There we read, "I saw the dead standing, and the books were opened, and they were judged by what was written in the books."

Now you'll remember that in Matthew 12 Christ declared that mankind has got to give an account of every idle word they've ever spoken, every evil deed they've ever done. Now what would be the purpose of this kind of a judgment if the moment we commit one sin we're already condemned by God to spend an eternity in hell? Why have this kind of a judgment on the last day?

You see, the Bible indicates that there are levels of condemnation. Those who have known the way and yet have gone their own way will be beaten with many stripes. Those who have not known the way and yet they have done that which deserves judgment will receive few stripes. The wages of sin is death. The penalty that is meted out at Judgment Day is payment for sin. Therefore, the more sins a person has committed, the greater the condemnation.

CALLER: I get the idea. I was wondering, if they're already condemned, judgment wouldn't help any.

HC: They're already condemned, but God's justice must be very perfect. And therefore their condemnation will be in accord with their sins.

CALLER: That's punishment then.

HC: Yes, it is punishment. You see, the interesting thing is, in the case of the believer the reward we receive is not pay. It is a gift of God, because Christ already paid for our sins. He has paid all that was required to enable us to go into Heaven. It is a gift that is so vast, so marvelous, that there's nothing that we could do that could add anything at all to that tremendous gift of salvation.

On the other hand, the unsaved receive their eternal destiny not as a gift, but as payment for their sins.

CALLER: I see. Well, that answers it very nicely. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Understanding Hell (463B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I would like you to read Malachi 4:2 & 3 and tell me what you think about it.

HC: Yes. The question is raised concerning Malachi 4:2 & 3. There we read, "But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings. And ye shall go

forth and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked. For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, sayeth the Lord of Hosts."

Now this is speaking about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as He came when He went to the cross. He is the Sun of Righteousness. He came with healing in His wings. He is the one who made it possible that we could have victory over our enemies, the kingdom of Satan, because that's what we belonged to before we were saved. And for us who are born again because Christ went to the cross, Satan is a defeated foe. We tread upon him. We have no fear of him any longer. He has been vanquished by Christ's going to the cross.

Now you'll notice in verse 5 of the same context, God goes on, and He says, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." This chapter opens in verse 1 talking about the day, the day that is coming. And now He talks about Elijah the prophet being sent before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers."

Now we know from Luke:17 that this prophecy of verse 5 was fulfilled by John the Baptist. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah. Notice the very similar language in Luke 1 to what we have just read in Malachi 4:5 & 6. There we read, as God is telling Zachariah about his son, John the Baptist, who would be born to him: "And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," almost identical language, you see, to Malachi 4, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Now the "great and terrible day of the Lord" that's in view in Malachi 4 is the atonement, the day when Christ hung on the cross, when He paid for our sins, when He became sin for us and God poured out His wrath on Him. But before Christ went to the cross, before this dreadful day of the Lord came, John the Baptist came, as a fulfillment to the promise that Elijah would come and turn the heart of the fathers to the children. That is, John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, to preach repentance and to cry out to Israel that they had to turn away from their sins.

Now this is when Christ came with healing in His wings, when He came as the Sun of Righteousness, when He vanquished Satan so that Satan is as ashes under our feet. Now while He defeated Satan in principle, and we read in Hebrews 2:14 that through Christ's death He destroyed Satan, and we read in Revelation that He dealt a death blow to the head of the dragon, and while this was accomplished in principle, we will not see it in its full impact until the judgment of the last day, when Satan is removed into hell.

CALLER: At that time, at the end of the world, we will grow up as calves of the stalls.

HC: No. Malachi 4 in its totality is being fulfilled throughout the New Testament period. We grow up as calves of the stall now. The body of Christ is growing, and it's flourishing. It has been for 2,000 years. Of course in the Old Testament calves were given as a sacrifice, but in Romans 12:1 we are commanded, as born again believers, to lay down our lives as a living sacrifice. And this is occurring amongst all the nations of the world. There are those who are coming into the body of Christ and those who are born again are those who have surrendered their lives to Christ, to serve as ambassadors of His.

CALLER: About John the Baptist. Also, at the end of the world there are also

many many true Christian people that are preparing the way of the Lord just before His second coming. Many Christian people are preparing the way of the Lord.

HC: But that is not in view in Malachi 4. And actually, the believers are preparing the way of the Lord. And incidentally, the Bible does not use that language of Christians in connection with the second coming of Christ. The Bible does not say that as we bring the Gospel we are preparing for His second coming, although in a sense we are. As we bring the Gospel, and witness to the world, God brings in the elect, those who are to be saved. And when the last one has been saved, then the end will come. The Bible says in Matthew 24:14, or thereabouts, that when this Gospel has been preached to every nation, then the end will come. And in that sense we are preparing for the end of time. But God does not use that kind of language in speaking about the work of the believers insofar as I know.

CALLER: You don't have the attitude that everyone will be saved.

HC: Oh, no. The Bible teaches that "Broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are thereon," and "Narrow is the way that leads to everlasting life, and few there are that find it." It's only a remnant chosen by grace out of all the peoples of the world that actually become born again believers.

CALLER: Back at verse 3, it isn't the devil that is burned to ashes. He will be burned right along with the wicked, but it says "the wicked." It doesn't separate the devil and the wicked. They will all burn together.

HC: Yes. You see, when Christ went to the cross, He actually guaranteed damnation upon all of the unsaved of the world who would die unsaved. By virtue of the fact that Christ endured the judgment of God for our sins, this guaranteed that judgment would also come upon the unsaved. And so they automatically are under condemnation, if they do not become saved. Every man is a sinner, and the wages of sin is death. It is eternal damnation, and so that condemnation rests upon the unsaved. And so in that sense they are already identified with hell.

It's interesting, you know, in the New Testament that God in three or four places speaks about the angels who rebelled. And He speaks of them as if they are already in hell. Now they aren't actually in hell, because they're still active in the world throughout the New Testament period. And even as the New Testament was being written, they were very active as demons, and so on. But nevertheless God uses language as if they're already in hell, because their damnation is guaranteed at the cross, and it's as if they are already in hell.

We read in Jude 6, And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, until the judgment of the great day. In II Peter 2:4 he says, For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment." He's using language as if they're already in hell, as, if they're already being consumed, as if they are ashes. And that's the language of Malachi 4.

Now they're not actually there, but their judgment is certain. Ever since the time of the cross, there's no way that they can escape the judgment.

CALLER: When fire is in the process of burning them to ashes, that isn't the same as being ashes, which will annihilate all, we're told in the Bible that the affliction will never arise a second time. There will never be another devil devoured.

HC: Now you've introduced two questions. First of all, the Bible does not teach annihilation. That is not taught in

the Bible. When the Bible uses language like ashes, or burning, or I'll remember them no more, or whatever, God is not speaking about annihilation. There are too many passages in the Bible that would make that an impossible idea. There are too many passages in the Bible that speak about everlasting damnation, that say that "the worm dieth not," that say, "there is weeping and gnashing of teeth," that speak about eternal torment, and so on and so on.

But as God speaks about hell, and the wrath of God, and the terrible condition that will prevail, we must remember He's talking about a condition that's outside of time, that's outside of our ability to really fathom, because we don't know what eternity is. We don't know what it is to be without any blessing whatsoever from God. We have no idea about these things, because these are not part of our experience in this world.

But God does give us word pictures, of burning and of ashes, and of worms that do not die, and so on, outer darkness, and a lake of fire, and so on. God gives us these word pictures in order to indicate to us the awfulness, the dreadfulness of hell. And yet, as He gives all of this, there's no question at all that He talks about eternal damnation. It's not something that is annihilation. Annihilation is just not taught in the Bible. If you might find a number of verses, if you grouped those together and took them out of the Bible, without letting the rest of the Bible be a commentary on them, you could find verses that might seem to teach annihilation.

CALLER: Well, we are told what eternity means, as far as the devil and all his subjects are concerned. Sodom and Gomorrah were burned with everlasting fire. Sodom and Gomorrah are in the bottom of the Dead Sea, and they are not burning now. No place is there perpetual fire.

HC: Oh, I know. But remember that Sodom and Gomorrah have not come to an end. The peoples of Sodom and Gomorrah have ceased to exist momentarily on the face of the earth, but they will be raised on the last day. And their damnation is not complete. Just because we see them destroyed by fire back 4,000 years ago, that doesn't mean that that's the end of their damnation.

CALLER: I agree with you there, but I'm just referring to the term everlasting. And there's another thing that brings up the same thought, what is the definition of everlasting?

HC: You see, we don't even have to struggle with that. If you read Revelation 14, for example, God says there in verse 10, speaking about the unsaved, "The same shall drink the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation. And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb." And notice: "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. And they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

Or again, we read in Revelation 22, where it's talking about those who are in the New Heaven and the New Earth, which of course is going on eternally. And it says in verse 15 of Revelation 22: "For without are the dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." In other words, they continue having existence, but they are not a part of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

And there are other phrases of this nature in the Bible that assure us that hell is eternal. It is not annihilation. Now many people want to believe in annihilation. Perhaps they want to believe it because they are not really certain of their

salvation. And after all, if I'm annihilated, that finally is not so bad because then I have no conscious existence. I may be missing Heaven, but I don't know that I'm missing it, and there is certain peace in death.

But that is a figment of our imagination. That is not the wrath of God. That isn't the way that God portrays His wrath. It is not to cease to have conscious existence. It's to cease to be under any blessing of God. When Christ hung on the cross: He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and that's hell. And no human being has ever experienced being totally forsaken of God.

CALLER: It would be a very uncomfortable feeling. But ashes, as everybody knows, represent something that has been and no more exists. If you burn up a box, and have ashes, and walk on those ashes . . .

HC: Yes. Now if you took a verse that speaks of ashes, and isolated it from the rest of the Bible, then I would agree with you. God is indicating annihilation, because something that is burned up physically is annihilated. It ceases to exist.

But that is not hell. We have to read about those ashes in the light of everything else the Bible speaks about in connection with the nature of hell, in connection with the nature of eternal damnation, or in connection with God's wrath. And then we get a vastly different picture. Then we realize that there is existence of the unsaved after Judgment Day and while the New Heaven and the New Earth continue to exist. And there of course there is eternal bliss, and all is marvelous and wonderful, because we're in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But while this is going on, there is also conscious existence of the unsaved. But they are in a place of torment. They are in a place bearing the wrath of God, because they have violated the justice and holiness of God. And we don't know exactly what that punishment is. All we can do is look at the language of the Bible and realize that it must be super awful. It must be super terrible. And there's no escape. There's no way out. There's no end to it. It's like a person who has been consigned to jail for the rest of his life, because he's committed a crime. He's in jail. He can't get out. And regardless of what's happening out in the world, the beautiful things, the marvelous things, he's in jail. And he has to stay there until he dies. Now his life may be circumscribed by, let's say, seventy years. And so he may spend fifty years in jail. But for mankind who is unsaved, his conscious existence will continue forever and ever. And he will be outside of all of the blessings that come to those who are born again believers.

CALLER: So God will perform a miracle to keep people burning, actual burning, and suffering in burning hell. He'll perform a miracle to . . .

HC: The problem that you're raising is that you must remember that our minds are conditioned to think in terms of space, length, width, height and time. These are the dimensions that we understand. When the Bible speaks about eternity, when the Bible speaks about life after death, we can't really know what this is. There is no way that our minds can really fathom that, any more than we can fathom an angel. We don't know what a spirit is. We can't draw a picture of a spirit. We can't describe a spirit, actually. We really do not know what an angel is. We know they're ministering spirits. The Bible says that. But we, could never really detail or draw a picture or make a diagram of any kind of what an angel is, because our minds are not qualified. God has not designed our minds to think in terms of spiritual beings and to think in terms of eternity. We can just get a little bit of an idea, and that's all.

And so when God talks about hell, or when He talks about Heaven, God uses language, He uses word pictures of things that we know about. But that still does not really describe what it is.

For example, in Revelation 1 there's a beautiful description of the Lord Jesus Christ, with His hair of white wool and His feet of burnished brass, and so on. And of course it's a work picture. It's not a real picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ has a spiritual body. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him worship Him in spirit and truth. And yet as we look at this word picture that God describes in Revelation 1, we begin to get insights as to the nature and the character and the marvelous beauty, and so on, of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work that He came to do. But we're never going to get a real picture of what He looks like, because our minds can't get hold of any kind of a picture of what He really looks like.

Now the same thing is true when God describes hell. He uses figures of a burning furnace, and a lake of fire, and of ashes and of a place of outer darkness, and a place where the worm dies not, and a place where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. And all of these figures of speech are pictures to indicate one central truth, and that is that hell is terrible. Hell is awful. Hell is the worst kind of punishment that our minds can get hold of, and it goes on forever and ever.

Just what it is, I don't know. I don't know what it is. We see the essence of hell, we get a real insight, if we get any kind of an insight into the essence of hell, on the cross, as Christ says, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? Now He was enduring hell for our sins. He was not literally burning. He was not literally in a place of fire. And yet He was enduring hell. The awfulness of God being rejected by God, abandoned by God, was torment that is absolutely indescribable. There's no way that we could ever know how grievous this really was for Christ. And yet that was the essence of hell.

And so as we read all of this language about hell, we must not think of eternity as somehow identified with time. We have this song that we will praise God 10,000 years, and so on, and it will just be the beginning, or words to that effect. Well actually, that's a word picture again of eternity. Eternity is something that is outside of our ability to understand, however. It's something far more glorious than just a continuation of time, because eternity is not identified with time. It's a concept beyond our ability to take hold of.

And so is hell. But we know that hell is super terrible, and the marvelous thing is that God comes with His message of salvation, and He says that if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if we will humble ourselves before Him and acknowledge our sins and turn away from our sins and abandon ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, then we need not go to hell. We need not experience the wrath of God. We can be His children, and we can have eternal life. And that is the wonder of the Gospel.

CALLER: There was something said about time tonight, and the definition of time in the Bible is found about Nebuchadnezzar. He went out and ate grass like an animal for seven years.

HC: No, for seven times.

CALLER: Seven times. And so that's the definition of time. There was something said that the Bible said nothing about what time meant.

HC: No, I don't think that was said. Time is something we understand. The Bible indicates that God gave the sun to rule over the day and the moon and the stars to rule over the night. And therefore we have a very excellent knowledge of time. We can very accurately calculate the passing of seconds and minutes and

days and years. We can relate one historical incident to another by the passage of time. God has put this within our minds. We really can know time.

But that's quite different from eternity. We often think of eternity as just being infinite time. Well, that's one way of speaking about it. But actually, eternity is outside of time. Eternity is unrelated to time. Eternity is a concept that our finite minds, that are created in terms of time, cannot understand. It is outside of time. The sun is no more in the New Heaven and the New Earth. There are not time keepers. And so all we can do is leave it to the Lord that whatever it is, it is super glorious for the believer and super terrible, super awful, for the unbeliever.

But thank you so much for calling.

Malachi 4:1 and Everlasting Hell (528A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I'm very glad to hear your voice again. I'd like you to dwell upon Malachi 4:1 please.

HC: The question is raised concerning Malachi 4:1. Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. And we read in Malachi 4:1: "For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble. And the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

Now you're wondering what this refers to.

CALLER: Well, if there's anything else to understand other than the wording there, I'd like to know about it.

HC: I think the problem that is suggested here is, what does it mean that these who do wickedly shall be left with neither root nor branch? Now obviously this is talking about God's judgment on the wicked. "All that do wickedly shall be stubble. And the day that cometh shall burn them up." "The day that cometh" is Judgment Day. And it is at that time that God will cast the unsaved into the lake of fire, as we read in Revelation 20, which is a synonym for hell.

Now there are those who believe that when God says that He will cast them into the lake of fire, this will be annihilation. They will simply burn up and cease to exist. And they would use a verse like this to prove that particular idea, that they are left without root or branch.

The problem, however, is that when we look at all the language of the Bible that deals with hell, we find that God does not teach that there is annihilation. The Bible talks about eternal damnation. The Bible speaks of those who will be tormented forever. The Bible says there's a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and the worm dieth not.

And so we have to read a verse like this in the light of these other passages, that there is no cessation of existence for those who are under the damnation of God? but that they are in eternal punishment of some kind. Now actually, man was created on this earth to live here and to have an eternal relationship with this earth. And of course in the time before the end of time there is also to be procreation. There is to be the bringing forth of progeny from the loins of mankind. But the idea is that he will be here eternally.

Now of course because of the sin of man he dies. But those who have become saved still have an eternal relationship with this earth. We read in the Beatitudes, in Matthew 5, where Christ declared, "The meek shall inherit the earth." And of course this is the New Heaven and the New Earth. And so we who are born again believers do have a

root. We do continue in a living relationship to this earth.

But for the unsaved, they are removed from this earth. They have no relationship forever with this earth. They cannot remain here because they are not a part of the Kingdom of God. They have to be removed to another place called hell, and there they suffer eternal banishment from God. They suffer eternal damnation. And in that sense they have neither root nor branch.

Now the word branch carries a double meaning. The word branch is a synonym for the Lord Jesus Christ. He in Isaiah 11 is spoken of as the branch of the root of Jesse. And the word root here incidentally also has a double meaning. The word root refers to the Lord Jesus Christ also. Remember in Isaiah 53 God declared that He would be as a root out of dry ground.

And so the ultimate spiritual meaning that's in view here is that they do not have the Lord Jesus Christ. They have neither root nor branch. They are outside of Christ eternally.

CALLER: That's right. When it comes to evil, everlasting is as long as it exists, in the hottest fire that can be made. That's how long everlasting is, as far as evil is concerned, the same as Sodom and Gomorrah was burned with everlasting fire. And it's in the bottom of the Dead Sea, so the scientists tell us, at the present time. It is ashes in the bottom of the sea.

HC: Ah! Now you've pointed out a very interesting phrase, that Sodom and Gomorrah were burned with everlasting fire. But you see, we only saw the down-payment, the first picture of that everlasting fire, when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone back there 4000 years ago. But there is more to it than that, you see.

It's just like death. When man dies, when Adam died, when mankind dies because of their sins, that's not the whole picture. It isn't just physical death that's in view. There is also eternal death. There is the second death, which is the lake of fire. And so when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by literal fire and brimstone, that was only the down-payment. There's more to say, because those inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (and you would not doubt this for a moment) were not annihilated. They perished physically. They lived not again in their present existence, but they will be resurrected on the last day, at Judgment Day. And they then will have to give an account of all of their sinful lives. And then they will come under the judgment of God, to answer for their sins.

That fire and brimstone that destroyed them was merely an indication of what was going to happen to them eternally. And it was a guarantee that this was going to happen to them eternally. But that in no way annihilated them. The city might have gone to the bottom of the Dead Sea, or been covered by the Dead Sea. But the inhabitants of the city, with whom God particularly was dealing, are the ones who must stand for judgment on the last day and receive the full brunt of the punishment of God.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was not the end of Sodom and Gomorrah. The fact that there was a literal city that once existed and now cannot be found does not mean that the full payment has been made for their sins. A city consists of people, not of buildings. A city consists of people. And you'll remember when Abraham talked with God about Sodom and Gomorrah, he was saying, "If there are ten righteous in the city." These are the ones that God has in view when He talks about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now the fact that they came under this awful punishment of fire and brimstone was the means by which God brought the first death upon them. But there is still the second death that has to be

visited upon them in its full wrath of God. And that will occur when the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah are resurrected on the last day. "The hour cometh when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth, some to the resurrection of eternal damnation." And Revelation 20 says that the sea gave up the dead in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead in them. And you can rest assured that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah will also be resurrected to stand for judgment. And then eternal damnation will be visited upon them.

That activity that happened 4000 years ago was simply the beginning of an eternal damnation. And when God uses that word everlasting, He is speaking about eternity. He is speaking about something that goes on forever.

CALLER: What you've just presented sounds reasonable. But it's just a matter of definition of the word everlasting.

HC: You see, when we talk about the damnation of God, we read, for example, in Revelation 14:11: "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever." Now there's no way that we could understand it as anything but a continuous torment, when we read the language of everlasting damnation. On the one hand, in Matthew 25 God speaks about everlasting life. Well, everlasting life means it's life without end. It is life that goes on forever and ever, throughout eternity. And everlasting damnation then would be damnation that goes on forever and ever. That is the picture of the Bible.

And we read, for example, in Revelation 22, where it's talking about the New Heaven and the New Earth. And in that context it still has something to say about the unsaved. They're still in existence: "Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers," and so on and so on. They have not been annihilated.

This idea of annihilation is a very convenient idea, and certainly for those who are not really sure whether they're saved or not it's a very hopeful idea, because after all, then the worst that can happen to me if I happen not to be a born again believer is that I just cease to exist. Like an animal, I cease to exist. So I can bear that. After all, there's no pain, there's no penalty being paid if I simply cease to exist.

CALLER: If you die in a fire you live a good many minutes or hours.

HC: Well, my, you know, all kinds of Christians, where were born again believers, died in a fire. They were tied to a stake, and they died with the fire burning all around them. Now were they subjected to the same punishment that is spoken of when God speaks of eternal damnation? In other words, are you suggesting that these Christians who were burned at the stake actually suffered hell, and yet are born again believers? That wouldn't follow at all, would it?

CALLER: But they will be saved, because they're saved.

HC: Well, I know, but the fact is, if you're saying that the essence of hell is to die in a fire, then effectively you're saying that a Christian who is burned at the stake has suffered hell. And a Christian does not suffer hell. There's no way that a Christian suffers hell.

A Christian's sins have been covered. And so dying in a fire is not hell. That's an impossibility. That would make no sense at all. Hell is infinitely more terrible than dying in a fire, or to cease to exist. Hell is eternal damnation. It's awful. It's a terrible thing. That's why the Bible uses such ugly language in speaking about hell.

CALLER: The Bible made one mistake then when it said everlasting punishment instead of everlasting punishing. According to what we've just now discussed, it would be everlasting

punishing. They would continue to be punished throughout the endless ages.

HC: I think that's just a matter of semantics. When a man has committed a crime and he is sent to prison for the rest of his natural life, which is really an analogous situation to what hell is, if a man has a life expectancy of, let's say, seventy years, and he has to spend most of those years until he dies in prison, that is punishment for the rest of his life. Now the life expectancy, or the existence expectancy of an unsaved person is forever. His existence is unending. And his punishment is for the rest of his life expectancy, or his existence. I don't use the word life because technically speaking we are not really alive in the full sense of the word unless we are in the Lord Jesus Christ, because we were created in the image of God. And so maybe we should use that word existence. His existence expectancy is forever. And the punishment for his sins is that he is to endure the wrath of God forever.

Now we see that. I think sending a man to jail for the rest of his natural life is directly analogous to God's statement of everlasting damnation.

But look. We've talked quite awhile together, and we should give someone else an opportunity. Thank you so much for calling. Good night.

Will Hell Really Go On Forever? (536A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: Do you think that God really wants to have hell and people suffering forever and ever and ever? Don't you think that there's going to be a time when He just puts an end to it entirely and makes it final?

HC: The question is, how can it be that God would want hell to go on eternally? Wouldn't there finally come a time when the suffering has been sufficient and He would put an end to it?

Well, the problem is that we are in no position to judge the quantity or the quality of the penalty God demands for our sins. We are part of the sinful people, you see. And we of course do not understand the immense holiness of God, the fantastic justice of God. We just don't understand it. We can't contemplate anyone who is perfectly just. We therefore do not understand the immensity, the awful immensity of having been created in the image of God so that we were created to love God and have fellowship with Him, and yet to openly violate God and rebel against Him. We don't understand the awfulness of that kind of a sin. And for that reason we cannot really understand the awfulness of the punishment that God has.

We do know this, however, that God is absolutely perfect in His holiness, He's absolutely just in His holiness. And therefore whatever penalty He has meted out in hell, it is a perfect penalty. We know that. But we cannot understand it. There's no human being who's ever experienced hell. And those who are going to experience it are going to take eternity before they really know how great it really is. All we can do is get a little bit of an insight as to the utter awfulness of hell when we see Jesus in His suffering, as already before ever a hand is laid on Him He's in the Garden of Gethsemane, and already He's throwing Himself to the ground with great cries, and the sweat is pouring off His body like great drops of blood into the ground, and He's crying out to God, "Father, is it possible that this cup might pass from Me?" And we already then are beginning to see the awfulness of hell. But again, because we've never endured hell and because we don't know the perfection of God's holiness or the terribleness of sin as a reproach against

the holiness of God, we cannot understand hell.

But when we look at the language of the Bible, as God speaks of it as a place of outer darkness, as God speaks of it as a place where the worm dieth not, as a place where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth, as a burning furnace, as a lake of fire, as a place of outer darkness, where the torment goes on forever, and so on, and look at all the language, we know that it's a super awful, terrible place. And it's no place I want to go to.

CALLER: I'm confused, because in some places it does speak about forever and tormenting, and the worm dieth not. However, in many other places it speaks of ashes and consumed and utterly destroyed. And those things sound very final to me.

HC: I think we can reconcile these two kinds of passages if we recognize this, that first of all God uses the language of Judgment Day and hell as being cut off, or perishing from this earth. You see, man was created to live forever on this earth. If Adam and Eve had not sinned, then mankind would have continued forever on this earth. The fact is, Jesus said, "The meek shall inherit the earth." The believers are not going to inherit this present sin-cursed earth as it now is, but as it will be when it is recreated.

When God created man, God created man in a very intimate relationship with this earth. We come from the dust, we're made up of the same chemicals as the earth is, and we return to the dust. There is an intimacy that exists. God created us that way. Now God uses language of those who are to endure hell, or who are under judgment, that they will be cut off from this earth. They will perish from this earth. And this is the language that particularly might look like there is annihilation.

But when we try to include all of the verses of the Bible that speak of hell, then we know that it is not annihilation but that it is something that goes on forever, whatever it is.

CALLER: Well, in Malachi 3:6 I hope you can look at that now, where it says why you were not already utterly destroyed.

HC: "For I am the Lord. I change not. Therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Now what are you saying about that?

CALLER: I think maybe there's a verse after that about why we are not already utterly destroyed.

HC: But destroyed from what? We can be destroyed, God uses the word destroyed in Hebrews 2:14, that Satan was destroyed at the cross, that Christ by His death destroyed Him who had power over death, namely, Satan. Well now, Satan still exists. He still is alive and well. And he is going to be committed to hell. But nevertheless God uses the word destroyed.

Now the word destroy means that he has been vanquished, and he has been removed from his place of authority, and he is destined for hell. The word destroy has a whole lot of implications when we look at everything that's going to happen to Satan. Now again, man is going to be destroyed from this earth. Now in our common parlance, when we use the word perish or destroy, we think of annihilation. But when the Bible uses this word, the Bible doesn't necessarily mean this at all. Man was created to exist forever, and he will exist forever, either under the blessing of God in the New Heaven and the New Earth, or under the curse of God in hell.

And the big question is not is hell going to go on so long or so long. The big question is, am I ready to face my Maker? Have I made my peace with God? Do I know that my sins have been paid for, so that I will take no chance with hell? Whatever hell is, I want no

part of it at all. Everything I read in the Bible about the wrath of God shows me that it must be super terrible, and I wouldn't sleep tonight if I thought that there was any possibility I might go to hell.

But thank you so much for calling. And may the Lord richly bless you. Good night.

"I Don't Care if I Go to Hell" (732A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Is this a Christian station, where you talk about the Bible?

HC: Yes. This is a station where we're interested in encouraging people to the Bible. If you have a question, I'll try to relate it to the Bible.

CALLER: Okay. I don't care if I go to hell.

HC: You don't, care.

CALLER: I don't. I really don't.

HC: Why do you say that?

CALLER: Because, first of all, I couldn't believe in the Bible, because if I did I would feel like a robot: "You can't do this, you can't do that, God's watching you."

HC: Yes, I can see what you're saying. And of course the fact that you don't believe the Bible and you really don't think that the Bible means what it says when it talks about eternal damnation, of course doesn't mean that hell doesn't exist, does it?

CALLER: No.

HC: And the Bible indicates that it's everlasting torment. It is a terrible thing to come into the hands of an angry God. And when the Bible paints pictures of hell, it paints it in the language of the most terrible kinds of suffering. Now since you can't see hell, and you can't go anywhere to see people suffering in hell, it seems like that's only a figment of man's imagination, and maybe it's not real. And very boldly you can say, "Well, I don't care if I go to hell or not," but the fact is that doesn't change the matter of hell. Hell is still there. And if you die unsaved you're going to hell. You may say, "I don't care," but you'll care when you get there. And there is no escape from hell. It is eternal damnation.

CALLER: I just have a hard time, I don't know if it's pride (I hope it's not) or whatever, but I just have a hard time believing that.

HC: You mention that you hate to get to the point where you have to do this and you have to do that, and you just become a robot of some kind. Well, you know, before we're saved, before we're really a child of God, the Bible says that we're blinded by our sin. We're deceived by Satan. We're slaves of Satan, and he rules over us. And we really think we've got a lot of answers, but the fact is we don't have the truth at all.

Now let me just tell you something. Those who have really become children of God, those who have really trusted in Jesus as their Savior, are not robots. Nor do they find that it's just an uphill climb, a miserable existence, because they can't do this and they can't do the other thing. As a matter of fact, they have a lot more joy in their lives than people who are not saved. You see, when you're not saved of course you would hate to always obey God, because in every part of your being you want to do your own thing. Man by nature is very selfish and just wants to do his own thing. But when you become a child of God, God makes you a new personality in a real sense. In your soul existence He gives you a brand new soul. And in that sense you have an earnest desire to do the will of God. And the joy of obedience to God will be far more wonderful than the miserable pleasure you get in doing your sin today.

Now I can only say these things as a fact

because I've experienced these things. And the Bible tells us about these things. But you have not experienced that, so of course you can say, "Well, I just don't buy that."

CALLER: Yes, but man was created to do great things, be creative and be constructive, and so on. And yet when you look at the Bible, you can't do this or you're sinning, or you can't get rich or you're going to hell, etc.

HC: Well, you see, man was created, first of all, to have fellowship with God. The Bible opens up the curtain and really gives us the full explanation. You know, even heathen people sense that they ought to have some relationship with God. They'll worship an idol, or they'll worship the crocodiles. And they'll even get uneasy about the way they're living, and they'll offer sacrifices of some kind. Sometimes they'll even offer their children as a sacrifice, because deep in man's heart he realizes that there is a God and he's got to have some kind of a relationship with Him. And he'd like to figure out how to do it.

Now wonderfully, the Bible is God's book to us, that opens up the curtain and tells us the truth about ourselves. The Bible tells us that we were created in the image of God. We were created to have fellowship with Him. And that's where we can have our highest joy.

But the problem is that man rebelled against God. And so man's heart has become desperately wicked. And so we're in rebellion against God. And we're under the curse of God. And so we're really all messed up, and man cannot realize his highest goals and good. He can't live with maximum happiness and satisfaction, because he's estranged from God.

But when you become a child of God, then you are reunited with God, and then you find a real love for God in your heart. And you find that life really has meaning and purpose, and you no longer wonder about what's going to happen when you die. You know what's going to happen. The Bible tells us exactly what will happen when we die. And when you see troubles around and in your life, you know where they come from, because the Bible tells us. I'll tell you, the Bible is just absolutely a wonderful book. You can learn more truth there in a day than you could in a million years going to some of the great libraries and universities of our land, because the Bible gets right down to the very fundamental truth.

CALLER: Yes, but everybody interprets the Bible in their own.

HC: It's true that a lot of people don't regard the Bible properly. The Bible insists that we are to believe it alone and in its entirety as the Word of God. The Bible insists that we are to interpret the Bible by the Bible. In other words, the Bible is God's whole textbook for man, and all the information is there. We simply have to check the Bible against the Bible. And then we will come to truth.

Now if we don't obey the Bible's rules, then we can go off in all directions and come up with wrong conclusions and doctrines and practices, and really go haywire. But if we really go to the Bible trusting it is the Word of God, and this is God speaking to me, as we go from page to page, and when we see something significant checking to see if there's anything else in the Bible that relates to it, slowly on we do come to truth. And I can tell you, it's wonderful. It's really wonderful to know that I'm not faced with hell. I know that God is my Savior. I know that I am free to live a life that is pleasing to God, and I am not afraid of wanting to do the things that the world thinks are important.

You know, when we're unsaved, we really think, "Boy, if I could only do this and if I could only do that as much as I want." We think that's great. But the fact

is, when you have all that you want of any kind of sin, there really is no ultimate satisfaction. You simply want to go deeper into that sin, or you want to try out another sin. A fellow tries marijuana, and he gets jaded with that, so he tries some opium or some speed, or something else. And if that doesn't help for a while, then maybe he'll try alcohol. You just go from one thing to another, looking for something and never quite getting it. You think for the moment, that you have really found joy, but then the next thing you know it isn't there. And in the meanwhile you find that your life is just falling apart. And your health is failing and you're messing up in every way, and you wonder, "What has happened?" Well that's because you're not doing it God's way. If you do it God's way, God has laid down rules so that we can have maximum happiness.

CALLER: But I went to church a couple of Sundays ago, and the preacher said that all people who want to get rich are going to hell. And I can't see that. If a man sets a goal for himself and goes after that goal and becomes rich, I think that person deserves it. I don't care if there's a God or not.

HC: Let's put it this way. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that we cannot be rich and be a child of God. But we will have priorities in our life. When we have become a child of God, we'll find that getting rich is not the first priority. Oh, God may bless us. I know businessmen who are Christians, and God blesses their business, and they really become very wealthy. But because they are children of God, they have an earnest desire to make that wealth available to send forth the Gospel into the world, because they have a different priority.

Now an unsaved person becomes rich only because he thinks that this is going to make it possible for him to please himself. He can live in the biggest possible house and drive the finest possible car, and have all the other things that money can buy. That is his pursuit. And he'll get a certain pleasure from that. But he'll never be satisfied. He'll go after more riches so he can have more expensive things. And all the time he'll be worrying that somebody is going to take it away from him.

But when you become a child of God, then you realize that money isn't that big a deal. It's nice to have money, but there are more important things than money, and ultimately it doesn't make that much difference what kind of house we live in or what kind of a car we drive, or what kind of clothes we wear, because we've got something that is far more precious, far more wonderful than the things that money can buy.

Now until you are a child of God, of course you can't understand that. And so your question is not, "Shall I become rich or not?" That's not the question you have to face. What you have to face is, "Suppose I died tonight." And remember that you don't have any guarantee that you'll be alive tomorrow morning, anymore than I do, or anymore than anybody else does. And suppose there really is hell. Suppose that the Bible is true. And if you die without Christ, it means that you'll wake up on the last day and you'll have to answer for your sins, and you're going to be removed into eternal damnation.

You can say, "All right, I'll run that risk. But until I die, I'll be able to live the way I want to live." Well all right. Let's examine the kind of bargain that you're getting. You're going to get a few hours or a few days or months or years of doing your own thing. And you're going to trade it for an eternity in hell. Now that to me is a pretty bad bargain. That's pretty awful. And frankly, the more I study the Bible, if I were unsaved I'd be climbing the wall with fear. I don't want to go to hell. I'd be running out of my skin with fear, because hell, according to

what I read in the Bible, is certain and sure, and I don't want to go to hell.

But wonderfully, not only does the Bible tell us about hell (and it really does; it's got a lot to say about hell); it also tells us of a way of escape. And it's a wonderful way of escape. And that way of escape is to just recognize the truth, that if I'm unsaved I'm a sinner, I'm under the wrath of God, I'm going to hell, I deserve to go to hell. And the only way is through the Lord Jesus Christ. And I begin to cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me. I'm a sinner. I want to believe in Jesus. I want Him to be my Savior. Oh Lord, help me to believe in Him."

CALLER: Have you ever heard of hope?

HC: Hope for what?

CALLER: I mean, everybody that lives has a hope.

HC: Yes. Everybody that lives has a hope. And what hope do they have? They have a hope, first of all, that they'll just keep living for another day. And they're hoping that they'll live to a ripe old age. They don't want to even think of death.

And they hope that everything is going to be all right on the other side of the grave, that maybe since most of the people are like they are most people can't be wrong, and somehow it's going to be all right.

Well, that can sustain them. But the Bible opens up the picture and tells us whether that hope has any reality. And the first thing the Bible says is, Look, you have no guarantee you'll be alive tomorrow. You can hope you'll be alive tomorrow, but a lot of people are going to die tonight - in an accident or from an illness, or, for unexplained reasons. We can die for a lot of reasons. And so your hope that you're going to live to a ripe old age is on really thin ground.

But when it comes to life after death, the hope that everything is going to be all right has absolutely no basis in fact. That is simply a vain, empty hope. The fact is that it is appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment. And the wages of sin is death. The Bible is absolutely insistent that there is hell to pay. And so that hope is totally empty.

Now on the other hand, when you become a child of God, you have a hope. But it is a hope that is rooted in absolute solid fact. It is the fact that I know my sins have been paid for, that Jesus Christ is my Savior, and therefore I cannot go to hell. Christ has already endured hell on my behalf. It is a hope that is rooted in the fact that when I die I know that I'm going to be with the Lord Jesus in glory, where there's not going to be any more suffering or sorrow. It is a hope that is absolutely certain and sure, and the Bible speaks of it as a hope. But it's an entirely different kind of hope than the hope of the unsaved.

CALLER: I had a friend that thought the Bible was a lie. And he ended up dead a couple weeks ago.

HC: All right. Now imagine that had been you. Just imagine that had been you. That's awful close to home. He thought it was a lie; that's his privilege. That didn't make it a lie, though. The fact is that the Bible is still the Bible. It is still the Word of God. And your friend, if he died unsaved (and according to your testimony, we'd have to assume that this is so) is going to spend eternity under damnation. And frankly, that's the most awful thing that could have happened to your friend. And except for God's grace, that could have been you, because you have no more reason to be alive today than he had to be alive. I have no idea why he died, whether it was an accident or self-inflicted, or whatever it was. But the fact is, it could have been you. And now you're still alive. And the Bible says, "How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?" And so you can still do something about it. You can

face yourself honestly and start crying out to God for His mercy.

CALLER: But don't you think we're going to destroy ourselves anyway in a nuclear war?

HC: Whether man kills off each other by war or not, and whether two people with a pistol kill each other, or whether it's some people killing each other with bows and arrows, or whether they're dropping bombs on each other, or whether it's through a nuclear holocaust, it doesn't make any difference. In every case, when man is dead the next thing that he will face if he's unsaved, is eternal damnation.

And the very fact that we live in a world that is so threatened by war makes it even more imperative that I know that I'm a child of God. Suppose some nation drops a nuclear bomb on us. And that could happen. That certainly could happen. Then none of us would be alive. We'd be dead. But that doesn't change the fact of where we're going. Whether we died of a nuclear bomb or whether we died of old age at the age of 93, or whether we died of an illness when we were 19, we're dead. And there are certain things that follow. And for the unsaved it means eternal damnation. The Bible says that we're going to be resurrected on the last day. And we're going to stand for judgment if we're unsaved. God keeps an account of every idle word that we ever spoke, or every thought that we ever expressed. God keeps accounts of this. And we have to answer for this. And if anything was sinful, it is enough to send us to hell.

CALLER: I have a hard time believing that.

HC: Surely you do. Everything within you doesn't want to believe it. You'd give your eye teeth that it wouldn't be true, because it's too horrible. It's too terrible. But that doesn't change the fact that it is true. But wonderfully, God not only tells us that it's true, but He gives the way of escape. He tells us that if we will cast ourselves on Christ, if we will cry out to Him, if we will entrust our life to Him, we can be saved.

CALLER: Are you saying that God knows everything everybody does, billions and billions of people?

HC: You're saying, how can God know all of this? There are 4.5 billion people approximately in the world, and maybe there have been another 5 to 8 billion who have lived before this time and have subsequently died. Can God know all of this?

Look. Have you ever looked at this world, at how intricate it is? Have you ever looked in a microscope or a telescope? Have you ever noticed that scientists will struggle trying to figure out what life is? Well, God created all this. God is infinite God. He spoke and it came into being. And for God to know and have accounts of all of the lives of 10 or 20 billion people is nothing at all. That's nothing for God. God is God. And remember we're reckoning with God. We can't change that fact. All you have to do is look at this creation to know there is a God, because in no way could animals and plants and mankind have come into existence without a master designer, someone to design them and then make them originally. That's the only way that could have happened. So there's got to be a God. And if there's a God, it means you and I have got to answer to that God. That's why the evolutionists are so beset with their blind faith in evolution. They're hoping that there is no God. And evolution is set up under the assumption there is no God, that it all happened by blind chance, which is ridiculous. But evolutionists insist on this because they don't want to face up to the fact that there is a God. The moment they recognize there is a God, then they know they've got to answer to that God. And that's unacceptable. They know they're in trouble, because mankind, deep in his

heart, knows that he's going to be found guilty, and then judgment is going to come.

CALLER: I used to be a Christian. I know exactly what you've been talking about. And then I went back to my old ways. And it's hard for me to get back to being a Christian. I don't know if it's ego or what.

HC: I'll tell you what the problem is. You were never a Christian. And I say that not judging you. But the Bible says that when we become saved we become a new creature. We are born from above. We are given a brand new soul. And in our new soul, in our new spirit, we never want to sin again. And so had you truly become a child of God, if you had really become born again, then when you started drifting into your old ways, there would have been a violent struggle set up within you.

I'll tell you what experience you had. You had the same experience that many have. You joined up with Christians. You said, "Yes, that makes a lot of sense, to be a believer in Christ." And you joined. And you began to live like a Christian. But it was uphill work, because you had not become saved. And neither in your body nor your Soul had you become saved, so pretty soon you got sick and tired of this trying to live like a Christian. And finally you just slipped back into your old ways. And that's why you reluctantly think about trying to live like a Christian again. It's going against your grain, because the heart of an unsaved person doesn't want to obey God. But if you really become a child of God, so that you're really born again, then there is a miracle that has taken place in your life, in your soul existence, that part of you that leaves the body at death and goes to be with Christ. You have experienced the resurrection in your soul. And in that part of your life you never want to sin again. And so when you start drifting into sin there is conflict that develops, and you're not really happy unless you are living obediently before Christ.

But marvelously, even though you are not a Christian, you can become a Christian. But you've got to do it God's way. You've got to look at yourself honestly and cry out to God for His mercy and faith that you might believe in Christ as your Savior. To become a Christian is the moment of truth, when I see myself as a bankrupt, rotten sinner, under the wrath of God, deserving hell. And all I know is I don't want to go to hell. I'm just frightened out of my skin because of hell.

CALLER: Well, I appreciate your time.

HC: All right. I'm very glad you called tonight, because you're making statements that a lot of people would like to make. And I also perceive that you are struggling with this to some degree. Otherwise you wouldn't have taken time to call. But you just reflect on this now. Suppose I die tonight. Your friend died a couple of weeks ago. Suppose that had been you. And remember, every human being dies, unless Christ comes first, at the end of time. And then it's the same as if we died anyway. But every human being dies. And we can die as a young man just as well as an old man, as you know. And remember that no matter what you think about hell, or what your friends think about hell, the fact is, the Bible teaches us that hell is absolutely real. It's absolutely certain. And so as long as you live unsaved, you're walking a very very dangerous line.

CHAPTER 11 – ISRAEL AND THE JEWS

Are Americans and Britons Descendants of Israel? (035B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I just wanted to say in response to the last caller. I kind of had a head knowledge of God, and I didn't really have a personal experience with Him until He brought sickness into my life. At the time I didn't know what was happening until after it was all over. But I found out that it brought me closer to Him. So He does work that way.

HC: He really does.

CALLER: It might be kind of frightening at first, but after awhile you look back on it, and it's pretty wonderful.

My question tonight is about the old theory that Americans and the British are descendants of the Israelites.

HC: There's not a figment of truth in it.

CALLER: But where does that idea come from?

HC: I have no idea. I have no idea where any man gets any idea. You know, our minds are as prolific in our imagination as you want to name. With our minds we can go to the moon, we can go to the stars, we can dream up all kinds of things. And if we dwell on an idea long enough, pretty soon we begin to believe it. And if someone else has had the idea before, and they wrote about it, then we're more convinced than ever that it may be true.

Ideas ultimately come out of our minds, of course. But there isn't the slightest possibility that this is true. This would be absolutely and totally foreign to the Bible.

CALLER: Have they ever traced the descendants of the tribes of Israel? Where did they disperse to?

HC: Well, yes. The Bible indicates that up until the year 722 BC we have the nation of Israel as it existed in the land of Palestine. It was about two million strong approximately, two to three million. And it consisted of two nations, the nation of Judah to the south, and the nation of Israel, comprised of the ten tribes, to the north.

In 722 BC the Assyrians came and destroyed the northern kingdom of the ten tribes. Now some they took captive into Babylon, some they left there to till the fields, and so on. And they also imported Assyrians to live there. And these became a mixed race, called the Samaritans. They still existed at the time that Jesus came.

And some left the northern area and came into the land of Judah and became part of the two tribes. So you have remnants of all the twelve tribes with the two tribes. And so that then became Israel, from the year 722 BC until 587 BC.

Then in that year, that nation, the nation of Israel as it was not constituted, predominantly of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin with a smattering or remnant from the other ten tribes, was destroyed by the Babylonians. And some were taken captive into Babylon. Many of course were killed. And again, some were left as the poor of the land, right in the land of Palestine.

Then, beginning in 539 BC under Cyrus the Mede, and later on in 458 BC under the reign of Artaxerxes, the king of the Medes and the Persians, some of the Jews from any of the twelve tribes went back into the land of Palestine. And gradually, from this, the nation of Israel was rebuilt until it existed as the nation of Israel as it was in Jesus' day. At that time, of course, they had drifted under the heel of the Roman Empire.

Then in 70 AD the Jewish nation was destroyed by the Roman Empire. The fact is, in Jerusalem itself, according to the secular historians, something like more than a million Jews were killed. And so the nation was pretty well annihilated. And the balance were just dispersed into the nations. So they have continued to exist until the very present day, except for those who returned to Israel beginning in 1948.

Now the Europeans, and of course most Americans, because most of them come from Europe – either from England or Holland or Hungary or Spain, etc. – probably have their genealogical line completely separate all the way back to Noah. The Bible speaks of Noah, back in the year 4990 BC, that he had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now we know the Jewish nation comes from Shem. We know that the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Canaanites, the Egyptians and the people of Africa come from Ham. But the coastland peoples were the descendants of Japheth. And in all probability most of the Europeans came from Japheth.

And so the probability of England or Americans or Europeans being related to the twelve tribes, or the ten so called lost tribes (they're not really lost, because this is a figure of speech that people use, not knowing what the Bible declares) is just about nil.

CALLER: So they're not really lost.

HC: No. They've just been integrated into the nation of Israel and severely decimated by the judgments that God has brought against them.

CALLER: I think also that some people that the word Britain in Hebrew means "Son of the Covenant," or something like that.

HC: Well, I wouldn't pay any attention to that because it's not biblical.

CALLER: I have a friend who just got into that, and he's been telling me a lot about it. And I'm not that much of a Bible scholar, but I can tell that a lot of it's groundless. Did you not write something about this?

HC: No. I never am interested in writing about other religions or cults or gospels. I have written a couple of books on the Bible itself. But I just feel that it's not our job to go through life lambasting others. It's our job to positively offer what the Gospel declares, and let God bring the conviction in the heart.

God's Promises to Abraham Concerning Israel (138A)

HC: Before we take our next call, I would like to beg your indulgence, and I would like to expand a little bit further on the truth concerning the promises that were made to Abraham.

There are many who are making certain assertions and claims concerning God's promise to Abraham as it relates to modern Israel today. And because they are not reading the whole Bible, because they are not carefully going through the Scriptures, to see the development of God's program, God's plan of salvation, very easily it is possible to arrive at conclusions that are very much contrary to the Word of God.

Now you'll remember that the promise was given to Abraham that he would be given the land of Canaan, that his seed would inherit the land of Canaan, and that this promise of the inheritance of the physical land of Canaan was completely fulfilled during the days of Solomon. In Nehemiah 9:7 & 8 God speaks there of His promise to Abraham that the land of the Perizzite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, and so on, was to be given to his seed. And God was faithful. They did receive that land.

And we know from the language of I Kings 4 that this gained its fullest fulfillment during the days of Solomon. So insofar as the physical land of Canaan, there is no longer any part of that promise that must be fulfilled. Now this is an astounding idea to many, who have been taught that there still must be some kind of a promise fulfilled. But if we're going to let the Bible speak to us, if we're going to let the Bible be the authority, then we must conclude that there is no further implication insofar as this promise is concerned concerning the physical land of Canaan.

But you'll remember that there was an eternal aspect of this promise to Abraham, namely, that he would be given this land as an everlasting possession. Now the moment you find this phrase "everlasting" or "eternally" or "forever" in the Bible, you can know immediately that it is not talking about something that is related to this sin-cursed earth. Nor is it related to a political kingdom. That cannot be, because all of the political kingdoms, including the nation of Israel, which is a political kingdom, will all cease at Judgment Day, as will this sin-cursed earth.

This sin-cursed earth is going to be destroyed by fire, and it will be recreated New Heavens and a New Earth. And so when God spoke to Abraham about the land being an everlasting possession, God had in view something other than the literal land of Canaan. And we saw that Abraham understood this. He immediately spiritualized that promise, and recognized that God was not talking about the literal land.

We read in Hebrews 11 that he was looking for a Heavenly City. Incidentally, when we use that phrase, spiritualizing a promise of this nature, we're not suggesting that a spiritual fulfillment is less real or is less authentic than some kind of a literal physical fulfillment. The promise to Abraham that his seed would inherit the land in its physical fulfillment had to do with a literal political nation of Israel, that reigned during the days of Solomon. And it was fulfilled.

But the spiritual implication of the land has just as real a fulfillment in that the New Heavens and the New Earth, which will be very real, will be inherited by all the believers. As Jesus put it, "The meek shall inherit the earth." It is begun with our citizenship belonging in Heaven. That is the land that we enter into when we are saved. And it's a real land. Heaven is a real land. No, it's not a land that looks like our sin-cursed earth. But it's a real place. God dwells there. And those who have been saved dwell there. And it's as real as this earth is real. Now that is the land that we inherit when we are the seed of Abraham.

Now let's look tonight, very briefly, at another aspect of this promise to Abraham. And that has to do with the fact that he was promised a multitudinous progeny. Back in Genesis 13 he was told, in verse 16, "I will make your seed as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your seed also can be counted." Or again, we read in Genesis 15:5, where Abraham was told, "Look toward heaven and number the stars, if you are able to number them. Then He said to him, 'So shall your seed be.'" Now that was a very definite promise to Abraham.

Was that promise fulfilled, in its literal, earth-related aspect? Yes, indeed, it was. It was completely fulfilled. We already read in Deuteronomy 10, when the nation of Israel was going out of Egypt, that God said to them in verse 22, "Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons. And now the Lord your God has made you as the stars of heaven for multitude." And we read in Nehemiah 9:23, where Ezra is praying to God and saying, "Thou didst multiply their seed as the stars of heaven. And Thou didst bring them into the land which Thou hadst told their fathers to enter and possess."

And we read in I Kings 4:20, "Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy. They were as many as the sand by the sea." Now this is the language that was given to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, that their seed would be a multitudinous progeny, would be like the stars of the heaven in number, or as the sand by the sea, and so on.

And so whatever literal, physical, earth-related implication of this promise to

Abraham had, it has been fulfilled, even as the promise of the land has been fulfilled. But even as the promise concerning an eternal dimension, when God said, "I will give this land as an everlasting possession," so the promise concerning a multitudinous progeny had an eternal dimension.

In Genesis 17 we read, in verse 5, where God is telling Abraham at the time that he became the head of the Hebrew nation, at the time that he was circumcised, God said, "No longer shall your name be Abram. But your name shall be Abraham. For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kinds shall come forth from you."

Now you immediately sense that that has to have more than a physical dimension, because Abraham was the head of the nation of Israel. But God is saying, "You are going to be the father of a multitude of nations. There are going to be many nations over whom you are going to be the head." Now how was that all fulfilled?

Well, we first of all find repeatedly that in the Old Testament God emphasizes that there will be a time when Israel will be far larger than just the literal nation of Israel. Let me just give a couple of verses to show this, although there are many of these in the Old Testament.

In Isaiah 55 God said, as He's talking about the coming Messiah, in verse 5, "Behold, you shall call nations that you know not. And nations that knew you not shall run to you, because of the Lord your God and the Holy One of Israel. For He has glorified you."

We read in Isaiah 60:3, which is again talking about the Messiah, "And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." And we read in verse 10 of Isaiah 60, "Foreigners shall build up your walls, and kings shall minister to you." All of this is language that indicates that God has something great and wonderful for all the nations of the world.

And this all began in the promise to Abraham, "I will make you the father of a multitude of nations."

Well, let's look in the New Testament and see how this finally developed. We go to Galatians 3, and here God is speaking about Abraham. He says in verse 6 of Galatians 3, "Thus Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham."

Aha! Do you remember, in Genesis 17, that God had said, "You will be the father of a multitude of nations"? And here He is saying that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham, that is, men who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now notice in the next verse how God specifically emphasizes that this includes the Gentiles, the other nations of the world. "And the scripture . . . [the scripture is the Old Testament, that we have just been reading from] . . . And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith [or the heathen by faith], preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.'" In other words, God is insisting that when He was speaking to Abraham, back there in Genesis 17, He was anticipating the day when the true seed of Abraham would be believers from every nation, men of faith.

So we read in verse 9 of Galatians 3: "So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith." And this is further articulated in verses 28 and 29 of Galatians 3. It is through Christ that the spiritual promises made to Abraham are fulfilled. When we believe in Him, we are the true sons of Abraham.

Now let me reinforce this a little bit more with what we read in Romans 4. You'll

remember in Roman s 4 that in verse 13 it says of the promise to Abraham and his seed, that "they should inherit the world, did not come through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." In Romans 4:13 God is showing us that His intention was that the promise to Abraham concerning the land was far bigger than the physical land of Canaan. It would include the whole earth, which would have to be the New Heaven and the New Earth, because we are only pilgrims here.

Now by the same token, in Romans 4 we find that it talks about Abraham as being the father of the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Those who are blood descendants of Abraham think very heavily of the fact, they put a lot of weight in the fact that Abraham is their father, the head of their nation. Well, let's see what God says about the Gentiles who become believers.

We read in verse 9, the last half, that "We say that faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised?" Now before he was circumcised he was a Gentile. There were no Jews. When did he begin to believe? When he was a Gentile, or after he became circumcised, when officially the Jewish nation was founded?

The Bible says here, in the last half of verse 10, "It was not after but before he was circumcised. He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised," that is, while he was still a Gentile. It goes on, "The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised [that is, the father of the Gentiles who would believe, and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them] and likewise the father of the circumcised [that is, of the blood descendants of Abraham who are not merely circumcised but also follow the example of faith], which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised."

In other words, God is teaching that the true seed of Abraham that God had in view in the eternal characteristics of this promise, the eternal aspects of these promises to Abraham, was not the national Israel at all. It was those who would become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of them would be blood descendants of Abraham, but only if they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if they didn't believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, then they were not included.

And it also would include those who would be Gentiles and who were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And now you see how this parallels exactly the promise concerning the land.

Now I have offered this again tonight because there is so much misconception today concerning God's commitments to the nation of Israel, and what they will do and what they will be, as well as misconceptions concerning the whole nature of God's plan of salvation. God had one plan, and He has been working it out through time – through Abraham (it was already articulated through Noah, when we read that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; he was saved just like we are), and it has been worked out right through time.

And we who believe are finally the recipients of the glorious promises that have been made throughout the Bible. Now if we're only going to pick and choose from the Bible, if we're only going to take certain portions and not the others, then we're not going to see these things. And we're going to come up with doctrines that are contrary to the Bible, and doctrines that are quite erroneous. And it's imperative that we start all over again, that we carefully read the Bible, and we carefully compare scripture with

scripture, and we give just as much weight to the New Testament as the Old, and the Old as the New, because otherwise we're not going to find truth.

Now it's very easy, you know, to go along and say, "Now wait a minute, I don't really care about all this. I like what I believe and what I have been taught, and none of these things are really important." Is that really so? Is that really so? I think if I were going to become involved with a gospel, with a religion, I would want to know that everything that I have been taught is as true as possible. I'm one fellow who does not like to be conned. I don't like to be told something that is not true. I like to know that what I have been told is true.

Now I know, because I'm a teacher, that no teacher is infallible. I'm not infallible, your preacher is not infallible, the theologians of the past of your church are not infallible. Many of the things they have told you are true and trustworthy. But not everything. And therefore, in order that you might know that you have truth, check it out in the Bible. Patiently go through the Word, and don't be afraid to ask your pastor or ask your teacher, "Where did you read that in the Bible?" or "What do you do with this verse?" or "What do you do with that verse?" Any of us who teach ought to be ready to face every kind of a question like this. And if we try to dodge these questions, if we're not ready to face each question that comes, then we'd better do our homework, so that we can face these questions.

It is imperative that we constantly look for truth.

Will There Be An Earthly Reign of Christ? (139A)

HC: Now if our callers would be very patient, I would like to spend a little bit of time right now speaking about the thoughts that I alluded to on our last broadcast. We spent a little bit of time looking at the promises that were made to Abraham, concerning the fact that his seed would be a multitudinous progeny, that is, they would be a multitude of nations, and the fact that his seed would inherit the land of Canaan forever.

Abraham was told to look to the north, the south, the east, and the west. And all of this land would be given to his seed forever. Now we saw that while this promise had a literal fulfillment in relationship to the nation of Israel, and it was a complete, literal fulfillment, insofar as they were concerned, during the days of Solomon, yet there was a far more glorious fulfillment. And actually, the major focus of these promises was on the everlasting fulfillment, and that was through the Lord Jesus Christ, as He became the seed of Abraham, and became the head of all who are the true seed of Abraham. It is men of faith who are the seed of Abraham, we saw in Galatians 3:7. Those who believe in Christ are the true seed of Abraham.

And these are the promises that Abraham understood as he looked for a Heavenly City.

But now tonight I'd like to spend a few minutes with the question of the promise made to King David that one of his seed would sit on his throne. This is a very contemporary question, because there are many today who are convinced that this promise to David has never been fulfilled, and that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to come any time now, and He's going to establish a literal throne in Jerusalem, and He's going to reign not only over Israel, but over the whole world for a certain duration of time, and then, after that, the end of the world will come.

Now is this really possible? And I thought it would be very fruitful to look at quite a number of verses that relate to this question. And if you have a pencil, and would like to write down these verses, then in your spare time you can

check them out, to make sure that what I am saying is trustworthy.

Now in I Kings 8:25 we find Solomon speaking. You'll recall that Solomon was the son of David, who actually sat on the throne of David. And there we read, "Now therefore, oh Lord God of Israel, keep with Thy servant David, my father, what Thou hast promised him, saying, 'Thou shalt never fail you a man before Me to sit upon the throne of David, if only your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me as you have walked before Me.'"

Now let me put into this context what he said in verse 20 of I Kings 8. And again, this is Solomon speaking: "Now the Lord has fulfilled His promise which He made. For I have risen in the place of David my father and sit on the throne of Israel as the Lord promised. And I have built the house for the Name of the Lord, the God of Israel."

Now even as there was a literal fulfillment, a complete fulfillment, in a literal, physical fashion, of the promises that were made to Abraham, in this statement of I Kings 8:20 we find a literal fulfillment, physical fulfillment, of the promise made to David that one of his sons would sit on his throne, because Solomon sat on the throne of David, and he ruled over Israel. Let me read this again: "For I have risen in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised."

But there was another aspect of that promise, that was a conditional aspect. And that's what we looked at in verse 25. It says that, beyond the fact that someone would sit on the throne of David, his seed would sit on the throne forever, if only they walked righteously before God. "There shall never fail you a man before Me to sit upon the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me as you have walked before Me."

Now while Solomon was the fulfillment of that promise, this second aspect was not fulfilled in Solomon, because Solomon was not faithful to God. In his old age, he began to worship other gods. We read in Kings 11:11, "The Lord said to Solomon, 'Since this has been your mind, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your day. But I will tear it out of the hand of your son.'"

And so already God was taking the kingdom away from the line of Solomon. It began in a grievous fashion already with Solomon's son, Rehoboam, who was allowed to reign only over two tribes, whereas Jeroboam, someone totally unrelated to the line of David, was given the reign over ten tribes. This started in 931 BC. But worse than that, when we go through the line of Solomon all the way down to the third king to the last king over Judah, King Jeconiah, or Coniah, as he is called, he was cursed by God and told by God that none of his seed would ever sit on the throne of David.

And so the line of kings through Solomon came to a total end. We read in Jeremiah 22:30, "Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days. For none of his seed shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah." That was the end of Solomon's reign, insofar as his line was concerned. It began very brightly with Solomon.

But there's more to say about that. We look at Psalm 132. Or let me turn back to II Samuel 7, when God gave the original promise to David. Then he was told in verse 8, "Therefore thus [this is Nathan speaking to David] says the Lord of Hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel [in the

Bible prince and king are used interchangeably in speaking of David's throne] that you should be prince over My people Israel."

And then it goes on in verse 12, "When your days are fulfilled, and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring unto you, who shall come forth from your body. And I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." Now because we know that Solomon's line did not continue to reign forever, we know that God did not have in mind Solomon here. God had somebody else in mind. God was thinking of some other descendant of David who would sit on the throne. It would be a descendant who would sit on the throne and whose line of reign would go on forever.

Now remember when we talked about Abraham the moment we find the word "forever," we know immediately that God is not talking about this sin-cursed earth. He is talking about eternity. And the only kingdom that goes on everlastingly is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read in Psalm 132:11: "The Lord swore to David a sure oath, from which He will not turn back: One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne." Now notice the condition: "If your sons keep My covenant and My testimonies which I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit upon your throne."

Now Solomon did not keep the promise, and the kings that followed Solomon. And so their rulership was cut off, insofar as the throne of David was concerned. But Christ came, as we shall presently see, to sit on the throne of David. And His kingship lasts forever. We are the sons of Christ. We are adopted into the family of God. We become the children of God, and we reign with Christ, And it's an everlasting reign, because we have everlasting life.

This verse 12 of Psalm 132 is also emphasizing this term "forever." And so it has to be talking about the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm just beginning to build with one verse after another. And you'll see, as we go from one verse to another, how this picture develops, and how it all focuses on Christ. Now many of us are very familiar with Isaiah 9:6, where God declares, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." And immediately we know, that's talking about Christ coming as the Messiah. "And His Name will be called wonderful, counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

We know that almost by heart, many of us. But what we don't very often read is the phrase that is in the middle of this statement and the phrase that follows this statement which I have just read. Let me read it again, verse 6 of Isaiah 9: "For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And His Name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

You see, God is saying that this Messiah, this Child who would be born, would be a ruler. The government would be upon His shoulders. And then it goes on and says right in the next verse, "Of the increase of His government and of peace, there will be no end." In other words, it's an everlasting kingship that this Messiah would establish.

Remember, the context is, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." It's talking about the Messiah coming as a King. And it will be an everlasting kingdom. Now notice the next phrase, right in order. It says here, "His Name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over

his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it, with justice and with righteousness, from this time forth and forever more. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."

In other words, this eternal kingdom that Christ the Messiah was going to establish would be an everlasting kingdom, and it would be built on the throne of David. That's the biblical language. It would be built upon the throne of David. And so we immediately see that God, in very direct fashion, in very plain language, is focusing our attention upon Christ as the one who came to fulfill the promise that someone from the line of David would sit on his throne and reign forever.

Now interestingly enough, there were no kings between David and Christ. The line to Solomon petered out during the days of Jeconiah, around 595 BC, or thereabouts. But Christ's line goes from David through Nathan and through a whole lot of other people, none of whom were kings. And finally we come to Jesus Christ. And His is an eternal kingdom. Incidentally, you know, throughout the New Testament we find that He is spoken of as the Lord Jesus Christ. Now Lord means that He is to be worshipped. He is to be regarded as the one who rules. So He came as a King. He is called the Christ, which means the Anointed One. Christ came as a King. And He established His Kingdom, of course, by going to the cross.

We go to Jeremiah 23, where we read in verse 5, "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch. And He shall reign as King and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the Name by which He will be called, The Lord is Our Righteousness." That's the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the branch, as we read in Isaiah 11. He is the one who is raised up for David. He is seated on the throne of David.

Now a couple of other Old Testament passages quickly, and then we'll look at the New Testament, to see there how all these things were fulfilled. Now in Ezekiel 34 we read about the coming of the Messiah, in verse 11: "Behold, I, I Myself, will search for My sheep and will seek them out, like a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad." That's talking about Christ coming as the Good Shepherd. We can't get away from that.

In verse 15 God said, "I Myself will be the Shepherd of My sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled." He is the one who is the Good Shepherd, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, as we read in the New Testament. And this is Christ Himself, who is God.

Now in verse 23 we find that Christ here is called "My servant David," because it says, in verse 23 of Ezekiel 34, "And I will set over them [that is, over these sheep] one Shepherd." Now remember in verse 15, He said, "I Myself will be the Shepherd." So there's one Shepherd. And then He says, "My servant David, and He shall feed them."

Now if God says that He is the Shepherd, and there's only one Shepherd, and "My servant David" will be the Shepherd, then God is saying, "I am My servant David." In other words, Christ was typified by David. David was a type of Christ. And He is called "My servant David." It isn't suggesting that David would be reincarnated. It's only saying that Christ came in the spirit and power of David, or better put, Christ was typified by David. He was a shepherd and a king.

And then it goes on in verse 24 of Ezekiel 34: "And I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David shall be

Prince among them." That's Christ. Christ shall be Prince among them. "I the Lord have spoken." He is our King, of course.

Now let's go to the New Testament. And in the Gospel of Luke we find the angel talking to Mary. And she is told in verse 31 of Luke 1: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son. And you shall call His Name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His Father David." You see how plain that language is? It relates right back to all these Old Testament statements.

And then it goes on: "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of His kingdom there will be no end." That's the language of Isaiah 9, that the government will increase and will never have an end. Remember we read that.

Now remember when Jesus stood before Pilate? He said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." His Kingdom as a Heavenly Kingdom. It was an everlasting Kingdom. When Jesus came, He said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." And that Kingdom is the Kingdom that we enter into when we are saved. In Colossians 1:13 we read that we have been transferred from the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son.

Now if you're going to have a kingdom, you need a king. And that King is the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is the fulfillment of these glorious promises that there would be a son of David, someone coming from David, who would sit on the throne of David. And he would reign, and his children after him would reign forever. We are the children, and we are those who reign.

Now in Acts 2 we find another New Testament statement that emphasizes this truth in a very direct fashion. It's talking in verse 29 about David, that he is in the tomb. And speaking of David, it says, "Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God has sworn with an oath to him, that he would set one of his seed upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of Christ."

David realized that when the Messiah came, He would be the fulfillment of the promise that one of his seed would sit on his throne, the throne of David, forever. And of course Christ came as a King. In Ephesians 2:20 & 21 it says that when He rose from the grave, "He sat down at the right hand of God and rules over everything, not only in this age but in the age to come."

And in Hebrews 1:8 we read that of the Son, God says, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Now the Jews in Jesus' day made a colossal mistake. They read the Scriptures which they had, just as we have the Scriptures. And they couldn't get their mind off of an earthly kingdom, off of a political kingdom. They didn't read the Scriptures carefully and see all the "forevers." They weren't at all careful in what they were reading.

And so they got the idea that a progeny of David, a descendant of David, would arise as the Messiah, and he would establish a physical kingdom centered in Jerusalem, and he would free them from Roman rule. Now when Jesus, the true Messiah, came, He did not fit that description of what they were looking for. And so they rejected Him and crucified Him. Now this of course worked into God's plan. This was required in order that Christ would come as the true Messiah, to actually sit on the throne of David, to establish an everlasting Kingdom, to fulfill all of these Old Testament promises.

Unbeknownst to these Jews, the very thing that they were denying was actually happening. But the sad fact is that these Jews remained in their unbelief, because they were looking for the wrong kind of a king.

Now today we have a tremendous amount of activity by those who are speaking again of an earthly kingdom, a kingdom that cannot be a forever kingdom. No political kingdom on this sin-cursed earth could be a forever kingdom. That's an impossibility. Only a kingdom that is Heaven-related can be eternal.

And so to raise the idea that Christ is going to come and sit on a physical throne in physical Jerusalem, on this sin-cursed earth, is totally foreign to the Bible. Christ is not king over two kinds of kingdoms. He has already established a glorious Kingdom, an everlasting Kingdom, that fulfills all of the promises that relate to the throne of David, and the fact that a king would sit who would reign forever, and whose children would reign forever. All of these requirements have been completely fulfilled in this glorious Kingdom that Christ has already established when He went to the cross.

And now to say there is going to be in the future some kind of a physical kingdom, with Christ ruling over, how can that make sense? How can that hold a candle to, how can that be related to this glorious Kingdom that is infinitely more wonderful and majestic than any physical kingdom? You see, if you really go through the Bible, and compare Scripture with Scripture, pretty soon it all begins to fall into place.

Let me read one more passage from Ezekiel. Remember we saw in Ezekiel 34 that the coming Messiah was called "My servant David," and that He would be the Shepherd and He would be the Prince over the sheep, or over Israel. Now in Ezekiel 37, we see in verse 23 that God is talking about the time when He would heal, "I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they shall be My people and I will be their God." And of course verse 23 was fulfilled in the Messiah. He came, and He provided cleansing. And those who believed on Him, the 11 disciples, Mary and Martha, and Mary Magdalene, and Simeon and Anna, and the 120, and so on, they did become the people of God and God became their God.

And then it goes on and says in verse 24, "My servant David shall be King over them [and remember, that's Christ], and they shall all have one Shepherd [that's Christ - He is the Good Shepherd]. They shall follow My ordinances and be careful to observe My statutes. They shall dwell in the land where your fathers dwelt that I gave to My servant Jacob. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever."

Now remember when we saw the promise to Jacob and Abraham and Isaac, about the land, that their seed would dwell there? And a lot of people focus on the land of Canaan? Well, here it says that when Christ would come, they would dwell in this land forever, forever! And so, again, it can't be referring to the land of Canaan, because nobody can dwell in the land of Canaan forever. This earth is going to end. Absolutely it's going to end. And the only way that this can be understood is that the land where the fathers dwelt, that "I gave to my servant Jacob," where "your children will dwell forever," has got to be referring to Heaven, or to its final fruition, the New Heaven and the New Earth.

The patriarchs were dwellers in Heaven, because they were born again. The moment we become born again we are citizens of Heaven, as Philipians 3 puts it: "Our commonwealth is in Heaven."

The Future For Israel, the Fig Tree (154A)

HC: I think what I'll do is get into the question: "What are we going to do with the fig tree?"

I'd like to begin our discussion tonight, if you have a pencil and a paper, you may want to write down some of these verses as we go on in the study, so that you can check me out. Don't trust me; just let the Bible be its own authority. I'll simply lay out for you what I read in the Bible, and then you check the Bible to see if I've covered it well, if I've been fair to the Scriptures, if I have been faithful to the Scriptures. Are there other passages that I've missed? And in this way, you can check for yourself to see if the conclusions I am coming to are correct.

Now in Matthew 24:32 (and in the context, Christ is speaking of the signs that will appear signaling the imminent return of Christ - He has spoken of quite a number of things), and then He says in verse 32: "From the fig tree learn its lesson. As soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that He is near, at the very gates."

Now there are those who say that this fig tree represents the nation of Israel. And the fact that we see Israel as a viable nation, as an independent nation amongst the nations of the world, is an evidence that this prophecy has been fulfilled. The fig tree has become tender and has put forth its leaves, and therefore we know that this means that we're very close to the return of Christ.

Now I would agree wholeheartedly with that observation. I believe the Bible does teach that the fig tree represents the nation of Israel. I'd like to offer a couple of verses to prove that, or to show that.

In Hosea 9:10 we read: "Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the fires fruit on the fig tree in its first season, I saw your fathers." Now it is very frequent in the Bible that God speaks of Israel as a vineyard or as grapes.

In Isaiah 5:1, he's talking about a vineyard that God had planted. And then this vineyard did not yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And then he says in verse 5: "Now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured. I will break down its walls." And then in verse 7 he says: "For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant planting."

And so God clearly indicates that the vineyard is a figure of Israel. So also is the fig tree. And in verse 10 of Hosea 9 we find both the vineyard and the fig tree featured: "Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree."

In Isaiah 28 we find a passage that further develops this truth of the fig tree being a figure of the nation of Israel. There in verse 3, God is faulting the Israelites, that is, the priests of Israel, and He's calling them the "drunkards of Ephraim." Ephraim is one of the tribes of Israel, and it is also sometimes used as a name for Israel. He's faulting them as drunkards of Ephraim because they have begun to worship other gods. They have not been faithful to the true God.

And He says: "The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden underfoot, and the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is on the head of the rich valley, will be like a first ripe fig before the summer. When a man sees it, he eats it up as soon as it is in his hand."

Again, in Micah 7:1, I think we have an allusion to the fig tree as being Israel. There we read: "Woe is me, for I have become as when the summer fruit has been gathered, as when the vintage has been gleaned. There is no cluster to eat, no first ripe fig, which my soul desires." Here again, you see, it's the vineyard and the fig tree that is spoken about in the context of Israel of old.

So I think we're on very solid biblical ground when we recognize that the fig tree is indeed a figure, or a type, of

national Israel. But now let's see once if there are any other statements concerning the fig tree which will give us further insights as to what God's intention for the nation of Israel is.

And I'd like to refer us to Luke 13, beginning with verse 6. Jesus is telling a parable. He told them this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vine-dresser, 'Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?'"

Now you see, Israel was God's chosen people. Ant notice how pointed this is toward Israel. It's a fig tree planted in his vineyard. You have both the vineyard, spoken of in Isaiah 5:7, and the fig tree in view here. So it's directing our attention right to the nation of Israel. Now, Israel has again and again and again been blessed by God. And God was constantly looking for fruit; that is, He was looking for obedience. The fruit of the Spirit, as we read in Galatians 5:22, is obedience. It is "love, joy, peace, tenderness, kindness." These are the result of being obedient to God and trusting in Him with all of our heart. But, He says, He found none.

And we can see this historically. In the wilderness sojourn, God had brought Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand, by many miracles. And yet, in the wilderness they perished, because of unbelief; most of the nation perished there.

Again, in the days of David and Solomon, He blessed Israel so that they became a mighty nation, one of the mightiest nations of the world of that day. And yet, beginning with the sin of Solomon in going after other gods in his old age, and continuing through the kings of Israel, we see that wickedness multiplies, until finally in 722 BC, the ten tribes are utterly destroyed by the Assyrians, and in 587 BC, 135 years later, the nation of Judah is totally devastated by the Babylonians, so that even the temple is razed to the ground.

Again and again God has come seeking fruit, and there is none. And now, while Christ is speaking, Israel again is a nation. They're not free, like they were prior to 587 BC, but they are a nation, and they have a temple. Herod has built the most beautiful temple that has ever been built since Solomon's temple. And again it is a fig tree that has been raised up, but again there is no fruit.

Now when God is talking about the nation of Israel as not having fruit, there is an exception, and that exception is a remnant chosen by grace, a trickle of believers that actually did believe in Christ as the Messiah. That is not in view in these statements. That's a separate issue, and on another evening we will look at that. But as a nation, when Israel was there, they rejected Christ as the Messiah and they crucified Him. The trickle of believers included the eleven disciples, and Mary and Martha, and Lazarus, and Mary Magdalene, and Anna, and Simeon, and Paul, and Luke. These were saved, and the 120. But beyond this, most of the nation of Israel remained in their unbelief. As a nation, there was no fruit. And so again, they were destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans. And again, the temple was utterly devastated, so that it was razed completely to the ground.

Now you notice here that it says that he came seeking fruit three times. "Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit." In the Bible, when God uses the number three, very frequently that means it's the end. God has spoken. You'll recall, when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, three times He prayed, "Father, is it possible that this cup might pass from Me?" And yet there was no answer from Heaven. Jesus had to go ahead and drink that terrible cup of

suffering, which was required of Him, in order that He might be our Savior, in order that He might be our substitute in paying for our sins.

In II Corinthians 12, we read of Paul, that three times he besought the Lord concerning the removal of a thorn in the flesh, and yet the answer came back, "My grace is sufficient." There was nothing more to say - three times.

Now here too: "Three years I have come seeking fruit." And so, when Israel rejected Christ and crucified Him, and continued in their apostasy, and they were destroyed in AD 70, that should have been the end of the nation. That should have been long enough. Three times God has looked, and there has been no fruit.

But we go on in verse 8, and we see God's overwhelming mercy, God's overwhelming mercy. He says in verse 8: "Let it alone, sir, this year also, until I dig about it and put on manure. And if it bears, well and good, but if not you can cut it down." In other words, God is teaching here that He is going to give Israel one more opportunity. One more opportunity, they don't deserve it; they should have been cut down forever; that's the end. But he's going to give them one more opportunity. And lo and behold, in 1948, after almost 2000 years, this opportunity comes to fruition. We see Israel as a viable nation, as an independent nation among the nations of the world. Really, for the first time in 2600 years almost, they are again an independent nation. The fig tree is in leaf. The fig tree is a tree that looks like it ought to bear fruit.

But, but there is no fruit, there is no fruit, that is, except for a trickle of believers, a remnant chosen by grace. But as a nation, Israel today has no interest in the Messiah at all. And because of this, we can know they are going to be cut down. This is what Jesus says here: "If it bears fruit, well and good. If not, you can cut it down."

Now we therefore can understand what Christ meant in Luke 21:20, where He says, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come nigh." Jerusalem is surrounded by armies, and God predicts that its desolation will come.

But wait a minute, wait a minute. Maybe you're saying right now, "Now just a minute. Where does it say that they can't still believe in Christ as Messiah? Why can't there be a mass turning to God? There's no suggestion here in this parable that they can't." Well, you're right, you're absolutely right. We've got to get more input from the Bible; my conclusion is too early.

Let's look at a miracle that happened just before Jesus went to the Cross. We read about it in Mark 11. And it also concerns a fig tree. In Mark 11:12: "On the following day, when they came from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if He could find anything. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And He said to it, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.'" Now what's the implication of this? Why does it say that it was not the season for figs?

Here's a fig tree in leaf, just like Matthew 24 is talking about - "When you see the fig tree in leaf, then you'll know that summer is nigh" - and you'll know that it's time for Christ to return. Well now, Jesus is speaking that the fig tree is in leaf, and He looks for figs and there are none, because it isn't the season for figs. And then He curses the fig tree and says, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again."

Now the fig tree was a true representation of Israel of Jesus' day. It was a fig tree in leaf. Now I'll indicate presently why it says, "it was not the season for figs," because that also was very ominous. But as a result of the fact

that there were leaves only and no fruit, Christ pronounces a curse on that fig tree which is an everlasting curse. You notice what He says? "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." In other words, this fig tree will never again bear fruit.

That means that the fig tree that had shown itself to have leaves but no fruit in Jesus' day, that is, the nation of Israel, was cursed by Christ, indicating that it would never bear fruit. And so even though God was going to allow it to be once more a nation, so that it would bear leaves, as we read in Matthew 24, and as we see this fourth time in Luke 13, we will not expect to see fruit, because Jesus said, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again."

And so when anyone says to you today that Israel some day, sooner or later, is going to respond as a nation to the Gospel, and are going to come to the Messiah, they are saying this without biblical validity. In fact, they are saying it in the face of a statement here that indicates it will not happen. That's why we can be so sure of Luke 21:20, that Jerusalem will indeed be destroyed.

But why does He say that it was not the season for figs? Now that's an interesting statement. What significance does that have? Well, let's back up and see once if this was the first time Israel was cursed. Let's go all the way back to Isaiah, about 740 years before Christ.

In Isaiah 6, God says something very provocative. Isaiah is seeing this vision of the holy temple of God. And the seraphim takes a coal from the altar and touches Isaiah's lips so that he is holy and qualified to be a witness. And then in verse 8 of Isaiah 6: "Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me.' And He said, 'Go and say to this people, 'Hear and hear, but do not understand. See and see, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people fat and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.'" Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And He said, "Until cities lie waste without inhabitants, and houses without men, and the land is utterly desolate, and the Lord removes men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains standing when it is felled."

In other words, God is saying, already, 740 years before Christ, it's the time when the ten tribes are about to be destroyed by Assyria, He's saying, "I have blinded Israel, so that they will not come to Me," the context of course being that they have been rebellious so long that now it is too late for them as a nation to come to God. And then the question is raised: "How long, O Lord?" How long will they be blinded this way? And the answer comes: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitants, and houses without men, and the land is utterly desolate."

Now this could be speaking of one of two times. It could be referring to the destruction of Israel in 587 BC, when they were utterly devastated by the Babylonians, and the temple was reduced to a ruin. Then many of the cities lay waste. Or, it could be referring to Judgment Day itself. It could be referring to the end of time, when the world will be completely devastated, and there will be no men.

We've come in our discussion to looking at Isaiah 6, and we see here already, 740 years BC, God has pronounced a curse upon Israel, indicating that they will not hear the Gospel correctly any longer. They will remain blind. He's talking about the whole nation. We must always remember to exclude the remnant chosen by grace; that's another subject

altogether. But as a nation, they will continue in their blindness. And then the question is: How long will they continue?

Now we know that God is speaking here of the end of time, because note in Matthew 13, now Matthew 13 was written 600 years after Israel was destroyed in 587 BC, and in Matthew 13 Jesus says this, of Israel of His day, approximately AD 30, in Matthew 13:14: "With them [that is, with Israel] is indeed fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says, you shall indeed hear but never understand. You shall indeed see, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for Me to heal them."

You, see, the same condition is still prevailing. When Christ was there, the same curse remained on Israel. This is the time when that fig tree was cursed, and it was told that "You'll never bear fruit again."

Notice, many decades after the Holy Spirit was poured out in Acts 28, the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is still talking about Israel. And he says there, in verse 25 of Acts 28: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: Go to this people and say, You shall indeed hear but never understand. And you shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for Me to heal them."

You see, that curse remained on Israel through that period of time. And so the language that it will "remain until cities lie waste without inhabitants and houses without men, and the land is utterly desolate" has to refer to the end of time. It has to refer to the very end. It is God's purpose that Israel will never again bear fruit.

Let me underscore again. We can now see why the Bible prophesies in Luke 21:20: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you know that its desolation is come nigh." And the language of Luke 21, beginning with verse 20 and going through verse 30, is the language of the end of time.

So you see, the very fact that the fig tree bears leaves is no indicator at all that they will come to the Messiah. The fact is, it is an ominous sign, because leaves without fruit . . . Remember the fig tree? There were no leaves; it was not the season for figs. God had already cursed Israel in the days of Isaiah, that they would remain blinded, and so there could not be fruit. It was not the season for figs. And so Christ simply underscores the curse that He had already put upon them in Isaiah's day, by saying that "Never again shall someone eat of the fig tree."

So this emphasizes that when someone says, and many are saying this, that Israel is God's chosen people, and they're going to come to the Messiah as a nation, this I do not believe is in the Bible. If someone says this, ask them where they read this in the Bible. And if anyone says that it is in the Bible, they must answer to these passages that we have been looking at, because this is what the Bible teaches.

Now wonderfully, of course, there is the remnant chosen by grace. This is already implied in Isaiah 6, in the last phrase, which I did not read. In Isaiah 6 it gives this terrible doom on Israel. In verse 13: "And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains standing when it is felled." In other words, every time it looks like it's going to come to

spiritual vitality, it's going to be cut down again. God is through with Israel as a nation, that it's going to be some kind of a nation that fears God. Israel will be like all the other nations of the world. There is no nation today that fears God. All the nations stand apostate, stand opposed to God.

But in every nation there is a remnant chosen by grace. Israel stands on the same ground with all the other nations. The minute that you start feeling sorry for Israel, then feel sorry for America, and for Spain, and for France, and for Germany, and for England, and for Brazil, and for South Africa. Every nation stands this way, as being apostate. But out of every nation there are a remnant chosen by grace that are coming forth.

Now notice the last phrase in Isaiah 6. It says: "The holy seed is its stump." Now the "holy seed" is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. Out of Israel there comes this branch, this root out of dry ground, and that branch is the wonderful nation of believers, the kingdom of God, that we enter into when we are saved.

The Future for National Israel (155A)

I would like to spend the next few minutes in talking about the subject of the future of the nation of Israel. Today the nation of Israel and its future is looming larger and larger in the minds of many believers. Many Christians are becoming very very concerned and interested and intrigued by what God might do for them. And frequently we are told that Israel as a nation has a bright and glorious future on this present earth, that indeed they will eventually as a nation respond to the Gospel, and as a nation they will turn to the Messiah, and then they will carry out a whole program of evangelizing the world, and even that Christ Himself will reign in Jerusalem, and they will be God's chosen people. And all of this is supposed to be in the Bible.

Now you'll recall, when we have talked about this, that we have seen that just exactly the reverse is true, that Isaiah 6 teaches that God has cursed Israel, and the curse that was given there, that He would blind them, so that hearing they would not hear and seeing they would not see, would continue until Judgment Day itself, because the language that's used there is that this blindness would remain with them until "the cities lay waste and the houses are without inhabitants."

And then you'll recall that when we looked at the cursing of the fig tree in Mark 11, we found that this same kind of a curse was pronounced, because the fig tree, a type of Israel itself, was told by Christ that it would never again bear figs, because when He came seeking for figs there were none.

And so everything in the Bible seems to point to the fact that except for a trickle of believers, a remnant chosen by grace, the nation as a nation will never again come to the Messiah. But there are many who read Romans 11:25 and 26 are saying something quite contrary. For doesn't it say here that after the full number of Gentiles comes in, then all Israel will be saved, because the Deliverer will come from Zion, and so on? Isn't this very quickly overthrowing all that we have been talking about in the past? Well, tonight I would like to look at Romans 11 in greater detail and very carefully, and see if we can see how this fits into the whole development of the Biblical statement concerning the nation of Israel.

Romans 11 opens up in verse 1 with a question. Paul is asking, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "I ask then. Has God rejected His people?" In other words, is Israel completely cut off by God? Has He turned His back on

them? Is there no hope for them at all? Now in the light of what we read in Isaiah 6, in the light of the cursing of the fig tree, in the light of what Jesus said in Matthew 21, where He said in verse 43: "Therefore I tell you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing fruits of it," or in the light of Matthew 8, where Jesus is talking to the Jews and He says in verse 11: "I tell you, many will come from the east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into outer darkness. There men will weep and gnash their teeth," in the light of all these statements, it certainly seems that God has rejected Israel. He is saying the most terrible things against them.

Is there any hope for them at all? Even in the last verse of Romans 10 God says in verse 21: But of Israel He says: "All day long I have held out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people." And so the question is very legitimate. It's a very logical question. "Has God then rejected His people?"

And the answer comes back, forthright and clear: "By no means." By no means! God has not rejected His people. God then tells what He means by the fact that He has not rejected His people. He goes on, and Paul says: "I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin." In other words, he's saying, "I'm a Jew and I'm saved. Therefore I'm clear evidence that this nation of Israel has not been rejected. Otherwise how could I be saved as a Jew?"

And then he goes and reaches back into the Old Testament days, during the days of Elijah, when Israel was so very wicked. And he says, "Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he plead with God against Israel? Lord, they have killed Thy prophets. They have demolished Thy altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." What was God's reply to him? "I have kept for it Myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." In other words, there were a number of believers in Israel in that day. This is the evidence that God has not rejected His people, whom He foreknew.

This is God's definition of what He means when He says that He has not rejected them. Now He's not saying here that the whole nation was believing, but He is saying that a Jew could be saved, in the days of Elijah, in the days of Paul. And so he goes on in verse 5: "So, too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace." Now what's a remnant? If you have a bolt of cloth, the remnant is the last little piece. It's just a little tiny part of the whole.

In the days of Elijah the nation numbered perhaps around two million people. Seven thousand had not bowed the knee to Baal. That is, 7,000 were saved. That's approximately 3½ percent. That's a remnant, just a tiny little part of the whole. In the days of Christ, or in the days of Paul, the nation again numbered perhaps a couple of million people, and yet there were only a few thousand who were saved. Again, it's just a remnant. And so, too, it has been throughout time, right to the very present day. There is a remnant chosen by grace that is being saved. God is saying that He has not rejected them. Salvation is possible to anyone in the nation of Israel, exactly as it is possible in any other nation of the world.

But He is saying that only a remnant will come forth, and they have been chosen from before the foundations of the earth, because Ephesians 1:4 says that we have been chosen in Him from before the foundations of the earth. And that would include the Jews who are being saved, just as the Gentiles.

But then God has something to say about the rest of Israel. Now remember, He's

explaining the fact that Israel has not been rejected. But in that context He's saying there's a remnant chosen by grace. But in verse 7 He says: "The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened." And then, lo and behold, in verse 8 He goes on and quotes again from Isaiah 6: "As it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear, down to this very day." In other words, when God says that He has not rejected Israel He's not suggesting for a moment that they're going to believe as a whole nation, but He's simply saying that the evidence of the fact that He has not rejected them is that salvation can come to them, that any Jew who will trust in the Lord Jesus Christ can be saved. And as a matter of fact, there is a trickle of believers coming forth from Israel, who indeed are saved.

Then God goes on in Romans 11 and describes the olive tree, that is, the body of Christ, into which we must be engrafted if we are indeed born again. And the nation of Israel has been cut off. But those branches can be grafted in again, just as we Gentiles, when we believe, are grafted in. And this is the way God is building the body of Christ. The olive tree is a figure of the whole body of Christ. And the nation of Israel, that is, the remnant chosen by grace, can come into that body of Christ just as readily as anyone else in any other nation can come into it.

Now incidentally, you know, the nation of Israel does not stand any different than any other nation in the world today. There is no nation that has turned to Christ as Messiah as a nation. This is not true of England, it's not true of Germany, it's not true of Spain, it's not true of the United States, it's not true of Nigeria, it's not true of Swaziland. It's not true of any nation in the world. Nor is it true of the nation of Israel. But wonderfully, out of every nation there is a trickle of believers, including the nation of Israel. There's a trickle of believers coming out of England, there's a trickle of believers coming out of Germany, out of Spain, out of the U.S., and so on. This is the way God is saving people.

And so, actually, what God has said so far is not putting down Israel in any way. It is simply indicating that it is a nation among the nations of the world, and God deals with it exactly as He deals with all of the other nations of the world. But now let's look intently for a couple of moments at Romans 11:25 and 26.

The verse opens up with God warning the Gentiles: "Don't be wise in your own conceits," because God is dealing with national Israel the way this chapter is describing. "Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren." And then he describes their condition. "A hardening has come upon part of Israel." Now in Romans 11:7 he spoke about this hardening. "The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened." In other words, the part of Israel that has been hardened makes up a major part of the nation. But from the earlier verses we know that even though part has been hardened, and even though that's the largest part, there is that remnant chosen by grace that has not been hardened.

But now how long will this condition prevail, that a hardening has come upon part of Israel? You'll remember, back in verse 8, this hardening has been linked right back to Isaiah 6. In verse 25 it says, "A hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles comes in." Now let's read that carefully. "A hardening has come upon part of Israel until the full number of the Gentiles comes in." God is saying here that as long as there is one Gentile living on the face of this earth who must yet be saved, this hardening will continue upon Israel. Let me say that again. As long as there is one Gentile on the face of the earth who has not yet been saved and

who, under God's divine plan, will be saved, this hardening will remain upon Israel.

In other words, any theory or any scheme or any theology, or whatever, that suggests that the nation of Israel is going to respond en masse to the Gospel, and then they will witness to the Gentiles, so that Gentiles will become saved, is flatly contrary to this verse. This hardening will remain with Israel as long as there is any Gentile to be saved. Now that really brings us right up to the end of the world. Because when all of the people of the world have been saved, then Judgment Day is at hand. And so it's no wonder then that we see in Isaiah 6 the very same thing, that this blindness, this hardening, will continue "until cities lie waste and houses are without inhabitants." It's giving exactly the same truth as Isaiah 6. The curse remains upon national Israel until the very end of time. There's no contradiction of any kind.

Well now, let's look at verse 26: "And so all Israel will be saved. As it is written, the Deliverer will come from Zion. He will banish ungodliness from Jacob, and this will be My covenant with them, when I take away their sins." Now you can read many many books on this verse, and after this verse is quoted very frequently you will read in the next sentence or the next paragraph, "You see, the Gentiles will have their time, and then all Israel will be saved. Then the Deliverer will come from Zion," and so on, and so on, and God will do something glorious with the nation of Israel.

Now that word "then" is not in this passage at all, nor is it suggested at all. The word "so" – "so all Israel will be saved" – under no circumstances means then. It means in this fashion, or after this manner, or thus. In other words, the manner is that God has provided that a remnant chosen by grace will be coming in right up until the end of time, while the rest of the nation of Israel remains hardened, and in this fashion all Israel will be saved. That is, all who are to be saved will be saved. "As it is written, the Deliverer will come from Zion." Now the Deliverer, that is, the Savior, "He will banish ungodliness from Jacob, and this will be My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

Now on what basis is the remnant chosen by grace saved? On what basis is anyone saved? It's because Christ came and went to the cross. He is the one who took away our sins. Who did He come to? He came to the Jews, didn't He? He came to Jerusalem. Who were the first ones who were saved when Jesus put in His appearance? They were Jews. John the Baptist was a Jew. Mary Magdalene was a Jew. The apostles were Jews. Zacchaeus was a Jew. Simeon, Anna, Mary and Martha and Lazarus were all Jews. Christ came to take away their sins. He came from Zion to banish ungodliness from their lives, from Jacob. He took away their sins. And because He came in complete faithfulness to the prophecy that was prophesied in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 59 and in Isaiah 60, which is quoted here, about the Deliverer coming from Zion, because He came, therefore there is salvation provided for Israel, just as there is salvation for every other nation, or that remnant chosen by grace that is found in any nation.

You see, Romans 11:25 and 26 is not saying anything at all that is contrary to anything else in the Bible. It is simply underscoring. It is reiterating. It is reemphasizing what Isaiah 6 said. It is reemphasizing what the fig tree symbolizes. All of this is in complete agreement. God has provided that any Jew can be saved, just like any Spaniard or any Mexican or any American or any Englishman can be saved, if we will respond to the Gospel. There's only one salvation. There's only one way to the cross, and that is through Christ.

The nation of Israel does not stand in a different relationship to God than the rest of the nations. Oh yes, in one sense it does. You'll remember in the parable of Luke 13, there the fig tree was to be cut down. And then it was offered one more chance. Let it have one more opportunity to bear fruit, and if it does not bear fruit let it be cut down. And so God, in His overwhelming mercy, is giving Israel one more opportunity. But everything in the Bible teaches that they as a nation will never respond to the Gospel.

And so we shouldn't be at all surprised then, when we look at the nation of Israel today and see that, as a nation, there isn't the slightest interest in the Messiah, is there? Not a bit. Individual Jews are being saved, but not as a nation. There's no interest in Christ as the Messiah. The same blindness prevails that has prevailed ever since the days of Isaiah and before. And the Bible says, no matter where we look, that this will continue right to the end.

Now one last statement. If we look at verses 30 and 31, God gives a little more information to underscore this. In verse 30 He says, "Just as you gentiles", that is, "just as you," and He's speaking about the Gentiles here, "were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience." Because they became disobedient against God, and their eyes were blinded, they rejected the Messiah and crucified Him. And this of course made it possible for we Gentiles to be saved. And this was God's plan, that Christ had to be crucified. Otherwise Christ could not be King. He could not have a kingdom unless He had been crucified.

He came to establish His kingdom by going to the cross. So they, that is, the Jews, have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy. In other words, they stand just like unsaved Gentile nations, so that as you who have been shown mercy bring the Gospel to them, they also may receive mercy. That is, the Gospel can come to them, and a Jew can be saved even as you as a Gentile were saved.

And then notice verse 32: "For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that He may have mercy upon all." In other words, God is closing the argument here in a real sense. He's saying, "You see, all nations stand on the same ground. All men are consigned to disobedience." That is, whether you're a Jew or Gentile, you're under the wrath of God. But whether you're Jew or Gentile, if you respond to the Gospel, you can be saved. The Gospel is available to a Jew just as quickly as to a Gentile.

So you see, Romans 11 is very clearly setting aside any kind of an idea that national Israel stands on special ground before God, or that they have a special future, or that they are any different than the other nations. Romans 11 is underscoring and emphasizing that whether you're an American, or a Jew, or a Spaniard, or an Englishman, or a German, or if you're from Argentina or whatever, your opportunity to be saved is exactly the same. You must respond to Christ as your Savior and cry out to Him for mercy. What a wonderful, merciful God He is, that He has made this kind of provision.

The Cursing of the Fig Tree in Mark 11:12-14 (178C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I would like to ask a question about Mark 11:12-14.

HC: Mark 11:12-14. There we read, "And on the following day, when they came to Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if He could find anything on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And He said to it, 'May

no one ever eat fruit from you again' And His disciples heard it."

CALLER: What was His purpose behind doing that? I could perhaps understand it if it was time for fruit to be on the tree, but it wasn't, evidently.

HC: You see, in the Bible the fig tree is a figure of Israel, national Israel. This can be shown in a variety of ways. Now back in Isaiah 6, God had already cursed Israel, and said that except for a tiny remnant chosen by grace, Israel would remain blind and hearing they would not hear, and seeing they would not see.

The same curse was emphasized by Jesus. He used the same language of Isaiah 6. And later on, the apostle Paul, in the last chapter of Acts, quoted the same words. In other words, God prophesied, already 600 or 700 years before Christ came, that when He came, Israel, national Israel, would be essentially in unbelief and would not turn to Him.

And so the fig tree that He is cursing is a figure of Israel. He comes to it, and all he finds is leaves. There's no fruit. Israel was a nation in the days of Christ. It was a nation, but there was no fruit. They essentially were opposed to Christ as Messiah, because it was not the season for figs. Well, Israel would not be bearing fruit because God had already anticipated, in Isaiah 6, that they would be cursed in this way so that they would not bear fruit.

Now there is a further curse here, and it's got very sad implications. He said, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again", the implication being that Israel would never again bear fruit. Now this is excluding the remnant chosen by grace. That is the exception that God constantly refers to in the Bible. But as a nation, as a nation we will never expect a turning to the Lord Jesus Christ by the nation of Israel.

Now significantly, when we look at the nation of Israel today, we see this prophecy, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again," being fulfilled before our eyes. Almost miraculously, Israel is a nation, for the first time, after 2000 years. And you would think if there were ever a time that they would really call attention to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is one of their own, and turn to Him as their Messiah, you would think this would be the time. But they've been here since 1948, and they are no more interested as a nation in Christ as Messiah than any nation in the world. They are not bearing fruit. And the implication of this is that they will not bear fruit as a nation. The fig tree has been cursed for ever.

Thank you for calling.

Is Israel Still a Special Nation? (285D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: As I understand it, you said that the people of Israel were nothing special. Is that correct?

HC: Yes. Insofar as the Biblical indication of any particular blessing on the nation of Israel, that is not found in the Bible, outside of the fact that there will continue to be a remnant chosen by grace from them, coming in right up until the end of time.

CALLER: Then would you please explain to me Deuteronomy 7:6, along with Exodus 19:5?

HC: The question is raised, How are we to understand Exodus 19:5 and Deuteronomy 7:6? Let's look at those, and see what they say.

In Exodus 19:5 God is speaking to Israel. And He says, "Now therefore, if you will obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My own possession among all people. For all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

And in Deuteronomy 7:6 we read: "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people, that the Lord set His love upon you and chose you. For you were the fewest of all people. But it is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which He swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt."

Okay. Now on the face of it, God is speaking to Israel, and telling them that they as a nation are God's peculiar possession. And, in a sense, they were. They were called out of Ur of the Chaldees, that is, Abraham, the beginning of the nation of Israel, was called out of Ur of the Chaldees. And God did deal very specially and uniquely and peculiarly with the nation of Israel.

But when we study the Bible, we find that God had in mind, in these promises, a far more magnificent nation and a much greater promise than that which allude only to the physical nation of Israel.

First of all, this is suggested in Exodus 19:5: "Now therefore, if you will obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My own possession, among all peoples. For all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Now the fact is that Israel has never kept God's covenant. It has never obeyed His voice. It has repeatedly gone its own way. Even to the very present day, the nation of Israel does not obey the voice of God. It does not keep His covenant. It goes its own way. And so whatever physical suggestion that is offered in these statements, it is abrogated, it is set aside, it is broken, by the conduct of Israel itself.

But now notice the language of I Peter 2. In I Peter 2 we read some very interesting statements that relate to what we've just read. Now remember, in Exodus 19 it says, "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. You are My own possession." Now in I Peter 2 God is speaking here about born again believers, in verse 4: "Come to Him, to that living stone rejected by men, but in God's sight chosen and precious, and like living stones, ye yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

And then He goes on in verse 7, where He talks about the literal nation of Israel: "To you therefore who believe [that is, who have placed their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ], He is precious. But for those who do not believe, the very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner, and a stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall before they stumble, because they disobey the Word, as they were destined to do." And the nation of Israel was destined to stumble. And we can read that already beginning in Isaiah 6, where God says that He will give them the spirit of unbelief, and this will continue until the cities are without inhabitants, and so on.

And when Jesus cursed the fig tree, he said, "May there never come fruit upon you again." They were destined to stumble. But then He goes on in verse 9. And He's talking again about the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

In other words, God is quoting here from Exodus 19:6: "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." And He's speaking about any born again

believer. God is showing us, therefore, that this promise that He is making to literal Israel actually finds its fulfillment in the body of Christ, because literal Israel never did relate to God the way that is called for in Exodus 19:5.

Israel as a nation has always gone its own way. But born again believers have obeyed His voice. They have been faithful to God, only because God has drawn us to Him, of course. And we of course are drawn from every nation, as well as the nation of Israel – a remnant chosen by grace from the nation of Israel.

And so these passages find their fulfillment in the body of Christ, in you and I. We are the true Israel. We are the Jews that God speaks about in Romans 2. We are the lost sheep of the house of Israel whom Christ came to seek and to save.

Once we see this, you see, then all kinds of scriptures begin to hang together God had in view, in His salvation program, a salvation that was far greater than any literal nation.

The Jewish Misunderstanding Concerning Salvation (317A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I was talking with a Rabbi the other day, a Jewish Rabbi. He is not a Christian. And we got to talking about the Old Testament. And one of the things that he mentioned, well, I mentioned blood atonement and the centrality of blood atonement in the Old Testament, but he pointed out that in the Book of Leviticus the statement that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins in Leviticus 17:11 is a mere detail in a whole worship system that is taught in the Old Testament. In other words, the sacrifice is important, but it's part of a whole cluster of things that are necessary for Old Testament worship.

Now I didn't have a ready answer for this. The only thing I could think of was that Jesus Himself was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem, outside the camp, just as the Old Testament sacrifice. And in that wonderful, astonishing way, He fulfilled the very thing that this Rabbi is pointing out. But of course that doesn't constitute valid evidence for him, from his own presupposition. And I was wondering if you have any further insight into the objection to this Christian understanding of the Bible that he's mentioning.

HC: You see, the fundamental question that must be faced by anyone, whether he's a Jew or a Greek or Italian, or whatever, regardless of the religion we belong to or the gospel we hold, the fundamental question is, what is the basis of our salvation? Now the Jews of Jesus' day to a high degree, not all the way, we must remember that the first believers we read about in the New Testament were Jews, just as Jewish as any Jewish person today. The disciples were Jews, Mary Magdalene was a Jew, and Mary and Martha and Lazarus were Jews. So when we talk about the Jewish people we're not talking about the last man. We're talking about a major part, who held one position and a minor part, a remnant chosen by grace, who did hold the Biblical truth.

The problem was that the major part of the Jewish nation believed that because they engaged in these Old Testament worship activities very faithfully, which included the offering of sacrifices and the circumcision, and all of these things, that in this act they received remission of their sins. They were God's chosen people, they had been taken in a great and marvelous way out of the land of Egypt and brought into the land of Canaan by great signs and wonders. And whatever was required to make them right before God was abundantly taken care of in the act of the sacrifices and

offerings. They were not understanding at all that these sacrifices were merely types or shadows pointing to a Messiah who would come.

Isaiah 53, for example, speaks about the coming of the Messiah. He is despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. Now this is talking about a person, you notice. "And we hid as it were our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not." Notice what the Bible says about this Messiah. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." And it goes on to describe in this kind of detail the coming Messiah.

But this was foreign to the major Jewish position that their sins were already taken care of by virtue of the fact that they had offered their sacrifices, they had engaged in this Old Testament worship. And therefore this passage made no impact on them.

Or again, they failed to read a passage like Ezekiel 34, where God is speaking in verse 11, "For thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I even I will both search My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out My sheep and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloud and dark day. I will bring them out from the people and gather them from the countries and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be. There shall they lie in a good fold and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord. I will seek that which was lost and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken and will strengthen that which was sick," and so on.

In other words, God is going to be the Shepherd. And tying that back to Isaiah 53, we immediately see that God is going to come as a man, as the Redeemer. Now the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled these passages dramatically. He says of Himself in John 10, "I am the Good Shepherd. I lay down My life for the sheep." He identified with Ezekiel 34. He is the one who did make His grave with the wicked. He is the one who was not esteemed. He was rejected by men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He is the one that God did pour His wrath upon. And therefore Christ is, in a beautiful way and in a marvelous way, the fulfillment of all of these passages.

But we have to begin with the point that we are not saved by what we do. We are saved by what the Messiah would do in bearing our sins. The Jewish religion as it was practiced by the major part of the Jews of Jesus' day was a religion of good works. It was a religion based upon partaking in the Old Testament worship. Thereby they decided they became worthy before God. And that will never save anyone.

That same idea holds through right to today. It's exactly the problem today with those who are not Christians.

CALLER: It seems, as I talked to this Rabbi, he did have what seemed to me far to light a view of sin as it works itself out in the individual and in the national life of the Jewish community. And I have here with me a book by a Rabbi named

Morris Adler, called "The World of the Talmud." And Morris Adler is a Jew, writing for Jews. And he makes the statement in this, "A Christian scholar, Dr. James Parker, summarizes the contrast between Judaism and Christianity in this respect, when he writes, 'In Judaism God says to man, Fulfill My plan for creation. And man replies, I will. In Christianity man returns to God to say, Fulfill Thy part in creation, which I cannot, because I am foolish and sinful. And God replies, I will.'"

HC: That's a very excellent statement. It puts it exactly where it is. Now you mentioned the Talmud, and that of course is what happened to Judaism. They started out with the Bible, and then they added the commentaries of their holy men down through the ages to the Bible, so that the whole mass of writings became sacred writings. And thus the Bible no longer was the final authority. It was the Bible plus what others had said.

Incidentally, the Christian church to some degree is guilty of the very same thing. We start with the Bible and then we add to it the writings of certain theologians. And before we read the Bible or understand the Bible, we first see what our friendly theologian says, and that's it. In other words, we actually inadvertently place the authority of that theologian on a par with the Bible. And we must not do this.

CALLER: Another thing I wanted to ask you, which may or may not be exactly related to what we're talking about now. What is, very simply, dispensationalism? I have a somewhat imprecise notion of what this is. In other words, I've come across an author this last week who does say that, for instance, there are certain things in the Old Testament which are not applicable to the children of God today, such things as exterminating the Canaanites or going to war at all. He feels that this is part of an Old Testament dispensation. And the New Testament dispensation is one where, for instance, Jesus says to Peter, "Put up thy sword into thy sheath." And for instance, James and John wanted to call down thunder on one of the cities that would not accept Christ, and they appealed to Elias and said, "Shall we do it even as Elias did?" And this author was at pains to indicate that it was appropriate for Elias to have done that, but it was not appropriate for James and John to have done that.

Now my concern is not with these specific issues, namely war or militancy, or anything of that nature. That's not what I'm asking, but simply, as these indicate some kind of difference between an Old Testament economy and a New Testament economy. Do you see it this way? And if you do, what are the difference strata of scripture that you see?

HC: Actually, I see only one program that God has set forth, the program for the redemption of all whom He elected from before the foundations of the earth. Now in the development of this program, there are states in it. In the Old Testament God particularly focused attention on the nation of Israel, because it was out of the nation of Israel that the Christ was to come. It was the nation of Israel that would become effectively a historical parable of the nature of salvation. Israel and Jerusalem and many of the historical experiences that we read about in connection with the nation of Israel were really figures or types of aspects of salvation, even as when Christ came doing miracles the miracles effectively became historical parables of what salvation is.

Finally, in the course of time God actually became man and went to the cross. This had to happen at some point in history. The precise point made no impact at all on the nature of salvation. The Old Testament believer was saved exactly as the New Testament believer.

But it did signal the time when salvation would be aggressively made available to the whole world, because immediately following the cross comes Pentecost, when God began His program to evangelize the whole world. This was always anticipated by God. It is spoken of in hundreds of ways in the Old Testament, that the time would come when the world would be evangelized. And then this would be followed by the end, or Judgment Day itself.

It's all one plan. There are various steps and stages in the development of the plan, but there is only one plan. Noah, for example, who lived 7000 years ago, we read of him in Genesis 6 that he found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Now that's New Testament language. Abraham, who lived 4000 years ago (and who is really in actuality the beginning of the nation of Israel, and because they were blood descendants of Abraham they called themselves Jews and prided themselves that they are Jews), he is spoken of in the New Testament as being the father of all believers, both Gentiles and Jews. And his faith is set forth as the example of the faith of the believers Abraham's faith was reckoned unto him as righteousness.

There is a cohesiveness, you see, in the Bible that sets aside altogether any possibility that God has two kinds of salvation, or two programs, or whatever. It just happens that in the Old Testament there were only a small number who were being saved, because God had not begun His plan to evangelize the whole world, and He was dealing particularly through the nation of Israel because through them the Bible was being developed, through them we have all of these historical parables that are set forth in the Bible, and through their blood line Christ would actually come forth.

But once all this was done, the Bible was completed, the Bible was ended, now this marvelous salvation is made available to the whole world.

CALLER: You yourself are at pains often to indicate that the gift of tongues is limited to a particular historical period.

HC: Yes.

CALLER: Now again, my concern is not with that particular issue in this discussion, but simply as an illustration that although there's this unifying principle, yet there are these ways in which the Christian life, the behavioral pattern of the believers differs from one phase to another.

HC: Not the behavioral pattern. The difference is in the revelation of God. God did not reveal Himself, for example, in an articulated way so that it could be part of the written Word before the time of Moses. Moses is described in the Bible as the one who has given us the first five books. That doesn't mean that some of that which we find in Genesis might not have been in certain written places, but it did not officially become a part of the Bible until Moses wrote it.

When Jesus was on earth He made reference to Moses and the prophets and the writings. Now the Bible had been expanded to that point. Finally, the Bible is completed. God's revelation is completed, and that's the end. When Jesus was on earth, He had certain things to say, and then the Holy Spirit was poured out, and certain things happened. There were changes in God's plan as He is developing His program to evangelize the world.

This does not change the behavioral pattern of the believer, however, in any sense. The only thing it changes is God's revelation. There were 400 years, for example, between the last of the minor prophets and the birth of John the Baptist, when there was no statement from God at all. There was no penetration of the world from the supernatural to the natural. There was

complete silence. This happened to be God's program for that time.

CALLER: Well, perhaps I'm not using the correct term. But don't you see a difference in behavior between, say, circumcision and the lack of circumcision, or let's say, blood sacrifice in the Old Testament and a bloodless sacrifice that we're supposed to offer every day, in our own lives as Christians? In what sense how would you term these differences?

HC: I see the differences only in that in the Old Testament they did not have the written Word. So God gave them certain additional assists, to begin to get an idea of the nature of the Messiah. And so God talked about blood sacrifices and burnt offerings, and what have you. In the New Testament we have the advantage of having the historical record of the coming of the Messiah. We can read in black and white exactly what happened. And so these assists no longer are necessary.

But God does give us a little bit of assistance in that He still leaves with us two signs that we follow, namely, the Lord's Supper and water baptism, which are reminiscent of the Passover and circumcision of the Old Testament, or the Passover and the water ablutions of the Old Testament, if you will. But most of them He has taken away, because we have the historical record of Christ.

CALLER: The Sermon on the Mount is to be obeyed, or to be realized in our life today? Or do you believe that's something that is yet future, the ethics for a full Kingdom of God on earth? Or is that something that truly could be lived out by the believers in the midst of a world that is crooked and perverse?

HC: Now that's a good question. Is the Sermon on the Mount, which we find in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, relevant today? You see, the Bible is the revealed Word of God. When I say the Bible, I mean the whole Bible - Genesis, Matthew 5, 6 and 7, Revelation, Ezekiel, Leviticus - wherever we find it. The Bible is God's revelation to mankind. It is the law of God. It is the statement of the command of God.

Now insofar as mankind is concerned, any place where they violate the law of God, anything they do that violates anything that is stated in the Bible, they stand guilty of judgment and hell. For the believer of course that penalty has been taken care of by Christ. And therefore we're not under the threat of hell. But the Bible still remains as the law-book of the Kingdom. It remains the book that we are to trust in and follow and be obedient to.

So the Sermon on the Mount is absolutely relevant for us today, just as much as it was relevant to the Jews that Jesus was talking to when He was on earth. Every part of the Bible is relevant. However, if there were a statement in the Sermon on the Mount that was later negated by something in Revelation or Ephesians or wherever, then we know that that particular command was neutralized, even as the Old Testament ceremonial laws, which were commanded in Leviticus, were neutralized by the statements of Galatians 5 and the Book of Hebrews, where God teaches that the ceremonial laws were completed in Christ.

We examine any part of the Bible, and check everything that the Bible offers concerning that, and then we know that we have what is left to be obedient to. That is, when we synthesize all that God gives, we know what we have to be obedient to. And this of course sets aside the ceremonial law, because that is set aside by the Bible itself. This sets aside the possibility of revelation coming today in visions and dreams and tongues, because God indicates that we aren't to add to the words of this book, and so on.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Who Are the Jews? (349B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. In the Bible when it speaks of Jews, how did they become Jews? Was it a religion, or was it because they lived in a certain part of Judea? You know, they speak of Father Abraham, but he was not a Jew. And the Jews of today, are they descendants of the Jews in Bible times?

HC: The question relates to the origin of the Jews. Actually, the Jewish nation came into being from Abraham. Abraham was the progenitor. He was the beginning of the nation of Israel, or the nation of Jews. Abraham actually was born and raised in the land of Ur of the Chaldees. It would be in the fertile crescent, near the Euphrates River someplace that he grew up.

But when he was about seventy-five years of age, God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees. And after a brief stop in Haran, where his father died, he left Haran and came into the land that God would show him. Now Abraham came into the land of Canaan, which is now called the land of Israel, as a complete stranger and as a pilgrim. You can read about this in Genesis 12. And God gave him certain promises.

God promised that He would make a great nation of him. God promised that in his seed all the nations would be blessed. God promised that he would be the father of a multitude of nations. God promised that He would give him the land as an everlasting possession.

When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, it was the year 2028 BC., and God gave a sign of the covenant that He made with Abraham. It was the sign of circumcision, in which God declared that all of the males eight days and older were to be circumcised. This would include Abraham as well as all of his slaves and his son Ishmael, who was thirteen years of age at the time. They were all circumcised. This became the sign that God had a particular covenant with Abraham and his seed.

Abraham in turn fostered a son named Isaac. Ishmael was not the son that God was focusing on. There was another son that was to be born to Abraham named Isaac. And the promises flow from Abraham through Isaac to the son of Isaac, who was Jacob. Isaac, incidentally, had twin sons, Esau and Jacob.

Esau was not the son of promise, either. It was Jacob. So now we have the patriarchal line, beginning with Abraham, then through Isaac, then through Jacob. And Jacob became the father of twelve sons. The third or fourth son of Jacob was Judah.

Now these twelve sons became the patriarchal heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. Everybody from Abraham, from the time he was circumcised, was now called a Jew. Abraham would have been called a Jew. They weren't called Jews yet. They were called Hebrews in that day, or something like that. Actually, the word Jew comes from Judea. The major tribe was Judah. The land of Israel was also called the land of Judea. After the nation became a very great nation, then, on the death of Solomon, who reigned as king over Israel, the kingdom was divided. And the two tribes to the south, the large tribe of Judah and the small tribe of Benjamin, became a nation all in itself. And it was called the nation of Judah for a long time.

Well, these are the Jews, you see, that we read about. Actually, in the Bible God indicates that in His program, the way He looks at mankind, the true Jew is not a blood descendant of Abraham. By blood descent, anyone who is a blood descendant of Abraham can call himself a Jew, that is, if he came through Isaac and if he came through Jacob. The

descendants through Ishmael, the brother (or actually half-brother) of Isaac, were not called Jews. Ishmael became the forerunner of the Arab nations. And Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, who also was a blood descendant of Abraham and Isaac, was not a Jew. He was cut off. He was set aside. The true line of Jews flowed through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, through to the twelve sons of Jacob. They only were called Jews after the name of Judah, who was one of the sons of Jacob.

So this became the nation of Israel. And this is the nation that God gave the initial promises to, gave the task of preparing the Word of God. It is the descendants of Abraham, in this covenant line, that were the chief scribes of God in preparing the Bible for us. They are the ones to whom Jesus came.

But the true Jews that God has in view, looking at the larger perspective, are not composed of those who are blood descendants of Abraham, but those who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus of course was a Jew, because He was a blood descendant of Abraham, coming through Judah, coming through David, and so forth. And therefore, since He is the head of the Kingdom that we belong to, since He is a Jew, we also are Jews. And in Galatians 3, for example, God really underscores that the true seed of Abraham are those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whereas someone who is a blood descendant of Abraham, while he is by lineage, by blood descent, a Jew? in actuality, in God's sight He is not considered to be a Jew unless he has become born again, unless he's become a child of God.

So in the Bible, therefore, we have really two nations that are called Israel, or two nations that are called Jews. We have the historical, literal nation, made up of those who are blood descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They are called the nation of Israel. We also have a spiritual Israel, or a spiritual nation of Jews, composed of all who are born again believers, whether we are Gentiles or whether we are Jews. It makes no difference. If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are the spiritual Israel, the eternal Israel, the heirs of all the promises that were given to Abraham that were of the eternal variety. They are all fulfilled in spiritual Israel, not in literal Israel, or the blood descent Israel.

I hope this helps a little bit.

Will There Ever be Peace in Israel? (514B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Can you relate Jeremiah 8:11 with current events in Israel?

HC: The question is, does Jeremiah 8:11 relate to what is happening today with Israel?

Well, let's look at it. There we read, "For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, Peace, when there is no peace."

Well, yes, in a real sense that does relate. The context of Jeremiah 8 is the Israel that existed about 2500 years ago, particularly as the nation of Judah. Jeremiah is writing just a few years before they were destroyed by the Babylonians, because of the wrath of God against them. They had become increasingly apostate; they had gone after other gods; they had not been faithful in their worship of God. And so God brought judgment against them.

And yet the prophets in Israel, that is, those who were not the true prophets, were saying that all is well. There is peace. They gave what we might call the cosmetic treatment to the situation. They papered over whatever seemed to be problems and said everything is going to be all right. Everything is going to be good. God will not forsake us.

But the prophet Jeremiah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said no, there is no peace. God's wrath is upon us, and God is going to destroy us by the Babylonians, because we have not repented. And that's very much the case in the world today, and particularly what's happening in Israel today, and not only in that nation but in many nations. People are desperately seeking a political peace. And they may even think that they've found the beginning of some kind of a political peace. But there is no peace. Wars are going to continue right up until the end. God's judgment is gradually drawing closer, at a very rapid rate, as a matter of fact. And there will be retribution. It is going to come. I think really there is a direct parallel.

CALLER: And isn't it true also that Israel is not to expect any peace on earth, that is, until the latter days?

HC: The question is: Is Israel ever going to have peace on this earth, that is, Israel as a nation? According to the Bible, no, they never will. They never will, on this sin cursed earth, on this earth as it now exists, on this side of eternity. We read in Luke 21:20, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its desolation has come nigh." And then the language goes on to indicate that they will be trodden underfoot, and they will remain so until the times of the Gentiles are completed, that is, until the end of time.

And so I really expect, on the basis of this, that Israel will be eventually destroyed and will not rise again. Christ will return and bring to pass the New Heavens and the New Earth.

Now of course there's a double meaning to Luke 21. That is also talking there, I believe, about the spiritual Israel, spiritual Jerusalem, which is the body of believers and which also is surrounded by enemies that want to destroy it, and who will be successful in silencing the Gospel. And perhaps the two events will be simultaneous. It could well be that the destruction of literal Jerusalem and the silencing of the true Gospel will be simultaneous events, just shortly before Christ Himself returns on the clouds of glory.

CALLER: All right. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

CHAPTER 12 – JESUS AND HIS MINISTRY

GENERAL

Why Did Jesus Use Spit in Two of His Miracles? (101B)

HC: The question sometimes is raised about this matter of the two miracles of Jesus that are recorded for us in the Bible, where Christ spit on the eyes of the blind man in Mark 8 before He healed him, or He spit on the ground and made mud or clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man in John 9. Now why did God do this? Why did Christ do this? I'd like to speak on this before we take our next call.

We know, first of all, that nothing that Jesus did or that is recorded for us in the Bible is there accidentally, nor was it done coincidentally or incidentally. Everything has a very distinct purpose. Now Christ obviously could have healed these blind men by simply saying the word. He didn't have to go through all of this strategy of spitting, and so on. He didn't have to do that. It is there, however, to teach us something.

Now secondly, we know that Christ was constantly teaching with parables. Every action has to be examined to see if there is a deeper spiritual meaning. A parable, in the easiest way of speaking about it, is an earthly story with a heavenly

meaning. Well, these miracles were true historical events. But they are written to give us a spiritual insight. Now we know that the purpose of Christ's teaching was always to give us insights into the nature of salvation. And therefore we sense that the fact that He spit on the eyes of the blind man has something to do with teaching us about what our salvation is all about.

Now when we go to the Old Testament, we find at least two accounts of the meaning of spitting in somebody's face, and it's really quite bad. It's really quite shocking, in a way. In Deuteronomy 25 we have the account of a widow whose husband has died. And in accordance with the law God had laid down, if a husband died without bearing any children, then if that husband had a brother who was unmarried, he was to marry the widow, in order to provide children to perpetuate the name of his brother. And if the brother would not do this, then he was under the curse of God. We see this very vividly back in Genesis. There was a man by the name of Onan, who was supposed to go in to his brother's wife and bear seed for his brother, and he refused to do it. And so God killed him right on the spot. God killed him to show that he was under the curse of God.

Here in Deuteronomy 25, to show this curse, the Bible says this in verse 8: "If the brother [who is supposed to marry the widow on behalf of his brother, to provide seed] refuses to take her, then his brother's wife shall go up to him, in the presence of the elders, and pull his sandal off his feet and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house." Now this spitting in the face here is to indicate that he was under the curse of God, because he was rebellious against God, in that he would not go in to his brother's widow to provide seed.

Now in Numbers 12 we have a similar account, showing that to spit in one's face is to indicate that they were under the curse of God. We have the account there of Miriam, a sister of Moses, who had rebelled against Moses. And so Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Now to become leprous also indicated that a person was under the curse of God. A leper had to remain outside the camp, and he was to say, "Unclean, unclean, unclean." Leprosy in the Bible is a figure of sin. Well, Miriam became leprous. And then Moses cried to the Lord, "Heal her. O God, I beseech Thee," in verse 13. And then verse 14 of Numbers 12 records that the Lord said to Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut up outside the camp seven days. And after that she may be brought in again." In other words, God is equating leprosy with having someone spit in your face. In other words, both are indicators. Both are literal things, of course. But they are figures of being under the curse of God.

Well, what does this have to do then with these miracles? Here's a blind man, he's physically blind. Why would Christ spit in his face? Well, you see, the miracle that Christ did in a physical way was a figure of a great spiritual truth. The blind man, who was blind physically, is a picture of figure of an unsaved man, who is blind spiritually. And when Christ spit on the ground and made mud out of the spittle and put it on his eyes (or in the case of the man from Bethsaida in Mark 8, where Christ spit in his eyes directly), this indicates that this blind man, who was blind spiritually, is under the curse of God. He is like a leper. He is to be . . . he is unclean. He cannot come into the body of Christ. He is a sinner.

So you have the physical situation. You have the physically blind man, whose eyes have been spit upon. You have the spiritual meaning of this. It is a figure of a person who is blind in his sins, he's

spiritually blind. He is under the curse of God. He cannot come into the camp of the believers. He is an abomination to God. This idea is strengthened in Mark 8, where it's talking about this blind man there in verse 22: "They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought to Him a blind man and begged Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. And when He had spit on his eyes, He laid His hands on him," and so on. And then the healing came. He led him out of the village. That figure also points to the fact that he is unclean. He is led outside of the camp of the believers, if you will. He can't come into the body of Christ because he is cursed by his sin. The spitting is emphasizing that before we are saved we are cursed by sin.

Now notice what happens in John 9, after He had anointed the man's eyes with the clay. He said to him, "Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam, which means scent. So he went and washed and came back seeing." Now here stands the sinner. He is spiritually blind. He is under the curse of God. He's like a leper. He's like someone who has been spit upon in the face. He is an abomination. And now God comes with a command: "Go, if you will, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved; you will be cleansed of your sin."

God gives us the command to be obedient to Him, just as He gave the command to this blind man to go wash in the pool of Siloam. In Acts 2:38 Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is discussing salvation. And he says, "Repent and be baptized in the Name of Christ for the remission of your sins." The word baptism means to wash or be purified. What Peter was saying was, "Repent and be washed in the Name (that is, on the authority) of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins." And we are washed of our sins when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ and place our trust in Him. He cleanses us from all sins.

And so when we are obedient to the command, no matter how a great a sinner we might be, no matter how much we might be under the curse of sin, when we are obedient to the command to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then we will have our spiritually blind eyes opened, just as surely as this blind man, who obeyed God in John 9. He went and washed, and he came back seeing.

So you see, when Christ spit on the eyes of these blind men, He did not do this accidentally. He did it in order to teach us that we who are spiritually blind are under the curse of God. We are an abomination to God. We are dead in our sins. But it is these kinds of people that Christ came to seek and to save. He came for sinners. Isn't that wonderful? No matter how great your sins might be, no matter how deeply you have rebelled against God, your salvation can be just as certain and sure as anyone else's. What a wonderful Savior we have!

The Nature of Christ's Suffering for Our Sins (227D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi. I've got some questions concerning what Jesus Christ actually accomplished in paying for our sin. The Bible says that no flesh would be able to survive the fires of hell. If a man were to go into hell, that would be his state forever. And he would have no hope of getting out of there. And of course the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ took our sins on Him. And yet He was able to survive the fires of hell. In Hebrews 1:3 it says, "He purged Himself of our sins." And I wondered if you would bring out a little bit of why He was able to survive that, where no other flesh would be able to survive that.

HC: The question is, How could Christ endure the equivalent of an eternity in hell and survive it, whereas we would have to spend an eternity there? The reason is that Christ is the God-man. Christ was man in order that He might be a legitimate substitute. It is man who sinned, it is man who must pay the penalty for his sins. But He was also Eternal God.

And so God could so intensify sufferings that Christ endured that it became the equivalent of an eternity in hell, and Christ was not consumed in the attempt. He was Eternal God, and Eternal God is infinite, you see.

CALLER: I guess really what I'm looking for is: In the resurrection Christ could take up that body of flesh that had suffered, you know when He was on the cross. He cried out, because the Father had forsaken Him, turned His back on Him because He saw Him there with our sins on Him, the man Christ Jesus, even though He took out sins, He Himself was still perfect righteousness in the flesh, as the man still. And so does He have a right to the life, to be able to be refined and purified through the fires, without actually suffering destruction?

HC: No. That's not possible. You can't separate the man Jesus from the God-man. He is the Lord Jesus Christ, who stripped Himself of His glory in order that He might be the Lamb that was slain. And He took upon Himself our sins. So when He faced the judgment throne, He was as guilty as guilty could be, as guilty as all of those who. He was totally identified with our individual sins. And He deserved to go to hell at that point. Not for His own sin, but for our sins. He became sin for us.

Now had He sinned, in his own life, that would have proved He's not God. He could not be a substitute for our sins because He would have to pay for His own, and He would have proven He was only a human after all. And He would have had to spend an eternity in hell for his own sins.

CALLER: I know that in the New Testament where it speaks of the fires of hell that it means everlasting condemnation, and so on, but is there an Old Testament passage that teaches that someone who is in hell will remain there? You know, it's not like purgatory, where you can go in and come back out. It's a place of no return.

HC: Yes, there is. And I'm not sure that I can put my finger right on it quickly. But the Bible does teach that. For example, I think in Jeremiah 17, or thereabouts. Let me just turn to that a minute, and see if I can put my finger on it. Yes. Jeremiah 17:4. "You shall loosen your hand from your heritage which I gave you, and I will make you serve your enemies in a land which you do not know. For in My anger a fire is kindled which shall burn forever." Now that's speaking pretty plainly, isn't it?

And there are other passages of this nature, particularly in the Book of Jeremiah. God really gets into this matter of His punishment of hell for the sins of Israel.

CALLER: Okay. I appreciate your explaining Christ's resurrection, in that it's the power of God that He's back to life. But I have some problem with how that sinful, well, it's like you say, I guess. You can't separate the two.

HC: You can't separate them, really. And secondly, we don't know how Christ suffered. We have no idea. We see Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, and He's crying out with loud cries, we read in Hebrews 5. And He's throwing Himself to the ground, and the sweat is pouring off His body like great drops of blood into the ground. Now no one had laid a hand on Him. There was no one whipping Him. And yet here He's carrying on in a tragic and a terrible way. Whatever that is, that punishment, it was beginning to hone in on Him. And

only within the Godhead would we know exactly how this all went together.

CALLER: He's a wonderful Lord. That's all we can say. I praise Him for that. Thank you very much, Mr. Camping. God bless you. Good night.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Where Was Jesus After His Resurrection? (231D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I would like to ask, where was Jesus after the three days during which He was buried, when He told one of His disciples, "Don't touch Me because I haven't ascended to My Father in Heaven"? Somehow I don't seem to be able to understand that. Where was He?

HC: Your question is, where was Jesus after He had risen from the grave? He was on earth. The Bible doesn't give us any description of the precise place that He was. He did appear again and again to His disciples. He appeared to them in Galilee, where He appeared to more than 500. He appeared to them in Jerusalem, on two or three occasions.

But He certainly had not ascended in His total personality back to Heaven. That did not occur until about forty days after the cross, as you've already indicated. But the Bible just doesn't get into that question of where He spent His time. That's not for us to be concerned about, I suppose.

There are certain facts, you see, that God does not reveal to us. We read, for example, in Deuteronomy that the secret things belong to God, and that which He has revealed, those are the things we are to study out.

CALLER: You are aware, I suppose, that there is a very large and growing group lately that claims that He was in North America, that the Lord Jesus Christ visited them and that's what He meant when He said, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold." They say that they were the sheep. They count themselves in the number of the other sheep.

HC: Well, you see, that kind of an idea, that Christ was in North America, or whatever, has absolutely no biblical validation of any kind. The fact is, the Bible does not teach that there are two kinds of salvation or two kinds of programs that God has. When He said in John 10, "Other sheep have I," He was speaking of the fact that there were going to be believers from every nation, as well as the nation of Israel.

While He was on earth, He proclaimed the Gospel chiefly to the nation of Israel. He told His disciples, "Go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But it was God's program that Christ, in going to the cross, would provide salvation for people from every nation. And these sheep from the other nations would also come into the fold. Of course that program began in earnest at Pentecost, when God began His program to evangelize the world.

Now the idea that He had some kind of a special message to one nation like the North American continent or something, is just straight imagination. That would indicate that there is some other kind of a gospel, some other kind of a salvation than the salvation of the Bible. And that is not possible.

CALLER: They also are very busy building temples for the gathering of Israel because they think the Lord is going to establish His reign right here on this continent. And I believe the Lord has eliminated temples, for His temple is in human hearts. I believe that's the only temples He accepts.

HC: You know, they are not alone in suggesting that Christ will reign on this sin-cursed earth. There are a lot of Christians who believe that also. That is

because mankind has a definite attachment to this creation. They really think that this is where it is. And they fail to realize that this creation is under the curse of sin. This creation is going to be destroyed by Christ when He comes, and the whole plan of salvation is far more exciting and wonderful than this creation can contain.

CALLER: Of course. I should say so. But I still would like to know then, why did He tell the thief, "Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise" if He tells His disciples, "Don't touch Me because I haven't ascended to My Father"?

HC: When you talk about Paradise, and you talk about Him saying to the women, "Don't touch Me," now we have a different problem, and the Bible does give us some insight. The word Paradise is a word assigned by God to Heaven itself.

In Revelation 2 we read about the Tree of Life, which is in the Paradise of God. That is in Revelation 2:7. And in II Corinthians 12 the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, talks about being caught up into the Third Heaven, which is called Paradise. And Jesus Himself, when He hung on the cross, when He had finished His work on the cross, said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." So in His spirit He went to the Father.

Now He said to the thief on the cross, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Now the thief on the cross in his body went into the tomb, just like Jesus did. But in his spirit he went into Heaven, just as Abraham did when he died, and David did, and any believer, when he dies. He goes to live and reign with Christ in Heaven.

And Christ also went into Heaven in His spirit. But that doesn't mean that He had ascended into Heaven. He actually had to complete His work in the fullest sense by first waiting for His body to be resurrected and waiting to acquaint His disciples with the fact that He had become resurrected. And only then did He ascend into Heaven.

Now when the women took hold of Jesus' feet, they were so excited, and it was so marvelous that their Savior was here, that they really wanted to hold onto Him and never leave Him again. They wanted to worship Him forever, which of course is the ultimate desire of the born again believer. And this is what we will do throughout eternity. We will be in His Majesty's glorious presence, and we will worship Him forever.

But that time had not arrived as yet. God has given mankind who are saved work to do. We are to be representatives of Christ here on earth. We are to be His ambassadors representing Christ to a world that is dying in sin. And so you remember what He told the women. "Don't touch Me (don't hold Me), but go and tell the disciples that I have risen." In other words, that was the flavor of what He told all the disciples later on. "Go ye into all the world, making disciples," bringing the Gospel. And this is what we are to do today.

Now once our work is done (and only God knows when our individual tasks are finished), He takes us home. Then we leave our body, and we go into Heaven, and then we will be forever with the Lord. When He comes on the Last Day, we'll be with Him. We will be with Him forever. Once we leave our body, we will never leave Him again.

But until our task is done, until we have served out our life as an ambassador for Christ, in accordance with God's desires, we are not present with Him. He says that He will never leave us. And in the person of the Holy Spirit He does remain with us. But insofar as being in His personal presence, this will only happen again when we go to Heaven to be with Him.

CALLER: When was Satan cast down from Heaven?

HC: We don't know the precise moment, but probably at the resurrection, when the work of Christ had been completed in every sense. Now Jesus, when He sent out the 70, said, "Behold, I saw Satan falling as lightning from Heaven." Throughout the Old Testament period, even though Satan was doomed, even though he had rebelled against God, we discover that he still had access into Heaven.

But once Christ went to the cross and vanquished Satan, as we read in Hebrews 2:14, then Satan no longer could be found in Heaven. And so we read in Revelation 12 where Michael and his angels fought with the dragon and his angels. And they were cast out of Heaven. And I can see the drama. Here is the Savior, who has vanquished Satan by going to the cross, and has guaranteed the judgment of Satan. And so Satan has no longer any place in Heaven.

And so Michael and his angels drove the wicked angels and Satan forever out of Heaven, to the earth, where they continue to plague mankind until the Last Day.

Now interestingly enough, you might wonder why Jesus stayed on the earth for forty days. Why did He not show Himself to the disciples for a couple of days and then go to Heaven? Why wait for forty days?

Of course we can't know for sure because God has His own reasons. But I do know this. In the Bible the number forty is very frequently used as a number indicating a testing program. Remember, when Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, it was forty days. And you will remember when Moses was on Mount Sinai, Israel was tested for forty days. Moses remained on Mount Sinai for forty days, and so on.

Now I believe the forty days represents a testing program. Christ showed Himself during this period as having resurrected. Now what are we going to do? We are being tested by God. That is, will we believe that He is indeed the Messiah because He has risen, or will we not believe that He is the Messiah? This forty days represents the testing program of God.

Jesus' Resurrected Body (263A)

HC: Good evening, welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I'd like for you to explain the difference between the body Christ had from resurrection till He ascended, and the form He will have when He returns.

HC: The question is asked, "What was the body in which Jesus was resurrected, and how does that differ from the body that He will come in when He returns on the clouds of glory at the end of time?"

Now in Acts we read, when Jesus ascended into Heaven from Mount Olivet, the angels appeared to the disciples and said, in verse 11, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into Heaven? This Jesus who was taken up from you into Heaven will come in the same way as you saw Him go into Heaven." Now this is very important that we read this carefully. It doesn't say that He will come in the same body that He went up into Heaven, in the same appearance as He went up into Heaven. It says He will come in the same way. In other words, He went from this earth in a very literal fashion. He actually had to do with this earth, and went up into Heaven. And God is saying here that when He comes on the last day, at the end of time, He will come again as His Majesty, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will not come in the person of the Holy Spirit, as He exists in the world today. But He will come as the second person of the Trinity, as the Son of God, in a very personal way.

But there will be a vast difference in the body that He comes with from that in which He was resurrected. First of all, let's look at His resurrected body. Now when He went into the grave, we read of Him that He did not suffer corruption. We read this in verse 31 of Acts 2: "Nor did His flesh see corruption." The victory of the cross was of such a nature that the body that was put into the grave did not decay as our body does when it is put in the grave.

Secondly, we know that when He was resurrected, His body still was very much like the body that went into the grave. We know this because He told Thomas, "Put your hand in My side, and feel the place where the sword thrust was. Put your fingers in the imprints of My hand." His body was very much like that which went into the grave.

More than that, He said to Thomas, in Luke 24:39, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me, and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see that I have." So Christ is insisting that in His resurrected body He is flesh and bones.

Now remembering that, let's look at 1 Corinthians 15. There we read, in verse 50: "I tell you this, brethren, flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." Now I know there's a dual meaning here. Flesh and blood can refer to the fact that we in our human nature, as we exist in flesh and blood, cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. It is God who has to inherit it for us. He is the one who, by grace, is going to save us.

But it also has the implication that we do not go into Heaven as flesh and blood. We must receive our resurrected bodies. That is, in fact, the context of 1 Corinthians 15. It is talking about the resurrection of our bodies on the last day. And it's speaking here of our resurrected body as a spiritual body, not a body of flesh and blood.

Now if Jesus told the disciples, after He rose from the grave, "Touch Me, and see that I am flesh and bones," we know that this was not His glorified body. Now we know this for another reason. Had He been in His glorified body, in His heavenly body, no man could have looked at Him. His glory would have been far too immense for anyone to have looked upon Him.

But as a matter of fact, after He was resurrected, Mary thought He was the gardener. Christ had covered her eyes so that she did not immediately recognize Him. The two men on the way to Emmaus also thought He was just a stranger, a fellow human being, because God momentarily had covered their eyes. But they saw Him only as a man.

But when Jesus is in Heaven, He is not there as flesh and bones, or flesh and blood. He is in His glorified eternal body, that is far more glorious than anything that we could ever look upon with our naked eyes. And it's in this body that He will return at the end of time, when He comes on the clouds of glory. Note Matthew 24:30: "They will see the Son of Man coming on clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

We read earlier, in verse 27: "For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." Now imagine, people from all over the world, and don't get snared by the fact that this is the planet earth, and light travels in a straight line. God established that rule, and you can rest assured that that rule will be set aside on the last day. Light is going to bend, so that everyone on the fact of this globe will see Him coming. His glory will envelop the earth. And they will see His glory, as He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords.

And it's no wonder, therefore, that the unsaved will cower in fear and call for the rocks to crush them, and the mountains to cover them, because they'll

know that He is the Christ, and that He has come to judge them. It will be at this time that the prophecy will come true that every knee shall bow, and every tongue will confess Him as Lord.

And so this is the body in which He's going to return, in His glorified spiritual body.

What if the Jews Had Accepted Christ? (322A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: John 1:11 discusses the fact that Christ did go to His own people. He was of the tribe of Judah. And they did not receive Him. And John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." And another thing he said was, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Let us say that the people of Judah at that time had a very repentant heart, and this includes their religious leadership, and were really in tune with God, and had been convicted of their sins and realized that Christ was the prophesied One all throughout the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi. Would that have marked the end of the world? And the Kingdom of Heaven, instead of being transformed into the church, would that have been the literal meaning of Heaven? Or, in capsule, what would their fate have been if, instead of murdering Him, they had received Him as the Savior?

HC: That's a very interesting question. And it's a very valuable question, also, to face because it might clear up some misunderstandings that some have regarding what the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven is.

The question really is this. Suppose that the Jews of Jesus' day had welcomed Jesus with open arms as the prophesied Messiah. Instead of turning on Him, instead of repudiating Him and eventually seeing to it that He was crucified, suppose they had really, as a nation, accepted Him as their Messiah? Would God then have ushered into existence the Kingdom of Heaven?

Actually, we have to face this question. On what basis can there be a Kingdom of Heaven that is populated by human beings? The only basis that this can exist on is if our sins have been paid for, if somehow we have equivalently or actually endured an eternity in hell, and now the demands of the law that declare that "the wages of sin is death" have all been taken care of, only then could we become a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.

CALLER: I do believe personally that at the cross Satan was defeated once and for all. Christ endured the temptation of Satan. Christ endured the temptation of the religious leadership and some of the people of His day, and didn't succumb to their temptation (Satan wanted signs). Well had these people that He went to accepted Him, do you think Satan and his angels at that time would have involved themselves in a war with Christ?

HC: No. You see, if the Jewish people had accepted Him, and if Christ had not gone to the cross, there would be no kingdom. There would be no Heaven for human beings. There would be no Messiah. Christ came to go to the cross. He came to be crucified. This was His purpose in coming.

Now we can hypothecate and say, "If the Jews had not crucified Him, then somebody else would have." Satan would have in some other fashion made sure that He had gone to the cross, because it was essential that Jesus went to the cross. He could not be a king. He could not establish His Kingdom unless He went to the cross. Only by going to the cross and paying for our sins, enduring the wrath of God on our behalf, can He be King over those who are redeemed.

CALLER: So what you're saying is that once Israel had fulfilled its role, the new body of Christ is the church. Now in James epistle, it is introduced with the naming of the twelve tribes, but no more in that epistle is there mention of the twelve or thirteen tribes. So some that it's really symbolizing the church. Do you agree with that?

HC: The question is raised, When James says in James 1:1, "James a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad greeting," is he referring to national Israel or is he referring to the body of believers which is called the church?"

I believe that he is speaking here of all believers. We are the true Israel. We are the seed of Abraham. Anyone at all, according to Galatians 3, who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, is the true seed of Abraham. And we of course are scattered abroad. We are found in every nation of the world. And God writes to us in His Word.

And we have come into being because Christ went to the cross. Now why God chose the nation of Israel to crucify Him, that's another problem altogether. It was thoroughly anticipated in the Old Testament that the nation of Israel had rejected God consistently, throughout the Old Testament. And the unbelief that Jesus experienced when He came here was thoroughly anticipated in the Old Testament. There were no surprises of any kind in the conduct of the nation of Israel at the time that Jesus appeared amongst them.

Wonderfully, because of God's grace, and only because of God's grace a remnant chosen by grace from amongst the nation of Israel did turn to Him. We read about them when we read about the disciples, and the women who followed Him, and so on.

But because He was crucified, He became the King. Now the Old Testament church, the organized body of believers, the outward expression of the body of Christ in the Old Testament, was called the congregation or the assembly, or the nation of Israel, because it was totally identified with the nation of Israel. It was augmented by proselytes who became a part of the worship service by first being circumcised.

Now that came to an end when Christ went to the cross, because it was identified with the ceremonial law. But it picked up again under the leadership of the twelve apostles, and continued with national Israel, starting all over again with a remnant chosen by grace out of national Israel, but augmented by many Gentiles, so that throughout the New Testament period the congregation or the assembly, or Israel, if you will, really consists, to a far higher degree, of nations that have no blood descent from Abraham.

Did Jesus Actually Descend into Hell? (323A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Ephesians 4:9 & 10 say, "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first, into the lower parts of the earth." And I Peter 3:19 says, "By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." Jesus said, when He was on the cross, when He died, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Now there is some teaching that says that Jesus did suffer for men the penalty of sin, and that He also went to hell for us. And then there are some who say that because Jesus said, "It is finished," and "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," that He did that, and that He did not go to hell for us. And I'd just like to know which is correct. And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine.

The question is raised: How are we to understand passages like Ephesians 4, which indicates that Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth, and from there led captivity captive? Or 1 Peter 3:19 or 20, where it says that in the spirit He preached to the souls in Hades, who formerly did not obey in the days of Noah? How do we put all this together?

I think most of the misunderstanding on this particular question is a result of a lack of understanding of what Christ did for us on the cross. A lot of people talk about the fact that He shed His blood for our sins. That's a very Biblical statement. A lot of people talk about the fact that He died for our sins. That's very Biblical. A lot of people talk about the fact that He hung on the cross. That's very Biblical.

But when it comes to the fact that He descended into the lower parts of the earth, or as Jesus put it in Matthew 12, "I must be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," they have no understanding really of what this is. You see, the problem that Christ faced was the judicial statement of God that "the wages of sin is death." And the death that God had in view not only was physical death, but eternal damnation in hell. This is the penalty that had to be paid if He were to be our Savior.

Mankind is destined for hell, he is committed to hell, because we're all sinners. And in order to save us, it was necessary for God not only to find us in our depraved and desperate condition, sentenced to hell. But He also must pay the equivalent of an eternity in hell on our behalf.

Actually, therefore, from the time that He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," and He threw Himself to the ground, and the sweat was pouring off His body like great drops of blood, into the ground, until Resurrection morning, Christ was enduring hell for our sins. He was enduring the wrath of God for our sins.

Now it is true that at the end of the world there will be a place called hell, where all of the unsaved will be cast, along with Satan and all the fallen angels. Presently there is no hell, at least insofar as we can determine, as an actual place. The Bible teaches that the unsaved, when they die, go down into a place of silence. This is also called Hades in the Bible.

It is not the place "hell," however, where the unsaved go eternally. At least they are not suffering there. At least they're not experiencing the wrath of God there. They are simply waiting for the judgment of the last day. However, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus found in Luke 16 eternal damnation is spoken of as Hades.

The angels who have fallen, along with Satan, also are spoken of in the Bible as being in pits of hell, or consigned to hell. But in physical location they are active in the world, deceiving the hearts of men. So neither are they in a physical, literal place called hell. They're identified with hell because there is no hope for them. They are consigned to hell, and therefore the Bible speaks of them as if they are in hell. But in actuality, in physical location they are not in a place called hell.

Insofar as I can tell from the Bible, a literal place called hell will only be in existence at Judgment Day, and it must be there because the unsaved must be removed from this earth so that God can redeem it, so that He can destroy it by fire and recreate it New Heavens and a New Earth. And so there has to be a place where the unsaved can exist eternally, under the wrath of God. And that is a physical place called hell.

Hell, however, in its actual essence is not a place. Hell is a relationship with God. Hell is to be under the wrath of God and to experience the wrath of God. Hell is described in the Bible in all kinds of

ugly language. But ultimately it is all focusing on this point, that those who are subject to hell are in terrible trouble with God, and His wrath is being poured out upon them.

This is what Jesus experienced, from Gethsemane until the resurrection morning. He experienced the wrath of God, so that He was enduring hell. It was as if He had gone down to hell while He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and while He stood before Pontius Pilate, and while He hung on the cross. And we of course see this in its climax as the cry is wrenched from His lips, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" That's hell.

Specifically, therefore, when we look at Ephesians 4, and it declares that He descended into the lower parts of the earth, it is simply indicating that He had to come where those who are destined for hell dwell. That's in our presence. He rescued us from the path that was leading directly into hell. And in order to rescue us He had to Himself endure hell for our sins.

"He led captivity captive." Before we are saved we're slaves of Satan. We are entirely under his jurisdiction and his domain. He is our master. But when we are saved, we are freed from bondage to Satan, and we become bondservants of the Lord Jesus Christ. We become His captives, and He takes us out of hell. And He did this by going to the cross, so that we have eternal life and are forever His people.

Jesus, therefore, never did go to a place called hell. The fact is, when we look at Him on the cross, when would He have done this? He was a complete personality until He finally said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." And He said, "It is finished." But at that time, in His spirit He went to be with the Father. His body, however, was put in the grave, where it did not see corruption. And this was part of the suffering that was involved in paying for our sins. For this reason Acts 2:31 indicates that Jesus' soul was not left in Hades. Hades in this context has the meaning of eternal damnation. The fact that His body did not see corruption seems to emphasize that the victory of the cross was accomplished. The fact of the resurrection emphasized that the penalty of eternal damnation had been paid in every sense.

But at no time is there a time when He could have gone down to some place. Now 1 Peter 3:18 or 19 is not saying that He in His spirit descended into hell. It is simply saying that in His spirit, at one time, He spoke to the spirits in prison. Actually, the word hell is not found in 1 Peter 3. It's actually the word prison.

Now in 1 Peter 1 we read in verse 10: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching for what manner of the spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."

In other words, the spirit of Christ spoke through the Old Testament prophets, including Noah, to the prisoners (the spirits in prison) in their day. Now the spirits in prison were the unsaved of their day. Jesus in His spirit did preach to the spirits in prison, but not when He was on the cross, not when He was paying for our sins. He did this all through the Old Testament period, as He spoke through Noah, and as He spoke through Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Abraham, and so on, even as today the spirit of Christ is speaking to the spirits in prison, as we bring the Gospel. This does not require a physical descent of Christ into hell.

I hope this will clear up that question just a little bit.

Did Christ Go to the Cross

Willingly? (370C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like to know if Christ died willingly on the cross.

HC: Did Christ die willingly on the cross. Absolutely. He died willingly. He came to obediently do the will of His Father: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Now again and again He told His disciples that He would die, that He would be crucified, and that He would be raised again on the third day. This is why He came to Jerusalem at this particular time, so that He would be crucified. Jesus said, for example, in Matthew 12: "The only sign I will give you is the sign of the prophet Jonah. As he was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Christ willingly went to the cross

CALLER: Thank you.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

CHRONOLOGY

Does Christ Know the Day and Hour of His Return? (101C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: On the question of Jesus' not knowing the day of His return. He said to His disciples that not even the Son of Man knows the day when He was going to return. But I've also read in Zechariah 13, where it says that the Lord would know when the day was. And I was wondering if you could explain if that is talking about Jesus Himself, or is there something else in view?

HC: Zechariah 13. That's a curious possibility you offer. I wonder which verse you're thinking of. It says in verse 1: "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness." Now that of course is talking about the day when Christ went to the cross. That is when He provided cleansing.

And then in verse 4: "On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his vision. When he prophesies he will not put on a hairy mantle in order to deceive, but he will say, I am no prophet. I am a tiller of the soil, for the land has been my possession since my youth." I'm not sure exactly what God had in mind in saying that.

Verse 7: "Awake, oh sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to Me, says the Lord of Hosts. Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered. I will turn My hand against the little ones." Now that's again talking about Christ on the cross, and the church is scattered. The disciples momentarily are without any kind of a leader, because their leader, Christ, has left them, to endure hell for their sins.

CALLER: I'm sorry but I couldn't give you the exact verse, but I know it was in Zechariah.

HC: Well, let's look at the verse in the New Testament. In Mark 13 we read in verse 32: "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Now the first thing we have to bear in mind is that it's talking about the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ does not know of that day or that hour. And that's a puzzle, because Christ is Eternal God. He is the one who created the universe. He knows the end from the beginning. And I just can't believe that Christ would not know the timetable of the end.

The other thing I'm wondering is, why

does it emphasize the Son here, along with the angels and everyone else? I do know this, that in the Bible the word day and the word hour are frequently synonyms for Judgment Day itself. We read, for example, in Matthew 7, where it's talking about false prophets, "In that day they will say, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name?" and so on. Now the context there is very clear that it's speaking of Judgment Day.

The word hour is also frequently used in speaking of Judgment Day. We read, for example, in Revelation 18, where it speaks about the destruction of Babylon, a figure of the kingdom of Satan. And it says, "In one hour your judgment has come." Hour and day are synonyms, therefore, for Judgment Day.

Now we know this, that the angels were to come into judgment because of their sins (that is, the fallen angels are going to be removed into hell). We know that all mankind who are not saved are going to come into judgment for their sins. And we know that Christ was going to endure judgment because of the sins that He had taken upon Himself, the sins of those who were going to believe in Him. Yet at this point in time, when Jesus is speaking this, neither the angels, nor mankind, nor Christ had experienced judgment as yet.

And so I am inclined to believe that this verse 32 is not a time reference at all. It is simply a statement of the fact that no one has experienced judgment as yet, who is to experience it. The Father knows what that judgment will be, because it is the Father who is going to pour out His wrath on the Son.

The Two Genealogies of Christ in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 (136C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. In Matthew 1 and in Luke 3 we have two different accounts of the ancestors of Christ. And I'd like to know why they are different, and also, if the one in Luke is complete. It seems like kind of a short span of time. And I'd like to know if it is complete or not, and the comparison between the two, why they are different.

HC: Okay. Your question deals with the differences that exist between the two genealogies we find in the Bible concerning Jesus. We find one in Matthew 1, that begins with Abraham and goes down through to Joseph. And the other one begins with Adam (that's found in Luke 3), and goes all the way through to Heli, who is not Joseph.

Now when you study these two genealogies, you will find that they are identical from Abraham to David. You'll find the same names. But from David on, you will find a radical departure. In Matthew's genealogy, it goes through Solomon, through Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, all of the kings of Judah, right through to Jeconiah, and then from Jeconiah through some other names, all the way through Joseph.

Now in Luke's genealogy, it goes to David. And then it doesn't name another king. It goes to Nathan, who was a brother of Solomon, and goes right on through the whole series of other names, coming to Heli. And so this is the genealogy, in Luke 3, of Mary. The one in Matthew is the genealogy of Joseph, who was not the father of Jesus.

CALLER: The one in Luke goes all the way back to Adam.

HC: Yes. Because it is the genealogy of Jesus, and it relates Jesus to Adam. It carries all the way through the whole human race. It really begins with God, because it speaks of Adam, the son of God, and goes all the way through. Now it doesn't mean that every single name in the genealogical line-up has been named. There are one or two or three that are absent, as we compare with other Scriptures. And I think there may be

several reasons for this. But one of the reasons is that in so doing you end up with exactly 77 names in that genealogical table. And seven is the number of the perfection of God's plan. And therefore I think, in that sense, it was contrived. That is, the names are named, and enough have been left out to end up with 77, to emphasize that number seven in that context.

And also, incidentally, Jesus was born at the end of the eleventh millennium. There were 11,000 years before Christ, and it was right at that time that Christ was born. And so you find the number eleven featured and the number seven featured in the number 77.

CALLER: Thank you. Good night.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Three Days and Three Nights? (163D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Could you explain to me how Christ's resurrection took place three days and three nights after the crucifixion. But yet by our calendar today, when we count Friday through Sunday, we only have two full days and two nights. And I'll take the answer over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you.

The question is raised, How can we work out this idea that Christ rose three days and three nights after He was crucified, since He was crucified on Friday and He rose from the grave on Sunday morning? Now there's three days there, all right. There's Friday, because in the Bible a partial day is counted as a full day. Then there's Saturday, and then there's Sunday. A part of Sunday would be counted as a full day. So you have three days.

But we run into trouble with the nights, because we only have Friday night and Saturday night. But you see, the Bible doesn't teach that Christ was in the grave three days and three nights, or that He rose three days and three nights after He was crucified. The Bible doesn't teach this anywhere.

The Bible does say something that sounds almost like that. In Matthew 12, we read in verse 40, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." But you see, the heart of the earth is not the grave. The heart of the earth is something else.

The heart of the earth is used in the Bible as a figure of the suffering of hell. When we go back to Jonah, because that is what is alluded to here in this passage, we find in the Book of Jonah, in Chapter three, where it speaks about Jonah in the belly of the fish, that the language of hell is used. Let me just read a couple of verses.

We read in verse 6 of Jonah two, "I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever." Well, that's what happens when you go to hell. You are in the land whose bars close upon you forever. "Yet Thou didst bring up my life from the pit." The pit is a synonym for hell. It says in verse two, "Out of the belly of hell I cried."

In other words, Jonah's being in the belly of the fish is a figure of Christ enduring hell for our sins. And then it says, "Thou didst cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas." The heart of the seas, or the heart of the earth, is a figure of hell. You remember, in Ephesians 4 it says that Christ descended into the lower parts of the earth. That is language to indicate that He endured hell. He endured suffering in order to pay for our sins.

So we don't have to think only about Christ in the grave. We have to look at Christ in His suffering. Now when did it really begin? Look at Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, Thursday night. He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even

unto death." Already He's talking about hell.

Then He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and you'll remember that the sweat began to pour off of his body in great drops of blood into the ground. God was already pouring out His wrath on Him, the wrath of hell. And He was crying out to God. Now He was still a free man. He had not been bound by Satan as yet. And yet already He is suffering intensely. God is pouring out His wrath on Him. He's enduring hell for our sins.

And of course this reaches a crescendo on the cross, when He cries out, "My God, My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" That's the essence of hell. Now His suffering was completed in every sense of the word when He rose from the grave on Sunday morning. At that time it became abundantly clear that He had overcome death.

And so He was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth: Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday night, all day Friday, all day Saturday, and a partial day Sunday. This was the duration of Christ's suffering. Literally, therefore this timetable took place. He was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Well, thank you for that.

The Timing of Christ's First Coming (257B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Could you tell me why God waited so long to send Christ to be crucified?

HC: The question is raised, Why did God wait so long to be crucified? When we read Acts 2, we find that God speaks of the cross as the "last days." It's the beginning, in other words, of the final period of God's dealings with the earth. When we work out the timetable of the earth, we find that 11,000 passed before Christ went to the cross. And since then, of course, 2000 years have passed, approximately. And now we know that we are, in all probability, very very close to the end of time. Now why did He wait 11,000 years?

Well, I'm not really sure why He did. The Bible speaks about Christ coming in the "fullness of time." First of all, we must remember, of course, that the world during the first 6000 years of its existence, which was the period before the Flood, was not very heavily populated. People lived to be 900 or more years of age, and when we carefully study the Bible, we find that they did not bear a whole lot more children than a family today. Noah lived to be 950 years of age, and he only bore three children, which is not uncommon for a family today. And there are other evidences in the Bible of men who lived for a long period and still had relatively small families.

Ant so, based upon this, we might conclude that probably, before the Flood, the world never did reach a population of much over a million people, or thereabouts. So compared with, let's say, the four billion people who live on the earth today, it was a very insignificant number.

Then, beginning at 4990 BC, the date of the Flood, God began all over again with Noah and his family. And so again it would have taken thousands of years before the earth really began to be very heavily populated. And more than that, during this period God also had to work out all of the types and signs, and so on, particularly through the nation of Israel. This all had to be accomplished. And so for the 2000 years prior to Christ's coming, we have the account of the history of Israel, beginning with Abraham, who came out of Ur of the Chaldees, out of Haran, in the year 2092, at which time he entered the Promised

Land, going all the way through to the time that Christ came.

Well, that doesn't really answer the question, except that we know that the Bible says it was in God's own particular timetable. There was a very special moment in history when this would be accomplished, and the Bible speaks of this as the fullness of time.

Now by the same token, we know that when Christ comes on the Last Day it is at a precise moment. God has decreed. And again, it will be in the fullness of time.

Christ's Year of Birth (274D)

CALLER: You said that Jesus was born in 7 BC. Now if this is so, what's 0 AD? I always thought that was when He was born. I thought that's what we have our timetable set on.

HC: The question is raised, How is it that Jesus could have been born in 7 BC if our calendar begins with 0 AD?

Actually, I believe that this was under God's purposeful plan. The monk who was assigned the task, several centuries ago, of giving us our calendar presumed to have started the calendar with the birth date of Christ, or the birth year of Christ. But he made a mistake, by as many as seven years. And the fact is, when we accurately examine the period when Jesus could have been born, it has to fall between 6 and 9 BC. And all of the circumstantial evidence points to 7 BC.

And some of that circumstantial evidence is very interesting. Let me just give you a couple ideas of this. In the Bible the number twelve is used very frequently as a number signifying the fullness of time, or the fullness of any program, or the fullness of believers, or whatever. For example, the New Jerusalem has got twelve foundations, twelve gates. Its walls are 144 cubits thick. That's twelve times twelve. Its size is 12,000 stadia by 12,000 stadia. The number twelve is symbolically representing the fullness of all believers.

CALLER: Like the twelve disciples?

HC: Yes. The twelve disciples represent the whole New Testament church. The twelve tribes represent the Old Testament believers. The number twelve represents the fullness of anything.

Now it's significant that the Israelites went out of Egypt in the year 1447 BC. That's the year that the Passover was instituted, in 1447 BC. Now exactly 1440 years later, exactly twelve times twelve, we find that Jesus is born. He is the one, of course, who came to fulfill the Passover.

Now I mentioned that Jesus was crucified in AD 33, and that also ties in with 1440. Exactly forty years after the Israelites left Egypt, they entered the Land of Canaan, which is the figure of our entrance into salvation. And that of course was accomplished by Christ going to the cross. Well, exactly 1440 calendar years after 1407 BC., when Israel entered Canaan, Christ hung on the cross and paid for our sins, so that we might enter the spiritual Canaan. And so again you have the twelve times twelve.

Or again, the number ten is used in the Bible to illustrate the number of completeness. We find, for example, that God speaks of the completeness of believers in the figure of the ten coins of the parable. Or the number 100 is used in the same way, the hundred sheep, or the thousand years, the completeness of time during which Satan would be bound, in Revelation 20, or the thousand generations that Christ's love would continue, the completeness of His love for the children of the believers. And so the number ten, or a hundred, or one thousand, illustrates the completeness of something.

Now it's interesting that David, who is a great type of Christ, ascended the throne in the year 1007 BC, exactly 1000 years before Christ, who is the fulfillment of David's messianic type, was born. You have the completeness of time, you see, in there.

These are just a few that come into mind. These help to establish the fact, in my judgment, that more and more of the circumstantial evidence (I could give other evidences, I think, if I really work at this a bit) indicates that Christ was born in the year 7 BC.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Was Mary (Jesus' Mother) Special? (000A)

CALLER: In Luke 1, an angel told Mary, the mother of Jesus, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee blessed art thou among women" (v. 28) and, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God" (v. 30). Later, when the mother of John the Baptist saw Mary, she said, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (v. 42). Doesn't all this show that Mary is very special and deserves the special respect of all Christians?

HC: Surely, both the angel and Elisabeth gave Mary a beautiful salutation. But when we study those statements carefully, we find that they are not unique of Mary at all. Take the first phrase in verse 28, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured." The Greek for "highly favoured" there is the same word God uses in Ephesians 1:6, where it is translated "accepted." There we read, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

In Ephesians 1, God is talking about the salvation of all believers. Verse 5 says, for example, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." So, Ephesians 1:6 may very well be translated to read, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us highly favoured in the beloved."

You see, God is not a respecter of persons. He does not put Mary on a higher pedestal than any other believer. She is highly favored just as every other believer is highly favored. Indeed, all of us believers are highly favored because from all the sinners in the world God had chosen us to become saved by His grace.

The same holds true for the next statement the angels made to Mary, "The Lord is with thee." Isn't the Lord with every believer? Certainly. He promises, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Here again, Mary does not stand any differently than any other child of God.

Now, in verse 30 Mary is told that "Thou hast found favour with God" The word "favor" is a Greek word that is normally translated "grace." Again, it is not unique with Mary. In Genesis 6:8, we read, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Or we can go to Acts 7, where God, talking about David, says in verse 46, "Who found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob."

Actually, the phrase "thou has found favor with God" applies to every believer. We have found grace with God; we have been saved by the grace of God. So, in verse 30, the angel Gabriel is merely telling Mary that she is a child of God. And that's why he begins that sentence with the comforting remark, "Fear not, Mary."

Both the angel and Elisabeth say to Mary, "Blessed art thou among women." Does this statement imply that we Christians should look upon Mary with special favor? To the extent that Mary

was singled out from among women to give birth to the Lord Jesus Christ, of course, she is special. That is a very signal blessing. Nevertheless, notice how the Lord Himself addresses this subject of Mary being His mother. We read in Luke 11:27, "And it came to pass, as he (Jesus) spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." There, we have a woman who wants to eulogize Mary especially for the fact that she gave birth to Jesus and nursed Him. But listen to Christ's response in verse 28, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

What Christ does there is to politely direct people's attention away from Mary and put all believers on the same level. He doesn't want anyone to look upon Mary as a super Christian, even though she was chosen to give Christ His human nature. We are not to glory in any created being. We glory only in Jesus Christ.

What He wants is for us to submit to one another and to listen and keep the word of God. Such are the people that are blessed.

There is another incident relating to this subject that is recorded in Luke 8. Beginning with verse 19, we read, "Then came to him (Jesus) his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press (because of the pressing crowd). And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it."

Once again, you see, Jesus deliberately shifts the emphasis away from Mary and declares in effect, that as long as you have spiritual ears to hear the word of God and a heart that longs to do the will of God, you are a member of My family.

Please understand I am not trying to belittle Mary. Surely she was mightily used by God to carry Jesus in her womb, to give Him his human nature; and to nurse and bring Him up afterwards. And she is a beautiful example of what a believer of Christ ought to be. We can see her exemplary humility by looking at just the first three verses of her song of praise, or the "Magnificat." In verse 46 she starts, "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

That opening statement alone shows that she knows the Scripture well. It is effectively a condensed version of Psalm 34:2-3: "My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together." Now, notice the context of Psalm 34 in verse 4, "I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." It has to do with salvation. In other words, Mary's soul is magnifying God for the salvation she has received.

We can see this even more clearly in her next statement. She says in verse 47, "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

You see, Mary realizes that she, like anyone else, is by nature a sinner and is therefore subject to eternal damnation. Now, she rejoices because, in the child she is given the privilege to bear, God has provided her with a Savior.

She continues in verse 48, "For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

The Greek word for "handmaiden," there literally means "female slave." Describing herself as a slave of God, she is praising Him for the mercy of being mindful of her lowly condition and of granting her salvation. And for that reason, all generations shall call her blessed.

Summing up, let me say again that Mary is a beautiful example of what a believer of Christ ought to be. Even though she was given the great honor of bringing Jesus into this world, she realizes that by nature she is a lowly sinner under the wrath of God. Like every other believer, she has been saved by the grace of God.

Moreover, the Lord Jesus Himself goes out of His way twice to impress upon us that Mary is no different in God's eyes from any other obedient child of God and that she is not to be adulated. All honor and glory and praises must go to God alone.

The Relationship Between Jesus and John the Baptist (225A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: You know the words, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world," were spoken by John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus coming to be baptized?

HC: Yes

CALLER: It brought to mind something that I had thought about earlier. It's probably not a very important problem, but it's interesting to me. The scriptures seem to reflect almost a stranger's meeting there. And yet John and Jesus were born, on Jesus' human side anyway, as relatives. Mary and the mother of John the Baptist were cousins. And I know there are some fine paintings (I don't know if they were painted by Christians, or if they reflect scriptural truth) which show Jesus and John together as babies. And so I have always grown up believing that they knew each other as children. And yet I find that in the scriptures they are meeting as grown men now, doing the work of God in Heaven. And they meet almost as strangers.

And later on, after John is being persecuted, he said to Jesus, "Are you the one that we've been waiting for, or should we look for another?" almost as if some doubt has come into his mind. And I wondered if you would talk about what the Bible might teach us about their relationship as human beings.

HC: All right. Fine. The question that is raised is, what was the real relationship of John the Baptist to Jesus? Just how intimately did they know each other? Now first of all, we know that they were cousins. That we know from the Bible. And we also know that John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus.

Secondly, we know that Jesus grew up in Nazareth. And John the Baptist grew up, not in Nazareth, but in another town somewhere, which probably could have been two or three days journey at least from Nazareth.

CALLER: When Gabriel announced to Mary that Elizabeth was already six months pregnant, she immediately (I believe the Bible says immediately, anyway) went to be with her. And I think the language that the Bible uses is that she made a journey. That doesn't sound like it was just down the block. It sounds . . . I believe it was to the hills, or . . .

HC: In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah.

CALLER: So it must have been some ways out.

HC: Yes. And we must bear in mind that you couldn't get in your car and drive for a half hour and get there, you know. But the odds are that at least once a year, at least occasionally, when they went to celebrate the Passover Feast, John the Baptist would have met his cousin Jesus. I think that they probably at least had some acquaintance with each other. This is speculation, though.

Incidentally, the pictures that you see have no substance in truth at all. They are simply the speculation of artists.

CALLER: Although a painting doesn't necessarily reflect something in scripture, I have seen some paintings and heard some hymns, and so on, that do reflect scriptural truth. You know what I mean?

HC: Yes.

CALLER: Even though it's not, for instance, an illustration of a story that's actually written down. And I wondered about those. I wondered about those paintings.

HC: But now there's another factor here. You know, when we study John the Baptist, we find that he was what we would call an "oddball" today, because where did he spend his time, as he grew up?

CALLER: I believe, when he was grown, or nearly grown, he went into the desert.

HC: Yes. He was in the wilderness.

CALLER: He wasn't at home with his parents. And more than that, remember Jesus spoke of John the Baptist, that he did not come eating and drinking, whereas the Son of Man came eating and drinking.

In other words, John the Baptist was not sociable at all. He lived almost like an outcast, like a hermit. Jesus, on the other hand, lived just a very normal life, more of a gregarious life, with people. And so the likelihood is that John the Baptist went his own way, to a very high degree.

Now when Jesus met John the Baptist at the River Jordan, when Jesus was baptized, both had become grown men. And there's a good likelihood that John the Baptist may not have even recognized Jesus immediately in the flesh, except for the inspiration that God would give him.

CALLER: I believe that's so, that when John the Baptist saw Jesus and spoke those words, he was speaking words that . . .

HC: That God the Holy Spirit was giving to him.

CALLER: And the utterance came from direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

HC: Yes. I feel certain about that. Now later on, when John the Baptist was in prison, that was a different matter, when he said, "Are you the one who is to come?" Here we have the problem of a born again believer (because John the Baptist certainly was) who had an incomplete knowledge of what salvation is, and now momentarily his faith is faltering.

You see, the mind of the Jew of that day was looking for a Messiah who would be an earthly Messiah, a King who would rule in Jerusalem. And so I'm sure that John the Baptist had received lots of suggestion in his own mind along this line. And he was tremendously excited when he baptized Jesus, when the heavens opened and he heard the words, "This is My beloved Son. Hear ye Him," and so on.

And then he begins to hear that Jesus is beginning to teach. But the next thing that happens is that John the Baptist is in jail. Now that's a terribly bad thing. Here he's in jail, and the Messiah is out there, who could free him in an instant. And nothing's happening. He's rotting away in jail.

And so pretty soon he begins to wonder, is He really the Messiah? And then Jesus of course sends word back to him, "The dead are being raised, the lame are walking, and the eyes of the blind are being opened." This is what Isaiah prophesied. And these were all figures of the kind of salvation that Christ was beginning to offer.

The more I study the Word on this (and we have to speculate, of course), I do not believe that Jesus and John the Baptist, even though they were cousins, knew each other at all very well. I'm sure that Elizabeth told John the Baptist about

Jesus many times.

CALLER: Oh, I'm sure, too, just because I'm a mother, and I know that her excitement in having a baby in old age must have been marvelous. And then the experience that she had when Mary approached her home, Mary of course already bearing the Lord Jesus in her body. And Elizabeth's baby jumped with joy, so to speak. And I'm sure that that experience, and that kindness that Mary did to her, to help her during the last months of her expecting time, must have made a wonderful impression on her, as a person.

But John's doubting words to Jesus, "Are you the one after all, or should we wait for another?" has always touched me, since I've become a believer, especially in the light of Jesus' reaction to the news when John had been beheaded. I had never really seen it before. When the disciples had told Jesus that John had indeed been killed, Jesus went out to be alone. And the scripture vocabulary is so simple, and so quiet. And yet to me it pictures a moment of great impact in Jesus' feelings. This seemed to be almost the kind of reaction that He had when Lazarus died. And Lazarus was His friend.

HC: Well, thank you for sharing your thoughts. I do appreciate it.

CALLER: Thank you very much. Good night.

HC: Good night.

Why Didn't Mary Recognize Jesus? (339A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: The question I wanted to ask was, why didn't Mary recognize Jesus?

HC: When Jesus rose from the grave, and He's outside the tomb, Mary Magdalene supposed Him to be the gardener and did not recognize Him at first. And why did she not recognize Him?

Well, we might argue that she did not recognize Him because she was so grief-stricken that she was beside herself in her grief, and could not see Him. I believe, however, that the reason she did not recognize Him is that God did not open her eyes so that she might recognize Him.

Do you remember in Luke 24, when Jesus is on the road to Emmaus after the resurrection? He's with a couple of the disciples. And He talked with them a long time about what Moses and the prophets, that is, what the Holy Scriptures, the Old Testament, said concerning Christ. And they didn't recognize Him at all.

Then, when He broke bread with them, we read that God opened their eyes.

CALLER: When He broke the bread.

HC: Yes. We read in Luke 24:30, "And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread and blessed and brake and gave it to them, and their eyes were opened, and they knew Him. And He vanished out of their sight."

CALLER: Do you think He still had His same physical appearance then?

HC: I think absolutely he had His same physical appearance. He suggested to Thomas to touch the holes in His hands, and to put his hand in the hole in His side. He had the same body. He resurrected with the same body as He went into the tomb with.

CALLER: I just couldn't understand why the disciples and Mary hadn't recognized Him.

HC: Because God had a precise moment in time when He wanted them to recognize Him. God can open our eyes or close our eyes.

We might have an analogy here when we think about why it is that lots of people hear the Gospel, yet they remain in the sin of unbelief. They do not place their

trust in Christ. They do not see Jesus as their personal Messiah. It requires the opening of their eyes by God Himself. Then they will see Him.

CALLER: Oh, yes. That's very good. I should have known that. Thank you so much.

Was Peter Saved Before Christ's Death? (380C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. I'd like to ask you a few questions about the apostle Peter. Would you assume that Peter was saved before the death of Christ?

HC: The question is, would I assume that Peter was saved before the death of Christ? I think there's no question at all that he was saved. I say this for many reasons. One of the reasons is that in Matthew 16, when Jesus said, "Whom do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, in verse 16, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said unto Him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven." This is the statement of someone who has become born again. And Christ is indicating that God is working in Peter's heart.

More than that, when you read the high priestly prayer of John 17, which of course was uttered by Jesus before He went to the cross, there He speaks of the fact that God has given these to Him, and He has kept them, and none of them are lost, except the son of perdition, who was Judas Iscariot. The language is very clear that he was saved.

CALLER: Okay. Then we have established the fact that Peter was born again. He was saved. Now in Matthew 10:33 it says, "But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in Heaven." Now that was Jesus speaking.

And we also know that Peter, in Matthew 26:69-75, denied Christ three times. So my question is, if Peter was saved, and we know he was, was his denial of Christ a form of backsliding? Or how would you relate that?

HC: Let's be a little easy on Peter for a moment. When I'm a born again believer, and I engage in sin (and I've committed many sins in my life after I've known that I was a born again believer), any time I sin, effectively I am denying Christ, am I not? I am really indicating by this that I want my own way.

Now I will not continue in that way because I'm going to be troubled in my own soul because of this, and God will deal with me, and so on. But nevertheless, the moment that I sin I am denying Christ. The only difference, however, is that when I deny Christ this way, my sin has been covered by Christ's blood. I am a child of God, and that sin was paid for at the cross. And so whatever the implication of Jesus' statement, "If you deny Me before men, I will deny you before My Father which is in Heaven," it certainly cannot relate to the born again believer. It cannot relate to the born again believer. I think that that would have to follow, because our sins are covered by the blood of Christ.

On the other hand, if I'm in the congregation and I hear the Gospel presented again and again and again, and I repudiate this Gospel offer, I don't want it, I want to go my own way. I am still unsaved, yes, then I'm going to be denied before the Father in Heaven, because my sins are not covered. My sins are not covered at all by the blood of Christ, and I'm still under the wrath of God. And it's only when I finally come to my spiritual senses, as God opens my eyes and I confess Christ, I acknowledge that I'm a sinner and that I'm under the wrath of God and that I'm in deep and terrible

trouble with God, only then is there evidence that my sins are covered by the blood of Christ, and Christ now has become my comforter, my advocate before the Father which is in Heaven.

So the fact that Peter denied Christ is not evidence in any sense that now Christ was now going to deny him before the Father which is in Heaven. More than that, Peter went through a very traumatic experience. The Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, had abandoned the church temporarily. Jesus had to go to the cross, and Satan very arrogantly came to Jesus and said, "I want your disciples." Remember, Jesus said, "Satan would have you, to sift you as wheat is sifted. And I prayed the Father that your faith may not fail."

Now in John 10:28 Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice and follow Me, and they have eternal life and they shall never perish. And nothing shall snatch them out of My hand." And then He goes on, "And nothing shall snatch them out of My Father's hand." Now that verse seems like it's redundant. Isn't it sufficient that nothing would snatch them out of Christ's hand?

Well, there was a brief moment in history, that period when Christ was suffering for our sins, that the church was without the care and keeping of the Lord Jesus Christ. Never again would this ever happen. This will never happen to any believer who lives today. But it did happen to the disciples. The horrible, horrible trauma of being abandoned by Christ because He had to endure the wrath of God, He had to go to hell for our sins.

And so Jesus told the disciples, "But I've prayed the Father that your faith might not fail." He will hold you fast, even though I cannot hold you fast, effectively He is saying. And so the sheep were scattered, as it was already predicted in Zechariah 13:8. And so it's not a bit surprising that Peter denied Jesus. He was without a head, he was without a king. The Kingdom of Christ was temporarily shattered. So for that reason we have to be very patient with Peter at this particular moment in time.

All I have to do is look at me. I don't have to look at Peter. I look at the times in my life when I deliberately sinned, and I know I was a born again believer at the time, and I know that when I deliberately sinned I was denying Christ. And I know that except for the blood of Christ, I know that except for His covering and His righteousness which is imputed to me, Christ should have denied me before the Father, because I was in open rebellion against Christ at that moment, as anyone is when we commit any kind of a sin.

And yet I also am comforted by the fact that I know that Christ is my righteousness, that my sins have been covered by the blood of Christ, and that I have an advocate before the Father who declared to the Father, "But this man's sins have been taken care of. These are not to be looked upon any longer."

Why Didn't the Other Disciples Suspect Judas? (393A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Why didn't Judas and the other disciples know that it was Judas who was going to betray Christ? It seems to me that it was clear enough for them to know, from Matthew 26.

HC: The question is, in the light of Matthew 26 how is it that the other disciples did not recognize that Judas was about to betray Jesus?

Two things must be kept in view here. And incidentally, the later language indicates that the other disciples had no idea what Judas was up to. They had no idea at all. First of all, the idea that one of their own would betray Jesus was absolutely an impossible idea. It was

altogether foreign to think that one of these twelve, who had been the dearest friends of the Lord Jesus Christ, and insofar as the other disciples were concerned, Judas was just as much one of them as they themselves were, there was no indication of any kind that would point to him as being a little bit different from the rest, the very idea was a preposterous idea.

Secondly, it isn't necessarily true that the disciples caught the drift of the conversation. It's one thing for Jesus to say these things. And remember, Jesus earlier had talked about the fact that He would be crucified, and that He would rise the third day. And that didn't register, either, with the disciples. It was only after He rose from the grave that this meant anything to them. Jesus therefore was saying many things that had double meanings as well because He spoke in parables. And so there were many things that He said that the disciples did not understand at all.

And my guess is that at this point they didn't have any idea what Jesus meant, that He meant it just as literally as He was speaking. Secondly, the idea was so preposterous that even if they thought He meant what He said they couldn't understand how it related to the present situation in any sense. Therefore, while they may have entertained it momentarily academically, or intellectually, it certainly made no sense insofar as being a reality.

Thirdly, there's no assurance here that when Judas said, "Master is it I?" that all the disciples heard him. Judas may have spoken very quietly "Master, is it I?" And Jesus of course had Judas totally in view. Jesus is God, and knew the hearts of all. And so He would have caught even the small voice of Judas, if indeed he spoke in a small voice.

CALLER: And He responded by saying, "Thou hast said."

HC: "Thou hast said." And the disciples just did not catch the interchange. You know, frequently at a dinner conversation, if there is something private going on between two individuals, they may make a certain statement and nobody else catches it, do they? Because their thinking isn't aligned to it. And certainly the disciples' thinking was not aligned in any sense to the idea of a betrayal.

The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved (414A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Mr. Camping, I'd like to ask you two questions, and I'll take my answer on the air. One of them is: what do you think a Christian's view should be toward retirement and savings accounts and life insurance, that whole package of saving for the future? And second of all, in John and a couple of other places there's a disciple referred to as the disciple "whom Jesus loved." And in a couple of places it uses the Greek word *agape*, and in a couple of other places it's the *phileo* type of love. Could you explain why he uses it in one place and not in the other? And does Jesus here mean that He though a little more highly of this particular disciple? Or was He a good close friend of his, or what?

HC: The question is raised, first of all, does the Bible have to say anything about retirement plans, life insurance, saving for the future, saving for a rainy day, or whatever? Isn't it sufficient for us to trust in the Lord day by day, knowing that God will take care of us?

Well, certainly if we put our trust, if we put our confidence, if we put our security in riches, in the things that money will buy, then we're going down the wrong track. On the other hand, the Bible does teach that anyone who does not care for his own relatives is worse than an infidel, or worse than an unbeliever. In

other words, God indicates that we have a responsibility toward our family.

Knowing that God may spare us to a ripe old age, or anticipating that this might happen, I don't find anything in the Bible that would indicate we are not to plan. Well, let's be very simple about it. Let's start out simply, and then we'll expand it a little bit.

Certainly to have a few dollars in the teapot, or wherever we would keep our money, or in the bank or in our pocketbook, so that we'll have groceries for tomorrow, we automatically would sense that would not be wrong. We know that we have to live tomorrow as well as today. Certainly to take our paycheck and budget it out so that it will accommodate the groceries for the whole month is certainly in keeping with decent stewardship as we live our life. And of course we have to say all this in the framework that we are stewards of what God has given us, and we want to plan our life so that as much as possible of what we have will be available for the Lord, as much as possible that can ultimately be used to His glory, to His service.

Now let's plan it beyond one month, and let's plan it until the day that we retire. Certainly to set aside some funds through life insurance or through a retirement program, so that we might have some funds to care for us during those years when we cannot work is God-glorifying. It would fall into the same pattern as budgeting our paycheck for the month.

If we, however, are budgeting our paycheck so that we'll have a lot of money for personal pursuit of pleasure, just to heap the goods of this world upon ourselves, then of course we're not seeking first the Kingdom of God, we're not seeking to use our lives in the service of Christ, to send forth the Gospel. We're using all that we can grasp in order that we might pamper ourselves.

By the same token, if we have large life insurance policies, and so on, so that we can live in the lap of luxury and have all and everything at our feet, it would be the same kind of a thing. But on the other hand, to budget a reasonable amount so that we would be able to care for ourselves through these years is certainly God-glorifying.

If it should be that God would take us out early, and we don't know when we will die, when we will go to our heavenly home, this can be cared for by a will, so that if God does take us out early, then we've already taken care of the disposition of our funds so that they will also be used to God's glory after our death.

Now the reference was made to the fact that there are numerous references in the Bible (or a number of references, at any rate, in the Gospel of John) to the disciple that Jesus loved. As near as we can tell from the context, the disciple that Jesus loved was the apostle John. He is the human author, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of the Gospel of John. This is the common practice by the writers of the Gospels, not to name their own names, if they are being talked about in the Gospel message. And as near as we can tell, it is talking about the Gospel of John.

Now where we find this *phileo* love is particularly in John 21, but it's not in relationship to the apostle John. I don't know if it's ever used in relationship to the apostle John. I've never searched this out, but I don't really think that it is used in connection with the apostle John. But particularly it was used in connection with a conversation between Jesus and Simon Peter.

In verse 15 of John 21 we find that Jesus is saying to Simon Peter, "Son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" And Christ uses the word *agape*, which is the love of God Himself. It is a love that embraces total obedience to God. It is a

love that is a self-sacrificing love. It is a love where you want the very best for the other person.

Simon Peter has just gone through this terrible experience of having denied Jesus. He's not nearly the self-assured, certain person that he was before the time of the cross, where he was ready to declare, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," and "I will never betray Thee," and so on and so on. Now he says very tentatively, "I love Thee," and he uses the word *phileo*. That is, I am your friend, or it is the love that exists between father and son, or the love between mother and child. It doesn't have nearly the weight of *agape* love.

And then a second time Jesus said, "Lovest thou Me?" using the word *agape*. Do you have that love for me that is required of God when there is perfect obedience, when you really want to be altogether obedient to me? And again he answered with the word *phileo*... "I love Thee," indicating that Peter has learned a great lesson at the cross. He has been broken. He is not nearly as self-assured as he was before the time of the cross.

And oh, how we need this sometimes! How often we can get into that snare where we really think we've got all the answers. And just because we've learned something about the Bible, we really think we know it now. And the Lord has to deal with us perhaps a long time before we realize that there is a lot that we don't know, there's lots that we have to learn, and we have to be much more humble than we ever were before.

And then a third time in verse 17 Jesus said, "Lovest thou Me?" And this time He used the word *phileo*. Are you my friend? Are you my friend? Do you love me in this way? And Peter answered, "I love Thee," and again he answered with the word *phileo*.

Then in verse 20 of John 21 we read about the disciple whom Jesus loved. "Then Peter turning about seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following, which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is He that betrayeth Thee?" And this, as near as we can tell from the context, is talking about the apostle John.

CHAPTER 13 – MARRIAGE & DIVORCE

GENERAL

Is Abortion Right or Wrong? (214A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I have a question on abortion. Could I get some scriptures on it please?

HC: The question you're raising is on abortion? Is it right or is it wrong?

CALLER: I know it's wrong, but I'd like to get some scriptures on it.

HC: One of the best passages that speaks to the question of abortion is found in Genesis 9:6. God declares there that "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Now when that unborn baby is aborted by the action of the mother, with the help of the doctor, and so on, they are actually shedding the blood of that baby. They are taking the life of that baby. And this is murder. This is not be done.

The Bible teaches in Psalm 104 that babies are created in the womb of the mother by the activity of God. God is the one who creates that baby. It is God who is the giver of life, and He is the one that ought to take life. Mankind is not to take the life of another human being.

Morality Standards Apply Equally to Men (316A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I have a question. Are we to teach our sons to be really pure until they're married, and not just our daughters?

HC: Absolutely. The Bible does not have a double standard, so that there is one standard for our sons and another standard for our daughters. The Bible says, "Let the marriage be undefiled," and "Let marriage be held in honor amongst all." This is Hebrews 13:4.

CALLER: Where does this double standard come from? What was the status of women long ago? Where does the Bible say anything about men keeping themselves sexually pure?

HC: The question is, does the Bible in any sense teach a double standard, that there is one level of purity that the woman is to observe and another that the man is to observe? No, the Bible does not teach any kind of a double standard. Judah's sin in going into his daughter-in-law, whom he thought was just a harlot (he didn't know it was his daughter-in-law) was just as sinful as any other adulterous action, even though it's not condemned in the context. However, in the rest of the context of the Bible it definitely is condemned.

In Exodus 20 God says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery. And that is a command to mankind, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." It's just as serious for a man to commit adultery as it is for a woman.

CALLER: I am deeply concerned because I have seven sons, and so far I have two sons who are unmarried, and they are still virgins. And they keep telling me that they are really made fun of, because most young men their age are not virgins. I don't understand why ministers don't even make this point.

HC: Well, that is the situation in the world. In the world all around us man has rewritten the laws of God. He has come to the conclusion that he can have sexual relationships outside of marriage. This not only is true in connection with men today, but also in connection with women. There was a day when the world's standards were that the men had certain rights in this area, and the women did not. Today we're living in a world in which the women also are beginning to consider that it is their right.

But in neither case is it their right. In both cases they are going absolutely and definitely contrary to the Word of God. Now any time we live in accordance with the Word of God, of course we're going to be maligned. Of course we'll be slandered and ridiculed. This is the nature of doing it God's way. Mankind is perverse. Mankind is rebellious against God. They don't like God's Law, and therefore they don't like anyone who keeps God's Law. They're going to find ways in which to make it difficult. But if we love the Lord, if Christ is our Savior, then we want in every department of our life to live as righteously before God as possible.

CALLER: I wonder if people are teaching their sons this. When I was brought up, young men were taught that they were to "sow their oats," meaning that they have to have a sexual outlet.

HC: In the case of a Christian home, in which the father is a child of God, of course he is teaching this to his children, if he is being obedient to God's command to train up your children in the fear and the knowledge of the Lord. There should be no condoning of this kind of sin at all.

Unfortunately, today there are not that many Christian homes. And even in homes where the mother is a Christian, very frequently the father is not a Christian. And so they may not be getting that kind of training. But if the

home is a Christian home, and the father is taking his responsibility to bring up his children in the way that they should go, then by all means one of the things that he is talking about to his children is the fact that sexual relationships are something that must be limited to the marriage relationship. Unfortunately, we don't have that many Christian homes. Unfortunately, society has become decadent, society has degenerated, and man is doing what is right in his own eyes, to a very high degree.

But wonderfully, there are Christian homes that still remain. There are young people that are growing up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, so that they want to be obedient to Him. And this is something that we can be grateful for.

Now to find young people who are truly doing it God's way, it's harder and harder to find these. But nevertheless they still exist. We still are in the day of grace, when salvation is still found in our people.

Thank you so much for sharing that good observation.

CALLER: I was worried in a sense, because I was afraid that I might be wrong, because so many of my sons' friends at the university that they go to are going the other way.

HC: You know, there is an old Sunday School song that goes like this, "Dare to be a Daniel, Dare to stand alone. Dare to have a purpose firm, and dare to make it known." Now Daniel, in the face of certain death, stood alone in disobeying King Nebuchadnezzar, and refusing to give up his prayer life. The three young men in the Book of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, in the face of certain death, refused to bow down before the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had raised. They really stood alone.

When we study the Bible, we find that those who really belong to Christ very frequently stand alone. That's not uncommon at all. When Elijah was on Mount Carmel, as we read in the Bible, there were more than 450 prophets of Baal, many of whom were fellow Israelites. And Elijah stood alone. He was all alone on Mount Carmel, standing on God's side.

Jeremiah in his day, Ezekiel in his day, stood alone. It's as common as grass, insofar as the Bible is concerned, to stand alone when we stand for God.

To teach our children to stand alone in the face of the persecution, the slander, the maligning, all the things that will come against them, is to teach them to go God's way. We have to have young men and young women who are courageous enough to stand alone. If we're going to be Christians, increasingly we have to stand alone.

When persecution came in years past, and many people were denying Christ in order to save their lives in the face of certain death, being burned at the stake or being cast to the lions, there were those who stood alone. They were willing to stand for Christ even though it meant certain death.

Now in our land today, and in many lands today, to stand for Christ brings against us nothing more serious than that we may be maligned or slandered or laughed at. And that of course can be serious enough. In many lands, however, to stand alone and not deny Christ means certainly to be cast into a concentration camp or to even lose one's life.

But that is the life of the believer. That is what God calls us to be. I rejoice in the fact that we as believers can stand courageously before God, knowing that we are on God's side, even though the towers are falling all around us, that is, even though there are friends and neighbors and relatives and church members, and what have you, who are going the other way.

As Christians it's our joy, it's our

privilege, it's our calling, to stand courageously for Christ in the face of anything that the world might come against us with.

CALLER: I'll simply have to remain firm.

HC: Altogether, altogether. The sexual relationship is a wonderful relationship that God has bestowed upon mankind. But it is only wonderful in the marriage relationship. Sexual relationship outside of marriage is adultery. It's fornication. It is sinful. It is altogether rebellion against God.

May you have much wisdom as you continue to train your sons and your daughter this way.

CALLER: Thank you very much, Brother Camping.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Is Birth Control Biblically Acceptable? (442E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I'd like to ask a question regarding birth control. I wondered, is there anything in the Bible that specifically says that practicing birth control is wrong, especially concerning a family in where there are already a couple children or several children, and having any more would cause a financial burden, or say even physical problems for the mother? I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine. This is one of those questions that is very very practical and very contemporary. What about the question of birth control? We're living in a world where mankind has almost altogether forgotten there is a Creator God who upholds this universe by His power, has almost completely repudiated God. They look at the increase in population, they look at the problems of providing sufficient food for the nations of the world, and mankind is becoming really concerned that maybe things are not going to continue to go well, that we're going to end up with an imbalance between food and population so that the world is going to starve itself out.

Therefore, instead of looking to the Bible to try to find some answers, man in his vain reasonings develops his own answers. He reasons that effectively—he doesn't really say this quite this way—but effectively he's saying we cannot trust God, after all. He has abandoned us. Look at what is happening in the world, as the population continues to grow and as we have trouble with droughts and famines and tornadoes, and other things that make the raising of crops difficult. We've got to take matters into our own hands.

So sin always breeds sin. First of all, they decide that we are going to control the conception of children. Then, after that sin has been able to mature a little bit, mankind has come to the second sin. In some cases the conception of children was not denied, and conception did occur, so we better abort the children. And so for the last several years, all over the world, millions, literally millions, of babies are aborted or are murdered, because of man's fright that this world is getting out of balance.

Then the third sin develops. Because they've been able to control conception, this now means that sexual relationships can know no barriers. Men and women can live together without the benefit of marriage, they can go from partner to partner. Sex and all that goes with it is magnified until all the rules that God has laid down concerning adultery and fornication and immortality are flaunted right and left.

Well, that's kind of a negative answer to the question, isn't it? But that really is what the world is doing. Now let's see what God says about it. First of all, God decreed in Genesis 9, after the Flood, to

Noah, and this is a reiteration of the command He had originally given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." This was God's command to mankind.

Secondly, God declared in Psalm 127 and 128 that children are an evidence of the blessing of God. For example, in verse 3 of Psalm 128 we read, "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of shine house, thy children like olive plants around about thy table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord." In other words, God is indicating that children are a blessing, not a curse.

Now obviously, they're only going to be a blessing if we belong to the Lord and if we are doing it by God's rules. If we're an unsaved family, a family that's going by our own rules, then everything is topsyturvy. If we design the rules, then we're going to find all kinds of trauma and trouble anyway. But if we belong to the Lord and are concerned that God is indeed to be trusted, then God declares, "Children are a blessing." And the more children, the greater the blessing.

More than that, God teaches in Psalm 104, for example, that children are conceived in the womb by the activity of God. After all, that baby that is conceived has to be given a soul. That can only occur because God created that soul in the womb of the mother. Whenever a baby is conceived, it of course was done through a biological union of a man and a woman, but actually God had to bless that union by bringing into being that new being within the womb of the mother. That's God's province, in other words.

Now we go on. Who makes it possible that the grass grows and the crops bring forth abundant harvests? Does man do that? Well, man can put fertilizers on, and all that, and cultivate properly. But God can send a drought in five minutes, can't He? So that the crop shrivels and goes to dust. And man can't do anything about that. Or God can send benevolent rains so that they come just at the right time, the sunshine just at the right time, and He can bless those crops so that they bring forth a bumper harvest.

So you see, it is God who has set up the balances within this world. Even as He sets up the right kind of atmospheric conditions so that we can enjoy life, breathing just the right amount of oxygen, and all, so God also, if we trust in Him, will set up the proper balances so that there is an adequate food supply to supply whatever creation, whatever population God Himself brings into existence.

But of course if we violate the rules of God all over the place, then God is going to send His judgments, and we're going to find that it's going to be hard to find the blessings of God. But if mankind would trust in God, then we would find that God would do exactly what is best for this universe, for this creation.

Now this brings us to the Christian family. How are we to live in an alien world? Are we to be guided by the mores and the philosophies of the society around us? Are we to have fear in our hearts that we might not have enough finances to raise our children, if God would happen to bless us with five or six or seven or eight? Are we really going to trust in God, that He will provide what is necessary?

One of the fallacies that we run into in this world is that we have set standards for our material existence that are unbiblical altogether. We think we have to live in a certain kind of a house, we think we have to have a certain kind of car, or maybe two cars. We think we have to provide a certain amount of college education for our children. But where in the Bible does it say that any of these things are important? Nowhere, nowhere, nowhere in the Bible.

The things that's important insofar as our relationship to God is concerned is that we obey Him and that we rear our children to obey Him. As we read in Deuteronomy 6, when we walk by the way and when we lie down and when we rise up, we tell our children about these things. We rear our children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord.

And it's really not important at all whether they get a college education or whether we live in a fine house or whether we live in whatever kind of a house. The important things is that we have God in our lives.

If we as Christian families would simply abandon ourselves to God, now in 1 Corinthians 7:2 & 3, God declares that the husband's body belongs to the wife, and the wife's to the husband. And they're to live together as one flesh. If we'll live that way, trusting that God in His wonderful blessings will create a child in the womb of the wife at His good pleasure, then we are altogether in the will of God, and God is going to give us the perfect family. In one case it will be no children, in another case it'll be one child, in another case it may be thirteen children.

But whatever the size of the family, we won't have to fear that we are getting out of the will of God, and we know that every child that comes along is an evidence of the blessing of God.

The Problem of Lust (544A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Brother Camping, I have a question tonight, and I would like to take my answer on the air if I could. If a married person (man or woman) has a problem with lust, whether or not that problem has materialized, I believe that the strength to overcome that problem must come from God and that it's not within us, that there's nothing within us that I believe can do any good, or anything righteous, apart from Christ. And any light that you could shed on that would surely be appreciated.

HC: This is a very practical question. What do I do if I am tempted by sin? And in this particular case the issue was that of lust, or evil desire. And our caller very rightly put his finger on the answer, to some degree, when he said it is not within us to gain victory, it is not within us to have strength to have victory over that sin. It is God who has to strengthen us.

But we read in I Corinthians 6:18 a statement that addresses itself to this very question. God says there, "Flee fornication." Now fornication is any kind of sexual immorality, any kind of sexual lust, whether in the mind or in the action. And God says, "Flee fornication." Now how do you flee fornication?

Well, obviously, when you're trying to flee something or run away from something, you want to get as far away from it as possible. We of course are living in a very sinful world. We're living in a world where the TV programs are designed to aggravate the temptation of fornication. There are all kinds of suggestive statements and actions that are on display when we watch many TV programs. This is characteristic of novels that have been written. Hardly any today that are best sellers that do not contain at least one or two or more incidents that clearly display fornication. This is true of the newspaper, this is true of most magazines today. It's hard to find that which does not encourage fornication. This is true of many of the stories and jokes that are told. They find as their environment, or as their matrix, fornication.

Wherever we turn—the soap operas, for example—wherever we turn, we see an encouragement toward fornication. Now the Bible says, "Flee fornication." So this means that I have to be very selective in what I read and what I listen to. If

someone begins to tell a joke and we begin to sense that it's moving in a lustful direction, we have to turn off our hearing aid, so to speak. We have to walk out of the room, or mentally turn off the speaker so that we will not listen to what is being said.

When we are watching a TV program and we begin to sense that this is beginning to happen, we should forthrightly turn it off, and it may even be necessary that we pull the plug and never use that TV set again, if we find that this is increasingly in front of us, and of course it is, as we watch many programs today. It means that most novels we cannot begin to read, because we know what we're going to run into. It means that we have to be exceedingly selective as to what magazines we're going to open up. We have to do everything possible to remove ourselves from the arena where fornication is on display.

Now this is something that we must do. This is what repentance is, to turn away from it. We realize that this is a weakness in our flesh, this is something that can easily tempt us, and therefore we don't want to come near it. We want to stay as far from it as possible, all the time praying, "Oh Lord, give me strength. Oh Lord, strengthen me that I will continue to turn away from this." And if we really mean business about this, then God Himself will also strengthen us and increase our distaste for this. We will have the dynamic of God Himself strengthening us as we flee fornication.

COURTSHIP

Choosing a Partner (440A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: How can one be sure that the mate he has chosen is God's will for him?

HC: The question is raised concerning the one that we finally choose to marry. How can we know that this is of God? Well, God does not have a list in the Bible where He says, "Mary Jones is going to marry Tom Smith." That just isn't found in the Bible.

But God does lay down some basic rules as to how we are to marry. First of all, God dictates that it isn't necessarily God's will that we all marry. It is a very blessed thing to remain single. You read about this particularly in I Corinthians 7. Secondly, God does indicate that it is also a blessing of God to marry. There are certain blessings that come from marriage. There's nothing sinful or wrong about marriage.

More than that, the Bible indicates the kind of person we are to marry. And the big rule that is laid down, in II Corinthians 6:14, is don't be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. The one big question that we must face if we love God, if we want to be obedient to Him, is to make certain that the person we are dating is a born again believer. This is so important. And there are so many marriages that go haywire because this question has not been thoroughly investigated.

Two people, old people or young people, fall in love, there's an infatuation: "You make me feel so good. I'm so happy when you're in my presence," and so on, and so on. And they have so much fun together, doing this and doing that. They never really get to the real issues of life, the matter of personal relationships with Christ, carefully investigating each other's lives to make certain that they are safe in the arms of Jesus in each case.

And because they haven't made a thorough investigation, and because they blindly fall in love, and at least on the outside it looks like both are saved, they become married. And then after the honeymoon, one discovers that after

all the other is not a child of God. He was coming to church just because this was a way of looking good in her eyes. He was coming to church because he had a friend who kept inviting him, or whatever. Now he doesn't have this pressure on him, so he doesn't go any longer. And she discovers that she's married to someone who is unsaved. That was a sinful marriage.

The fact that they got married indicates it's a marriage in God's sight. It is a marriage that is not to be separated except by death. But it began as a sinful marriage. A Christian married someone who was not saved.

You can absolutely know you're in the will of God in marrying someone if you know that he is a child of God. Now there are some practical considerations that the Bible doesn't even talk about. But certainly you want to marry someone whom you feel comfortable with. If you know someone who is a child of God, and therefore, because you also are a child of God, you theoretically could get married, and she wants to marry you. But you just find that you can't stand certain idiosyncrasies about her, and it just makes you very uncomfortable to be in her presence. Then there's no point in proceeding toward marriage, because these things are still going to exist in marriage.

Now if you should get married, then it is your business to love your wife, regardless of her idiosyncrasies or peculiarities, or your own peculiarities. You have to love one another. You have to make it your business to make that marriage work. True love has nothing to do with infatuation, this superficial idea, "You make me feel so good." That is not true love; True love is to be obedient to God, to make it my business to care for my wife and want the very best for her, and to guide her in the righteous paths of life.

True love on her part is to be obedient to God in being submissive and to be a mother to the children God might give us and to care for her husband in every way. This is the business of believers.

In a nutshell, God particularly emphasizes that we are to marry someone who is a child of God. If we do this, and we find we are attracted to each other, and mysteriously, it's very mysterious, really. As I walk down the street and I look at people, I see some people that have happy faces, some that look sad, some that look naive, some who have a very wise look about them, every individual looks different. And I've often thought as I walk down the street looking at all these faces, "Now that young man, there's a girl somewhere that was attracted to that young man and really wanted to marry him. Now why did she pick on him? What particularly did she see in him?" I don't know that young man from Adam, but I just raise the hypothetical question. Why did she pick on him? And why did he pick on her?

Well, that's the mystery of marriage. God brings two people together very mysteriously this way. But we want to make sure that the one we're attracted to is a child of God. Then we know that we're definitely in God's will. And that is the way a marriage ought to go.

Some Advice on Dating (480A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question for a friend of mine. He is in a dating situation where he is dating a woman. And he is very interested in continuing and developing a deeper relationship with her. However, she is interested more, it seems right now, in casual dating, in which she wants to date one or a number of other men. And this seems to every once in a while cause a problem for my friend. He does have a desire for it to be dating only with her steady. And this does sometimes

cause frustration. He's wondering how he should continue in this relationship, what his action or attitude should be now.

HC: The question is about going steady, or having a friend of the opposite sex who is only for me and not for any one else. How do we stand over against that possibility?

Actually, until there is a marriage proposal that has been accepted, neither partner has any really claim upon the other. The purpose of dating, of course, is to become acquainted. Maybe this girl is wisely making sure that she is going to know as much as possible about more than one person, so that before she becomes serious with someone, or begins to have any intentions toward someone in the light of marriage, she knows a lot more about this person.

Now in order to know something about a person you have to have time to visit with him, and dating is that marvelous time when that visitation can go on. Now of course to a young man (or to an older person the same could be true) this could be very frustrating, because he wants her full attention for himself. But if he really is seeking the will of God, and if he is determined that eventually if a date will lead to marriage somewhere along the way, he also wants to know whatever he can about the other person. Perhaps he will want to look at other girls also and date them, in order to make sure that he is finding the girl who is most suitable to himself and who really loves the Lord.

You can't force someone on a date to give their full attention to yourself, because you have no claims on that person at all. Of course, in marriage it's total, and once there is a proposal of marriage that has been accepted, then you enter into that time when you really become acquainted, that is, when you give full attention to each other, to discover if for sure this marriage ought to go through, so that you are most careful before the marriage vows are actually taken.

But until that proposal of marriage, I cannot fault this girl for wanting to date several.

CALLER: Thank you very much. Now a question pertaining to my own case. I am dating a woman, and there are things that I see that I would like see changed in her. I see areas where I think there needs to be changes made. What I'm wondering, Mr. Camping, is, do I have a right to expect to see changes? And if so, what should be my attitude in trying to help the person to make these changes that I think should be made?

HC: Now that is a very practical question. First of all, when two people become very interested in each other, if one is a born again believer, he wants to make sure that the other partner is a born again believer. That of course is number one. And if the other person is not a born again believer, then the dating should be discontinued immediately. If changes are involved that have to do with a relationship with Christ, then it means that you are moving in the direction of a mixed marriage, or a marriage of a believer and a non-believer. And that ought not be.

Secondly, you want to make sure that the person you are dating and being more and more concerned about is able to be married. If she has divorced, then you should not be dating her. That is an absolute no-no insofar as the Bible is concerned. The Bible is very clear that whoso marries a divorced person commits adultery.

Now comes the other matter. You are dating someone and you see certain idiosyncrasies or characteristics or weaknesses, or whatever they are, in this person. And you really like this person in a lot of ways, and in a lot of ways you think you could be married to her, and all would be well, if only she would change this, if only she would change that.

Actually, to enter into a marriage relationship with that idea in mind is fraught with danger. You don't marry someone to change them or to make them over. You marry them as they are. And if by God's grace later on there might be some molding in their character, that's by God's grace, if that is required.

Sometimes the change ought to be in me rather than in her. In other words, maybe I have to learn to be more patient. Maybe I have to learn that I shouldn't be looking for the faults in others. I ought to examine my own faults. I ought to be less judgmental.

But under no circumstance go into a marriage believing that you are going to change the other partner. That is to walk into a very wrong situation.

CALLER: Is it proper to see if these changes can be made before marriage, if the person would even be willing to consider change in these areas?

HC: Well, this again is the purpose of dating. And as you talk about these things, if the person you're dating is willing to listen to you and try to make changes, and you see that apparently there are some changes made, well, fine. You have to be careful, of course. You want to make sure that she is not just doing this for the sake of insuring a marriage, so that after the marriage, when the knot has been tied, so to speak, then she can revert back to her old practices. You have to make sure that it's genuine and sincere.

On the other hand, if you keep insisting, "I'll marry you if you make these changes," she may grow tired of that, also, and decide, "Well, then I shouldn't marry you." It's a very dangerous path that you're walking. When you are with someone that you are beginning to consider as a life partner, and you have to begin with making changes in her life, or wishing that she had changes in her life, I would say that's a very dangerous business, because a person is what they are. And if both of you are born again believers, by God's grace you'll both grow in grace as you go along.

But right at the very outset there ought to be a total acceptance of each other as you are. And if you can't have that, then you're, I'm afraid, moving in a very difficult path.

CALLER: I see. Thank you for your advice on that question.

A Biblical Perspective of Courtship (574E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: What do you think the Bible indicates about the relationship a guy and a girl should while dating?

HC: What does the Bible say about the relationship of a guy and a girl while dating?

The Bible is very clear, I believe. In I Corinthians 7:1 it says, hold your hat now, this is going to be a shocker, but God says, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." In other words, the time of dating is a premarital relationship, a time when a man and a woman or a boy and a girl become acquainted with each other. And the sexual relationship, or anything relating to the sexual relationship, is for the marriage relationship. It is not to be of interest before marriage.

Now because God has put within men and women the fires of passion, which are stimulated by touching and caressing, and anyone who has ever touched someone of the opposite sex with an attitude of love, or has caressed someone of the opposite sex, knows this of course, we're all human beings. This is what stirs the fires of passion. And so therefore God set up a protective railing, a guard, around the two people who are becoming acquainted with each other, by

laying down the rule, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman."

Now of course this seems absolutely ridiculous to us in our society, because in our society we have gone so far from the Bible that we think that on the first date there ought to be a "good-night" kiss, and certainly by the second date there ought to be holding of hands, and the third date the caressing is a little more. And frankly, to a high degree there are those who are troubled then by early pregnancies, or there are attempts to avoid it by taking birth control pills, and so on.

And all of this sin develops because we are violating the fundamental rules that God has laid down. Now if a man and a woman will obey this rule, then they are setting up a program for themselves that is most advantageous for them. They will not mix up their time together by getting involved with their bodies, but they can keep their minds on knowing each other intellectually, spiritually they can talk about the things of the Lord, they can talk about their hobbies and their aspirations and desires and motivations. In other words, they can really become acquainted with each other.

And then if they should begin to fall in love and they find that both of them indeed are born again believers, because the Bible says, "Don't be unequally yoked with an unbeliever," if they find that they're not both born again believers, the one who is a born again believer is going to say, "I'm sorry. I can't date you any longer," and there isn't the physical side that makes her or her hesitate from breaking this off. The born again believer doesn't want to violate God's rule. And so the relationship is broken.

Or if indeed they find that both of them are saved, and they find they have a tremendous interest in each other, and this develops into a love relationship, then if they begin to find that after all of this they're becoming increasingly interested with sexual desire in their minds, then let them marry. Then let them marry. And then the sexual relationship, which begins with touching and caressing and all this, is the frosting on the cake insofar as the marriage relationship is concerned.

This is the Biblical path that God calls for. Now I don't expect a lot of people to obey this, because it is so contrary to our society, to the way we have been trained. And in fact, there are those who severely criticize any kind of a suggestion like this. But this is what the Bible lays down.

CALLER: Okay. Do you think then if you want to go out with somebody, and you know it's not a real marriage prospect, do you think that you can just date for the fun of it, even knowing that you may not marry or have any chance of marrying that person?

HC: The question is, can't I just date for fun? And if that is the case and after all, I'm only so old. I'm five years too young to marry, or three years too young to marry, and certainly I have no intentions of marrying, or anything like that; can't I just date for fun and not really worry about whether the one I'm dating is saved or not saved?

Again the Bible comes through very clearly: No! We have the account of Genesis 6:1: "The sons of God (that is the born again believers) looked at the daughters of men (that is, the unbelievers) and saw they were exceedingly fair." And they began to marry them. You see, if you start dating, if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and you start dating those who are unsaved, just for fun, the thing you don't realize is, at some point in this dating you might fall in love. Our hearts are designed that way. We deceive ourselves. We rationalize. We really begin to want something. And we have enough sin in our life, even though we're saved, so that

we might cater to that. And we're walking into temptation. We're walking as close to the world as we can. And you never know when it's too late. We should not be looking at the world, in other words. We should not be looking at unsaved people, to have any kind of romantic relationship with them of any kind.

When you start dating, date those who are believers. And then you're always at peace with yourself and at peace with God. You have someone that you're going to have a lot more fun with, because you're on the same wavelength spiritually. You're going to want to go to the same places. You're going to want to talk about the same things.

If you're dating someone who is unsaved, and she wants to go to a movie, and you say, "No, I don't think as a Christian I ought to go to a movie," she's going to think, "Well, what's wrong with you?" She may want to go to a dance, and you say, "No, we shouldn't go to a dance, because I'm a child of God." And she'll say, "Well, what's with you?" You can't even find any common ground of interest, or very little common ground of interest.

And as soon as you start talking about your church and about something you read in the Bible, she'll say, "Oh, that's interesting." And she'll change the subject and want to go on to something else. Where's the fun going to be then, you see, unless you just make yourself like the world and cater to her. But then what's happening? Then all you're doing is playing into Satan's hands, and you're becoming sin in order to have your fun. And that of course is rebellion against God.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much
HC: Thank you for calling.

MARRIAGE & REMARRIAGE

Remarrying the Wife You Divorced (100E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I would like your views, from the Word of God, on a Christian remarrying the wife he has divorced. What are your views on that?

HC: Now your question is: A man has divorced his wife, and now wants to remarry her; what does the Bible say about that?

CALLER: Right.

HC: Has there been a marriage by either one of them in between?

CALLER: No

HC: Neither has remarried since the divorce.

CALLER: That's true.

HC: Then there is no reason at all why they should not remarry. They belong to each other. The Bible teaches that until death separates them they remain husband and wife. Even though there is a divorce, they still belong to each other, and they ought to make every effort to remarry. However, if either one of them became involved in another marriage after the divorce, and then, through the death of the second partner, or through the divorce of the second partner, desired to go back to the first partner, that would be prohibited by the Bible.

But if there has been no intervening marriage, then there is nothing in the Bible that would suggest that they should not belong to each other, and as a matter of fact, all the implications of the Bible are that they still belong to each other and they ought to remarry.

When two people are married, regardless of how poor the marriage was, regardless of how great difference might exist between their religious beliefs or whatever, that alone, of course, would make it a sinful marriage, because the

Bible says, "Do not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever." But the moment they get married, they are one flesh. And "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." And then all the rules that apply to marriage have to be recognized.

We read, for example, in I Corinthians 7:10: "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband. But if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband." In other words, if there is a separation, either through a legal separation or through a divorce, let her remain single, or else be reconciled to her husband. This is the rule, that they are to come together again.

CALLER: Even though either party has not changed their views on the reason for divorce. But there should be a reconciliation anyway?

HC: Well, yes. Now if a wife, for example, is married to a husband who was vehemently opposed to her believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he used every effort to get her to renounce her belief in Christ, to renounce Christ, it may be that she has to be disobedient in her marriage in order to stand for God, and pay the consequences of it. The Bible does say that we have to put Christ first and anyone else second.

But the fact is, she still is the wife of her husband, and she should try to keep the marriage in tact. Now if the reason for the divorce is these spiritual differences, obviously, on what grounds would you remarry? In other words, why would the two partners be interested in coming together again, if the fight is just going to begin again? It is desirable that you remarry, of course.

I think the problem will resolve itself, in other words. There must be some kind of reconciliation, because it takes two people to remarry. And unless both were equally decided in their minds that this ought to be, you're not going to get remarried even though you want to remarry.

CALLER: Thank you very much. This helps a lot.

HC: Pray the Lord for wisdom. Pray the Lord for wisdom and for patience in this matter.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

On Being Childless (166A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question about childlessness. I'd like to know if God might want a couple to be childless in order to serve Him more, for the same reason that God might want a person to be single, in order to be free to serve Him more.

HC: The question concerns a couple who are not given any children by God. Could this be a very special act on God's part in order that they might serve Him more carefully? I think that's a fair possibility.

We know as born again believers that everything God does is perfect. We know from Romans 8 that all things work out together for good for those who are called according to His purpose. Now you correctly made reference to I Corinthians 7, where God indicated that a single person, in a real sense, is far freer to serve the Lord in complete abandonment than someone who is married, because his total focus can be on the things of Christ, whereas as a married person we have to be concerned about our husband or about our wife, and that takes a certain amount of attention. Likewise, if we have children, we can expand that, although the Bible doesn't really get into this in that detail. But if we have children, then our concerns are

not only for our husband or wife, but also for our children.

And so if we don't have children, that does give us a greater freedom in the Lord than if we do have children, in that sense. I think, for example, of situations where people are called as missionaries, let's say, to a tribe somewhere. And many, many times the children cannot go along. They must be reared in a school far removed from where the parents are working. This is far from an ideal situation. And so if those parents are not given children by God, this eases their anxiety. It eases their ability to be totally involved in the work of God.

I think, for example, in a congregational situation, where many of us find ourselves, or all of us should be finding ourselves, unless we're incapacitated in some way. If we have children, we have to spend much time with our children. They are our first responsibility. If we don't have children, we can be concerned about the neglected children in our congregation. We can put them under our wing in a teaching ministry, or we are free to take the young people to an outing here, or an outing, which someone with children may have more difficulty doing, because of the age of their children, and the difficulties that go with it.

The same in other areas of ministry, spending time with the lonely and the aged, and whatever. Indeed, indeed, I would have to conclude that if God has not given a couple children, this can be a great blessing, in that it frees them for a greater service to the Lord in other ways.

CALLER: Thank you.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Living With an Unsaved Husband (200D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: If a husband doesn't want his wife to have anything to do with the Lord, and not read the Bible, should she be obedient to him? And the second question is, if he wants her to do worldly things, like going to bars and drinking, should she be obedient to him? I'll take the answer over the air.

HC: All right. Thank you for sharing those questions. Good night

The question that is raised is a very practical question that arises when you have a mixed marriage, where the husband, let's say, is not born again and the wife is born again. And now the husband lays down rules. And he says, "Don't you ever read the Bible again. Don't you ever pray again. Don't you ever go to church again." What is the wife to do?

Well now, the Bible teaches that a wife is to be submissive to her husband. But the Bible also teaches that we are to obey God rather than men. In other words, when we are commanded to do something that is contrary to the will of God, by someone who ordinarily can command us, then we are to disobey that one who commands us, because we must obey the higher authority.

Of course this is somewhat of a hypothetical question because there's hardly a wife, at least in our land, who is not able to own a Bible or have a Bible somewhere in the home. It doesn't have to be out on the table where attention is called to it. It doesn't have to be in any place where it looks like it is frequently read. It can be hidden back in a closet someplace.

More than that, there is hardly any family where the husband is always with the wife. And so there are times when the wife is alone, of course. And then there is time to read the Word. There is time to turn the dial, for example, to listen to a Gospel radio station like Family Radio. Certainly anyone who is a born again believer can pray. You can pray in your

heart, without ever giving any outward manifestations of praying.

So really it would be very difficult to think of a situation where this was absolutely a rule that there would be no way of not following. Now if you lived in a situation where you could not do it, or let's say that you did read your Bible, and now your husband comes home to you at the end of the day, and he says, "Did you read your Bible today?" And you have to answer him honestly, "Yes, I did, for a little while this afternoon." And so you take your beating, whatever it may be.

Oh yes, you take your beating. People all through history have been persecuted for righteousness' sake. If you lived in a country where an ideology was offered that was contrary to the Word of God, and you had to deny Christ, you're not going to deny Christ. You're going to stand for Him. But you're also going to take your beating. You might end up in a concentration camp, or you might end up losing your head. These things are all likely possibilities. But we must obey God rather than man.

Now the same thing has to do with the committing of sin, the going to places where sin is in vogue. It's a little more difficult, of course, in this case. A person actually could go into a bar and not sin. They could be present there and not take part in the activities. You wouldn't be a very happy companion for your husband, but you actually could be there. And I'm not sure that that would be absolutely wrong, in a certain situation, as long as you did not take part in the sin.

Now if he asked you to commit adultery with someone, or if he asked you to drink alcohol, and you felt it was a sin to drink alcohol, then of course you'd have to disobey. And again, you'd have to take your punishment.

Having said all this, of course, you must realize, and I want to underscore this again, because I think this is very very important, if we happen to be the individual in the home who is born again, there are some very basic rules that we've got to follow.

Number one, we must not be "holier than thou." We must not flaunt our relationship with Christ in some kind of a superior, prideful fashion. We must walk very humbly. It's only by God's grace that we are saved. We don't deserve this salvation. We ought to be just absolutely thankful and helpful to everybody else because we have been looked upon with favor by God, and these others have not. And in our compassion, and in our pity for the others of our family, we're going to go the second mile every time, to show our love to them, and to help them.

More than that, as a wife, and as any member of the family, we're going to always think good thoughts about the rest of the members of our family. This means, effectively, that we're going to be the easiest one in the family to get along with. We're going to be the one that will bring the least irritation. We're going to be the salting salt, the preserver in the family. We're going to be the one that's always pouring oil on the troubled waters, because we are going to encourage that there is forgiveness, and we're going to encourage that there might be patience. And we're going to show this especially in our life.

And as a consequence of this, if a wife is showing this love and this surrender to her husband, it's going to be increasingly difficult, unless he absolutely is obsessed or possessed, or out of his mind, or deranged in some way, it's going to be increasingly difficult for him to be nasty to his wife. He won't believe how he could have come to live with such a wonderful woman. He never realized what a great and wonderful wife she really is. Look how she's always thinking about his comfort, and has such a concern for him, and is ready to go the

second mile for him all the time. It's her privilege to do this.

Now she's not a doormat to be stepped on. She's doing this out of the joy of her heart. She's doing this because she realizes that she has everything on her side. Christ is her Savior. She is of royal blood. She's got it made, in the good sense. And now she hopes that, as she is the fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ, through this opportunity might be given to show what it really means to be a Christian.

As a matter of fact, in a home, if you are the only born again one there, the rest of the family is going to see Christ no closer than they will see Him in you as the born again member. And if they can't see Christ in me, if I'm the only born again member, then they're not going to see Christ. And therefore I'm going to patiently study the Bible and pattern my life more and more after the patience and the wisdom that I find in the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, the whole Bible is the Word of God, and it is the guide book that I'm going to follow.

And so I think that when we would begin to do this, we're going to find that this ugly situation - "Don't ever let me catch you reading the Bible" - is going to diminish. It's going to get into the area of strictly hypothetical and not have any truth in fact.

Can There Be Remarriage After Divorce? (224B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I'm kind of confused about something. First let me say, my wife is "liberated" now, and she's left me, taking my son from me. And she's going with other men, etc., and is seeking a divorce. I heard some pastors on the air talking about divorce, saying that it's not a sin in certain cases, and under certain circumstances, for a woman to leave a husband and remarry, and that she would not be living in sin and that it would not be sin for the husband, as in my case, to remarry.

HC: So now you're confused.

CALLER: In my heart I've always felt that there's no such thing as divorce.

HC: Now you see, here is the problem. And you are speaking for all kinds of people who are troubled by this, because we're living in the age of divorce. And because divorce has become so commonplace, has become such a grievous sin all over the world, the church itself tries to accommodate itself to it. It tries to look for the best possible answer that they can find in the Bible, in order to make it more palatable in some way for those who have become involved in this kind of activity.

And therefore, you can go to ten different pastors, and you can get all kinds of different answers. And there are many very reputable denominations that say under certain circumstances, if you've been divorced, you can remarry. But frankly, when I read the Bible, and let the Bible be its own authority, and try to divorce myself from the culture in which we live, the problem that is so insistent, and just let the Bible be the answer, then I find that there's nothing in the Bible that says that a man can remarry and do it in God's will, as long as his present wife is still living.

The Bible says that what God has joined together, let not man put asunder. The Bible says in I Corinthians 7:10 that if you're separated from your husband, you are to remain single, or else be reconciled to him. The Bible says that whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. And there's nothing else in the Bible that ameliorates this, or modifies this. This is where it stands.

And so we have to decide: shall I go to this pastor or that pastor, or that denomination and find out what they say, and be obedient to what they say? A lot

of people do this. This is their privilege. Or am I going to study the applicable passages in the Bible and ask God for the grace to be absolutely obedient, just open to what the Bible says, regardless of how this is going to leave me?

CALLER: I will. Thank you.

HC: Thank you for sharing your question. May God give much wisdom. Good night.

CALLER: Good night.

Marriage When Divorce Has Previously Occurred (244B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. This concerns divorce and remarriage. I was wondering if you could tell me what the Bible says a couple should do if they find themselves in the situation where one of them has been married before and divorced, and they're seeking God's will, what they should do now.

HC: In other words, the question you're raising is, Here is a couple who are married. And when they look back on their lives, they find that at an earlier time in their life one or both of them had been married before, and their former wife or husband is still living. Now what are they to do in their present situation? All right. I'll be very happy to speak to this.

CALLER: I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: Thank you. Good night.

This is a very important question, because we're living in a day when more and more people are living by the standards of the world, flagrantly violating the rules of the Bible. And so unbiblical divorce and unbiblical remarriage is becoming more and more common. Now when a couple comes to their spiritual senses, and they see that all of this was sin, what are they to do?

Now ordinarily the Bible teaches that we are to flee from sin. If we are living by telling lies, we are to lie no more. If we've been stealing, we are to steal no more. If we are living in immorality, engaging in evil desire, we're to stop that. This is what repentance is all about.

But now what am I to do? I'm married. When I search the Bible, the best that I can come up with is that we can't divorce this last partner. That would only complicate the matter, because then we have another divorce on our hands. We know that we should not have been married this last time. We've discovered that this was sinful. It was an adulterous marriage. But we also know that we can go to our Heavenly Father, and we can seek forgiveness. We can ask that these sins, too, might be covered by the blood of Christ. And we can know that as a born again believer they have been covered. So there will be no Judgment Day that we'll have to face because of this last sin, or this sin which is part of a lot of other sins that we've committed in our life.

Now the only thing left to do is to live out our life in this last marriage as it were a first marriage. Now this may sound like a rather simple solution, but we must remember that there is a natural outworking of sin. The man who is a drunkard, and who has hurt himself and his family very grievously, who may have contracted cirrhosis of the liver, who may have destroyed his family to a high degree, now becomes born again. He stops his drinking, but the results of his former life will stay with him.

He may die of his cirrhosis of the liver, he may never be able to go back to his family, and so on. His former sins have a natural outworking in his life. Now by the same token, if we have sins in our life of the past, even though those sins have been completely paid for, there still will be troubles and trials in our life resulting from these sins. These troubles and trials will not be punishment for

those sins. They will be, first of all, the natural outworking of sin. And secondly, God will be chastising us in order to strengthen our faith, in order to help us to live more carefully in the future. But these things will happen.

And in the case of a second or a third marriage, the problems of alimony, the problems of former loved ones who are still living, and all the confusion that results from this, this will trouble again and again and again. This last marriage can never be the ideal marriage. It could have been, had it been a first marriage in the Lord.

But nevertheless it is a genuine marriage. And while it began as an adulterous marriage, it is to be looked upon now as a real marriage, a marriage wherein the sin of it has all been forgiven by the Lord Jesus Christ, and now we make the very best of it, as if it were a first marriage. As I study the Bible, this is the best that I can do by way of trying to find an answer to this particular kind of a problem.

Polygamy in Old Testament Times (266C)

CALLER: I was reading in Genesis about concubines. And I think that the Bible teaches that when we become saved, we can't live a life of sin, continuously, because the Holy Spirit will deal with us, to cause us to repent. I was curious. In the Old Testament you see a lot of these people, like Jacob, and so forth, who seemed to have other wives. Did God allow that because the whole Bible wasn't revealed, and they didn't know as much as we do? Just how would that work, if these people were saved like we are today? Does that make any sense? Could you deal with that a little bit?

HC: Yes. The question is raised concerning the matter of multiple wives, or concubines, as we read of it particularly in the Old Testament. How is this to be understood? Were they less knowledgeable of the will of God, or just what was it?

First of all, we must remember that multiple wives was not common. It is true that we read of some who had multiple wives. But they're really in the minority. We really have to remember that. Sometimes we read about a few individuals, and we think this was very common.

Look, for example, at Noah. Or let's go back to Adam and Eve. How many wives did Adam have? He had one wife, Eve. Noah, how many wives did he have? One wife. His three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, how many wives did they have? One each. You see, there were a total of eight people on the ark, four men and four women.

We come to Abraham. How many wives did he have? Well, essentially he had one, Sarah. It is true that in a moment of a lack of faith he adopted a custom of some of the nations around there, and he allowed Hagar to bear a son, Ishmael. And I'll mention in a moment why I think this occurred.

But essentially he had one wife. And after Sarah died, he married a concubine, Keturah. And that's all we read. He didn't marry additional concubines. We get to Isaac. He had one wife, Rebecca.

Now it's true that Jacob married two wives and two concubines. He was tricked into the first multiple marriage, because he had worked for Rachel, and his uncle Laban gave him Leah instead, to wife. And then, by working another seven years, Uncle Laban threw Rachel into the marriage deal.

But the other thing we must remember, also, is that Jacob at this time was probably an unsaved man. There's a lot of evidence to point to the fact that he actually did not become saved until he wrestled with God at the River Jabbok. And at that time he was leaving his

Uncle Laban. He was at that time a hundred years of age. He was a much older man.

But anyway, he did have two wives and two concubines. Now we go to the sons of Jacob, and we read very little about multiple wives. We read of Joseph. He only had one wife. We read of Moses. He had one wife, Zipporah. We read, as we go through the Bible, ordinarily of one wife.

But there are two or three outstanding illustrations of multiple wives. One is King David. He began to follow the practice of some of the eastern potentates of that day, and began to cultivate a small harem. This was greatly multiplied by Solomon, who ended up with 700 wives and 300 concubines. Now these really are the outstanding illustrations in the Bible of multiple wives.

There may be a few others, but they're quite incidental. But most of the personalities presented on the pages of the Bible had one wife. And this is the way God had it from the beginning.

Now let's back up and see, perhaps, why it was that God permitted this. Certainly, to have multiple wives was not in the will of God. The fact is, in the Book of Deuteronomy, in relationship to the kings, David and Solomon, God had warned that when you have kings over you, make sure that they do not multiply wives.

Why did God permit this? Well, I think, first of all, that He permitted it in order to develop and produce for us the Holy Word of God. You see, the Bible is a statement of certain experiences, and phrases that individuals spoke, that were carefully chosen by God in order that we might understand salvation. Out of the millions upon millions of experiences and sentences and speeches that were made and experienced by all of these characters in the Old Testament, God selected certain words, certain phrases, and certain experiences. And these became the Holy Canon.

Now at times they revealed the sin of man. But through these God is still showing His salvation. Now let's take, for example, the matter of Abraham with Hagar. Now certainly this was sinful on Abraham's part. It indicated that his trust was wavering, that God would provide a seed for him, although the pressures were very severe, because both he and Sarah (or at least Sarah) was beyond the age of child-bearing. And Abraham had become a very old man himself. And yet there was no seed.

And so God allowed him to proceed in this sinful direction of producing a seed, a son, by his Egyptian slave, Hagar. But God used that sinful act of Abraham as an experience to teach an aspect of salvation. And if you go to Galatians, I believe it is, you will find that Hagar is referred to as an equivalent of the covenant on Mount Sinai. And that's another subject all by itself, and we won't get into it right now. But God utilized that sinful experience of Abraham in order to magnify an aspect of the nature of salvation.

Now the same is true in the case of Solomon. Now Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Actually, Solomon was a figure of Christ Himself in many many ways. And those 700 wives and those 300 concubines are two perfect numbers. Seven is the number of perfection, and three is the number of God Himself. Ten, the sum of these two, is the number of completeness. In these numbers God is indicating the perfection, the completeness, the God-like qualities of the church, of which God is the Bridegroom, even as Solomon was the groom and these were the bride.

God is teaching, through these experiences, even some of these sinful experiences, aspects of the nature of salvation. Now incidentally, Solomon didn't get away with this, of course. He violated God's command concerning

multiplying wives, and it's these very wives in his old age that caused him to begin to worship other gods. And as a result of this sin, the kingdom was taken away from him. At his death his son was allowed only two of the twelve tribes, and this was only because of God's promise to David, rather than to Solomon. And so that sinful act ended up in a great and terrible defeat.

Moreover, David's multiplication of wives also ended up in great harm for David. For example, we see Absalom ravishing David's ten concubines. And we see the fact that he could multiply wives caused him to commit adultery with Bathsheba and caused her husband to be murdered.

When a Spouse is Unsaved in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 (321D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I'd like for you to give me a little help with I Corinthians 7:10-16, and relate it to salvation, and John 3:16. And I'll take the answer over the air.

HC: That's I Corinthians 7:10-16. All right. I'll try to speak to that.

I Corinthians 7 is dealing mainly with the marriage relationship. Our caller is wondering whether verses 10 to 16 have anything to do with salvation. Well, yes, they do. This is introducing, first of all, the awful situation where a husband departs from a wife. He apparently is unsaved, and she is saved. And he departs.

And the Bible first of all says, "Let her remain unmarried," in verse 11, "or be reconciled to her husband." And then in verse 12 He goes on to say, "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she is pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away." Every once in a while someone will ask me, "My wife or my husband is unsaved, and he's living a very sinful life. Do I have to continue living with him, since he is unsaved?" Or, "At present we're separated, and he is unsaved. Am I to continue to live with him?" And the Bible here is saying, "By all means! You're married to each other. This is just one of the practical aspects of what happens when we are saved."

And then it goes on in verse 14 and gives a very interesting application of God's covenant promise that "I will be a God to you and your children." God gave this promise to Abraham back in the Old Testament. He reiterated it at various times in the Bible. We read it in Acts 16, for example, at the time that the jailer at Philippi was saved. He was told, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, with your household." God is saying to parents, "Look, if you're believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you have become citizens of the Kingdom of God, and your children, too, are identified with the Kingdom of God. If you bring them up in the fear and the nurture of the Lord, I give you a promise that if you train a child in the way that he should go, in his old age he'll not depart from it." This is the way God works out His program of salvation throughout the world.

Of course He also looks outside of the family, and can save the individual who has no saved parent. But that is not nearly as usual as is the situation where children of believing parents are saved.

Now this concept is introduced here in verse 14: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband. Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." You see, the question arises here, in the light of God's covenant promise, "I will be a God to you and your children," what happens to that promise in the event that only one of the parents is a believer? Does this mean that the promise no longer holds, by virtue of the fact that one person, one

of the parents, is unsaved? And God says, No, no, that isn't so. The very fact that one of the parents is a believer, that makes the family a holy family. It sanctifies the husband, if he is the unbeliever. It doesn't save him, but it does make him also corporately a member of the Kingdom of God, because the wife is a believer who actually has become an eternal citizen of the Kingdom of God. And vice versa. The same would be the case in the event the husband was the believer, and the wife was the unbeliever.

And so the children, too, are holy, that is, set apart. The word holy means to be set apart for the service of God. They, too, are identified in a corporate fashion with the Kingdom of God. And all the promises that come to believing parents who will train their children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord apply, even though only one of the parents is a believing parent.

And then it goes on, "But if the unbelieving departs, let him depart." Going back again to the relationship between the saved and the unsaved partner, if the unsaved wants to leave, if he wants a divorce, let it be so. "A brother or sister is not under bondage in such a case, but God hath called us to peace."

That is, you're not bound to try to maintain that marriage union, that marriage relationship. While in God's sight that marriage is to continue until death parts you, because of the sin of your unbelieving partner, let him go. You're not free to remarry, because you've already been told in verse 11 to remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to your partner. But you're not bound to try to keep that marriage in existence.

And then the question is raised, "For what knowest thou, oh wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, oh man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" Now here God is saying that the work of saving is God's elective program. It's God's grace. It's God's sovereign good pleasure. And we can't really know who He is going to save.

However, God does give some real encouragement along this line in I Peter 3:1, where God is discussing this same question of a believing wife with an unsaved husband. And here we have this wonderful encouragement. "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 (or the conduct) of the wives, while they behold your chaste conduct coupled with fear." In other words, God is holding out the promise, salvation is very close to your husband. And if you really live by God's rules, if you will patiently obey God in the trials and troubles and turmoils and difficulties that arise because your're married to an unsaved husband, there's a strong likelihood that he will see Christ in you, and salvation may come to him also.

The Different Words for "Love" in the Bible (324C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. What is the difference between the two kinds of love? I think one starts with an "f" and the other one starts with an "a", or something like that.

HC: The question is raised, what is the difference between the two kinds of love that the Bible speaks of? Actually, in the Greek language there were at least three kinds of love. And the most popular one in the Greek language was the word *eros*, from which we get the word *erotic*. And it had to do with sensual love. It was the kind of love wherein we love someone because they make us feel so good. We love them because they are so beautiful. We love them because they complement us, or whatever. It is the love that most

romances are built on, and it has no enduring quality of any kind.

And the Bible does not use the word *eros* in speaking about love. That was in the secular world. In the Biblical language one of the words that was less frequently used is the word *phileo*. It's the word that we get Philadelphia from. Philadelphia means brotherly love. *Adelphia* is brother, and *phileo* is love. It is the love of one brother for another. It's the love of a father for his child. It is the love that runs along bloodlines, if you will.

A deeper and more intense and eternal love is *agape* love, that we read about very frequently in the Bible. Most of the references, or a high percentage of the references to love in the Bible is the word *agape*. *Agape* love is love that is patterned after the love of God. One aspect of that love is intense love for the unlovable, in that God loved us when we were in our sins, and there was nothing lovable about us. It is the love that is based upon the keeping of the commandments of God. It is the love that God certainly expects between husband and wife. Once we love this way, then we've got a marriage that will never fail, because we're going to love. We're going to make it our business to love. We're going to make it our business to do the very best for our marriage partner, regardless of whether they love us or not.

I hope this will help you. Thank you for calling and sharing. Good night.

Intimacy in Marriage – A Biblical Perspective (384C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. The question I would like to ask is probably a sensitive one. It is dealing with the controversy of homosexuality. I think that sex with one's marital partner can be just as evil as homosexuality. And since I have this feeling, and I believe that lusting beyond what is normal is evil, I want to back it up with Scripture. I'd like to back it up with Scripture. And I was wondering if you could give me scriptural references to this.

HC: Now it's very interesting, you know, that when we study the Bible we find that God deals with sex. God deals with that which is the most intimate relationship that exists between men and women, that is, between husband and wife. And of course God has to deal with it to some degree because He made man. He made woman. And He put within them the body chemistry, the sexual desires. God is thoroughly aware of our sexual desires, because He created us this way.

But now when God created man, God gave us His Word, to give to us all that was necessary so that we might really know truth. And when we search the Bible, we find that it is not written like the pornographic literature of today. Now I used that word pornographic very advisedly. There are lots and lots of books on the market today, and they're increasingly becoming available. It started in the secular field, but now it's getting into the sacred field, also, into the so-called Christian books, where there is all kinds of information about sex relationships, just all kinds of detail. And words are used, and suggestions are made, and so on, that you just don't find any relationship to at all in the Bible.

Now this is because man's mind is depraved, and man thinks this way as quickly as possible. And even Christians think they have to think this way. Now the Bible talks about the sexual relationship, and lays down some basic rules. And if we follow these basic rules, then we don't have to read books on sexual relationships. In fact, I think that they're very very negative. I think that they contribute to lust. I think that they encourage wrong thinking in the minds of marriage partners. I really believe that

when God created mankind He put within them enough common sense so that when the man and the woman become married they can work out their sexual relationship with each other without any outside help whatsoever. I think our whole system, our whole culture, has gone awry on this.

Now let's look at the passages that relate to the sexual relationship. And let's look at the language that God uses. Now in I Corinthians 7:2 and 3, God indicates that the husband's body belongs to the wife, and the wife's body belongs to the husband. In Matthew 19, He says that they are one flesh. Now that indicates that there can be the most intimate relationship between husband and wife. There can be the most intimate relationship, because they belong to each other and they are one flesh.

Now how are they to look at each other? In I Thessalonians 4 God sets the way that the husband is to look at the wife and the wife is to look at the husband. In I Thessalonians 4:3 God declares, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." Now fornication is any kind of adulterous thinking or action outside of the marriage relationship. And then it goes on, "that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel (and the vessel in this context is the wife or the husband) in sanctification and honor, not in the lusts of evil desire, even as the Gentiles which know not God."

Now that's what God says, you see. He says that the husband is to look at his wife as a holy vessel, as an honorable vessel, as someone that God has given to him to love and to cherish. And if he looks at her this way, and she looks at him that way, and they realize that they are one flesh and they can be in the most intimate relationship with each other, because their bodies belong to each other, then you've got a formula where the husband and the wife can work this out between them, and they don't have to talk this matter over with their friends. They don't have to ask questions, "Can this be done?" or "Can that be done?" They don't have to read primers or books on sexual relationships. They can work this out right in the husband-wife relationship. And that's where it belongs.

And I think Christians ought not to use language of the world. I don't think they ought to discuss the suggestions that are offered in pornographic literature, these books that detail the sexual relationship. I really don't think there is a place for that. I think that as Christians we ought to be in the habit of using the biblical language.

Now God does use some ugly language, in Romans 1, where He talks about men burning with lust for men, and unnatural desire for women, of course speaking of homosexuality there. But God chooses His language very carefully, and He gives us enough information so that the husband and the wife who have just become married are going to have that marvelous time of exploration and of discovery as they live together and discover each other as husband and wife.

CALLER: I see. So that would indicate that we're to treat our bodies honorably. Then these acts would be abnormal acts, because it seems to me that these are not normal.

HC: Well, I'm quite convinced that no husband and wife would even think of those acts unless they had been reading other books. I'm quite convinced that these kinds of things are things that are a result of the depraved culture that we're living in. And I'm very distressed when I begin to read even Christian books where they are starting to detail the sexual act, as if God has not put enough intuitive sense within the husband and wife so that they can work this out together.

I wonder what people did before the time of the printing press. People have lived

on this planet for 13,000 years, and they've borne children, and they've loved each other, and they've related to each other. And they certainly didn't need all of the pornographic material that's available today.

CALLER: It reminds me of the story of Jezebel, and the form of worship that she was involved in.

HC: Well, there always has been sexual depravity, because mankind is in rebellion against God. But that sexual depravity is fed as we put ourselves in the place of temptation. When we read this kind of material, and when we talk about these kinds of things with our friends, we will find, and I don't think anyone is immune to this, that that develops the fires of lust within the human heart, because even after we're saved we have a body that lusts after sin. And this is the kind of think that we often "pooh-pooh." We often look down our long noses at the so-called Victorian Age, when everything was prudish and proper, and so on. And of course in those days there were all kinds of sin abuses, grievous sin abuses. But amongst those who were Christians, I think they were on the right track altogether.

CALLER: So therefore these things are just as grievous to God as homosexuality.

HC: Well, of course I don't like to say that one sin is bigger than another sin. There are those who say, "Well, that is a terrible sin, and this is a less terrible sin." Actually, sin is sin. A homosexual is living in sin, a drunkard is living in sin, a person who is thinking adulterous thoughts is living in sin. Someone who is swearing is living in sin. Sin is everywhere. Sin is everywhere. We don't go around stamping out sin or pointing out sin. Our task is to be an ambassador of the Gospel, to recognize that there is sin everywhere, and there is a way of gaining victory over sin. And that is through Christ. Whether a person is a homosexual or a murderer or a drunkard, or living adulterously with someone, or embezzling funds from his employer, or whatever he is doing, in Christ he can become a new creature. And that's the wonder of the Gospel.

CALLER: The Bible says we are in the world but not of the world.

HC: Yes.

CALLER: Thank you very much for that information.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Questions on Remarriage and Christian Living (417A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. I just was listening to your program, and I had the same question as the lady that has just talked to you. I was brought up in Europe during the time of Nazism, and religion wasn't stressed at all. It wasn't forbidden, but it just wasn't talked about much. And so I wasn't living a Christian life at all. But now, since listening to your program, I think my life has changed, and I have remarried also. And my question was, in order to be accepted by Jesus and by God, do I have to get a divorce? What is my proper way of living?

HC: Again, the answer has to be that the Bible is not really clear about this. There is no evidence that I am able to discover in the Bible that you should become divorced.

Now bear this in mind. You are saved not because of what a good person you have become. You are saved because you're a sinner, and Christ has covered your sins. He has paid for all of your sins. Now logically, and biblically, when we are saved we want to repent of our sins. And this is what you are struggling with. If there is any sin in my life, I don't want that sin to continue, because I love

the Lord and I want to be pleasing to Him.

If a person is stealing, he stops stealing. If a person is lying, he stops lying. If a person has been troubled by the sin of gossip, he seeks strength that he might stop gossiping, and so on. And so when we know that our marriage was begun as a sinful marriage, now what do we do? It's a very fair question, a very honest question. As I've already indicated, as near as I can tell, and you'll notice I'm not saying anything very dogmatically at this point, but as near as I can tell from the Scriptures, you are to seek forgiveness for this sin and accept the Lord's forgiveness, and now go on in your present marriage as if it were a first marriage.

CALLER: In my religion I'm really condemned because of this. I can't receive Holy Communion or have any of the sacraments. Because when I was very young and I obeyed my mother, to marry the man she had chosen for me, my pastor is trying to get an annulment from that first marriage. I was wondering how God would feel about that. I want to do what is pleasing to God, not just to the pastor or to the church, or my convenience.

HC: Actually, of course, we're not saved by the church. We're saved by Christ. Christ is the one who is the authority. Now if you are married to someone in the eyes of the law, and if you have been living together with your present husband as a wife, then while the church might be able to arrange an annulment, the fact is that in the eyes of God you are married. You are married, the same as anyone else is married who is married in the eyes of the state and who is living together as husband and wife.

Now actually, the Bible teaches that there is a natural outworking of sin. If a man, for example, is a drunkard, and finally he becomes born again, he is forgiven for his sin of drunkenness, but he may still die of cirrhosis of the liver, which he developed because of his former drunken condition. Or his life may have been shattered by his drunkenness, and his family broken away from him. And once he becomes saved it doesn't mean that now he's going to enjoy all kinds of blessing. His past drunkenness will work out its natural outworking. A man who has committed a crime and is in jail for his crime could become born again. His sin could be completely paid for. But he may still have to spend the rest of his life in jail.

Now the same is true when you marry a second time. The fact that your sin is forgiven, and the Lord has covered your sin so that it's not remembered anymore, there's no possibility that you are threatened by hell because of your sin. If you're a child of God, there's no way that you can be threatened by hell. Christ has paid for all of this. But there will still be a natural outworking of this kind of action.

And it's easy to see this. There is the problem of the confusion that exists, the alimony, the past wife or the past husband and children that may have been born in the first marriage, and so on. It doesn't mean that your life now in your second marriage is going to be quite as beautiful as it could have been as a first marriage.

CALLER: You're absolutely right.

HC: In other words, you have a lot of natural trouble because it is a second marriage. But I know of nothing in the Bible that says now that you should divorce your husband. Now I could be wrong about this. I don't say this very emphatically. I only say that as near as I can tell you are not to divorce your husband. You are to continue to live as if it is a first marriage. And there are many people who have become born again after they have committed the sin of divorce and remarriage and now are continuing in their second marriage.

CALLER: May I explain something? I really preferred talking to you about this in private, not over the air. I felt that it's sort of very personal. But at the time I did marry my first husband, whom my mother had chosen. I did say to God in church, privately, "Forgive me for what I am saying, but I really don't intend to live with him for better or for worse as long as I live." But that was just between God and myself. Do you think that matters at all?

HC: You see, let's think about what salvation is. Let's take our eyes off your marriage now for a moment, and let's look at what salvation is. When God looks at you, He sees you as a person that is just covered with sin. You're no different than I am or any other human being. The Bible says that there is none righteous, no not one. Now you may have felt that you were living a fairly circumspect life, a fairly decent moral life in many ways, as other people would look at you. But from God's vantage point, unless we had the holiness, the perfection, of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, we stand condemned every day. The Bible says in the Epistle of James, in the New Testament, that if we have broken one point of the law, then we stand guilty of the whole law.

In Isaiah the Bible says our works are as filthy rags in God's sight. So you don't have to think that "Well, there was this sin that I committed when I divorced, and there was that sin that I committed when I was married the first time and I didn't have a sincere vow." Actually, your life and my life and everybody's life is one series of sins.

Now this is why we desperately need a Savior, because every one of those sins, or any one of those sins, will send us to hell. Any sin, a sin that you committed when you were three years old or five years old or six-and-a-half or eighteen, or whatever your age, any one of the sins you ever committed would send you to hell. Now when we become saved, it means that every sin that you will ever commit, every sin that you committed from the day you were born until the day you die, has been taken by the Lord Jesus Christ. He became sin for us, for you and for me, if we believe on Him. And He stood before God as Judge, and He was found guilty for our sins, and the sins of every individual in the whole human race who has ever believed on Him. And God poured out His wrath on Him, because He was guilty for my sins. And Christ, you see, bore hell for me. He took my place in enduring the wrath of God, the equivalent of an eternity in hell for me.

That is why God can never send me to hell anymore, because my sins have all been paid for. I have trusted in Christ as my Savior, I have recognized that I'm a sinner, and that except for the blood of Christ I would stand altogether guilty of hell.

And so I can look back on my life, and I can see sins that stand out. And I look at those sins, and I can say, "Praise God, those sins have been covered by the blood of Christ." But I also know that there are thousands of other sins that don't stand out. Every action of my life, there is no action that has ever been a perfect action. It has always been tainted by sin. And every day I can go to the Lord, and I can say, "Oh Lord, forgive me. I didn't measure up perfectly to Your glory, to Your holiness. But I know, Oh Lord, that my sins have been covered by the blood of Christ. And strengthen me that tomorrow I'll live a little bit more to Your glory," not because I'm trying to merit anything, or to guarantee my salvation, but because I love God and want to live for Him and show my love in this way.

CALLER: I have been listening to your program for a long time, and I have changed the way I believe in God and the way I'm a Christian. Before I seemed to be more afraid of going to hell, and I

thought I had to be good because that was expected of me. But now, since I'm listening to you, my religion has changed. I'm bothered by sin, and I don't want to sin because I don't want to hurt God, or rather Jesus, because of what He has done for me. Is that a sign in my favor? Does that mean that perhaps I am saved?

HC: Yes. You can know if you're saved. We don't have to guess about it. I can't know whether you're saved. I can't look at your heart. God is the only one outside of yourself that can know whether you're saved. But if you know, and if you look at yourself very honestly, you know whether your will has been surrendered to Christ. If you know that you believe with all your heart that Jesus has paid for your sins as your Savior, then you can know you're saved, because the Bible tells us so.

CALLER: It's such wonderful news when you tell me that.

HC: Well, that is the joy of salvation. That is the joy of salvation, that we can know this, that our sins have been paid for. And when we find this ongoing, earnest desire that I want to live for Christ because He is my Savior and I love Him with all my heart, that this is my desire, not because I'm meriting anything, now there are many people who are desperately trying to live for God because they're trying to prove themselves worthy, or they're trying to merit something. They're trying to make sure that God sees all their goodness, so that God will have mercy on them. And that will lead to hell. But if we really are doing it because of our love for God, because we aren't comfortable unless we're doing God's will, then we can know that we're a child of God, that we're born again.

And you know, you put your finger on a very common misconception, and I'm glad you mentioned this because this is a misconception that is found in almost every religion and every gospel. You said that you have been told that you have to be a good person, or else you would go to hell. Now many mothers tell their children this. "Jimmy, now you better be good. Otherwise God is going to be angry with you, and you're going to go to hell if you're not good." And this is dimmed into our ears. We've got to be good, or else God is going to send us to hell.

Now that is absolutely contrary to the Word of God. That is contrary to the Word of God. That is really saying that you've got to be a good person so that God will save you. And that path will never lead to salvation. The path to salvation is where we recognize that we're a sinner, and we cast ourselves on the mercies of Christ, and we trust in Him as the one who has forgiven our sins, and we pray that we might be born again.

And we can know we're born again when we find within our lives an earnest desire to be good, because we love God.

CALLER: Yes. I think I like your way much better, but it had to be taught through continuous listening, in order to understand what I'm listening to. And the only thing that bothers me is that I can't receive the holy sacraments. What should I do about that?

HC: The Bible doesn't say that we have to partake of Communion. The Bible says, "As often as ye do it, do it in remembrance of Me." Now if we happen to belong to a church that refuses us Communion, for one reason or another, all right then. Let's not partake of Communion. There's nothing superstitious about Communion. It is a sacrament God has ordained, but it is not wrong not to partake if you're not able to partake. There are many people who are bed-ridden, who cannot partake. If the opportunity does arise that you can partake, then by all means partake.

CALLER: I asked the pastor because I go to church. I go to my church, and everyone seems to receive Holy Communion except me. And my pastor can tell it bothers me because sometimes I walk out crying. Sometimes I become emotional about this.

HC: Well, you become emotional for one reason, not altogether of course, but at least in some way your pride is hurt badly. And we all are proud. And when you are singled out as the only one who can't partake, then it's a blow to your pride, and then of course it's very easy to weep.

But what I would recommend to you is, put your trust in the Word of God. The Word of God is the final authority. And spend lots of time just feeding on the Word, feeding on the Word. And as you feed on the Word, you're going to learn more and more about this wonderful salvation, and you're going to be strengthened in your life to live for Christ, and these other things are not going to be nearly so important.

Actually, the Communion service is not for perfect people. The Communion service is for born again people. Anyone who is born again is, to use the biblical language, worthy of Communion. Now we're not worthy because of what we are, but because of the righteousness which has been given to us by Christ Himself. Any born again person ought to partake of Communion. And so you should not hesitate to partake of Communion.

And insofar as confession is concerned, the Bible teaches that we are to confess to God. "If ye confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And we have a high priest who is the Lord Jesus Christ that we come boldly to, to confess our sins.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, thank you very much. I don't read as much as I should, but I listen to Family Radio. But I'm not as knowledgeable in the Bible as the way you explain it, and when I listen to you I'm sure I don't misinterpret it.

HC: It's wonderful that we do have this opportunity to talk together. And every one of us has to begin where we are. Every child of God begins having very little knowledge of the things of the Lord. And when we know someone else who seems to have a little better knowledge, we wish that we could be there, too. But our salvation is not dependent upon our knowledge. Our salvation is not dependent upon our understanding. Our salvation altogether depends upon what Christ did for us on the cross, and our trust that we have put our whole life on Him.

But if we do love Christ, if we do love God, then as we recognize that the Bible is the Word of God, it is the voice of God speaking to us, it is the way that the Lord Jesus communicates with us, then we want to spend as much time as we can reading the Word and becoming acquainted with it. Then as you hear these discussions they'll also become more meaningful to you, because you'll begin after a while to say, "Oh yes, I read that in the Bible. I understand what you're talking about."

CALLER: You know, it's like food for the soul. I have come to the point where I need it, where I need to hear it, just like I need food for my body. Perhaps that's why I'm just afraid that I'm a born again Christian, because it's such a wonderful thing.

HC: Well, the Bible says if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, if we really trust in Him, if we've hung our life on Him, we shall not perish but we shall have everlasting life. And if you really have entrusted your life to Him, so that your will is given to Him, then you can know that you're saved. Or in I John 2 we read in verse 3, "And hereby we do know that we know Him [that is, that we are His child and that He is our Savior] if we keep His commandments. He that

sayeth, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him." Now the commandments are the Word of God. And if we discover a real desire in our heart to be obedient to the Word of God, because of our love for God, then we have evidence that indeed we are a child of God.

CALLER: But, Mr. Camping, I have progressed quite a bit. But I feel I'm still perhaps too selfish. I like my nice home and the nice things in my home. And sometimes I feel very guilty that I enjoy that. And perhaps I am not saved because of that.

HC: Now you see, once we're a child of God, we're not going to find that we are already perfect. We're going to find that there are things in our life that we're troubled by. Is this sin or is this not sin? And we can go to the Bible to get information, so that we know what God's will might be. We can pray for wisdom. Prayer is the wonderful blessing God gives us, "Oh Lord, may I have wisdom on this matter, or that matter." And then, as we go along, God will give us a settled feeling in our soul. "I ought to do this," or "this sin has got to go," or "that sin has got to go."

CALLER: But do you think that this is really wrong, to live in sort of a nice house, luxury?

HC: Well, the Bible doesn't say that we have to live . . . the Bible puts it this way. The Bible says that we are His ambassadors; we are the ones who hold the Gospel that is so desperately needed in the world, and we are custodians or stewards of all that God has given us so that we might use these things as effectively as possible to His glory, to send out the Gospel. Now there's nothing in the Bible that says that it's wrong to be rich. There's nothing wrong in itself to be rich, that is, rich in the things of this world. But the Bible says let the rich be very generous in their giving. They have an opportunity to really make substantial gifts that the Gospel might go forth. The Bible does not say we all have to live in a tent, or that we have to live in poverty.

The main thing we have to make certain of, however, is that we are not indulging ourselves. Our focal point is not on me all the time. Our focal point is, "Oh Lord, where is it that I can be most effective, in the money that I have or in the things I own, that they might be used to send forth the Gospel?"

I hope this helps a little bit.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, you have helped quite a bit, and I thank you very much.

Marrying a Christian Who Does Not Attend Church (458B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Brother Camping, do the Scriptures have anything to say about a Christian marrying a Christian that doesn't attend church? Do the Scriptures refer to that?

HC: The question is, does the Scripture say anything about a Christian marrying a Christian who does not attend church? Well, the Bible says, in II Corinthians 6:14, Be not unequally yoked with an unbeliever. Now this means that God wants us to be very very careful, if we are a born again believer, to make sure that we are marrying a born again believer.

Now if I was going with someone, and they had no interest in going to church, even though they said, "Well, I love the Lord, and I am a Christian," I would have great questions in my mind. I would really wonder, because the Bible says in Hebrews 10 (I believe it is), "Don't neglect the assembling together of the saints." If someone had no interest in the fellowship of other Christians, and did not want to come under the authority of the preaching of the Word, and the

authority of those who rule in the congregation, then I, realizing that marriage is binding on the rest of my natural life, would want to have someone who gave a lot better testimony than that before I would marry him.

You see, there are lots and lots of people, and this is a very common experience. A man starts going with a woman, and pretty soon they fall in love. And the woman really wants to marry this man, and it appears as if he probably is a Christian. And there seems to be quite a lot of evidence. He of course wants to marry her, and so he really talks it up that he is a Christian, and so on. And so they don't really investigate this carefully. They don't talk a lot together about the claims of Christ, because they don't really want to, they're really hoping that everything is all right spiritually.

And so they get married. And then after the honeymoon, she finds, to her utter dismay, that he really doesn't have any interest in Christ at all. Now it's not necessary to show any interest, and as a matter of fact, he could really care less. This has happened so frequently that it just grieves anybody's heart.

If the person you're going with does not have a vibrant testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ in his heart, if there isn't clear evidence, very clear evidence that he's born again, that he loves the Lord, he loves to talk about the Word, and he loves to fellowship with fellow believers, then by all means don't continue with this person, because you're just inviting a serious, a terrible problem in your life.

CALLER: Okay. I just have one thing I would like to say. Some people are very quiet about their faith. I haven't really gone with him long enough to really feel that I know . . .

HC: Well, yes. It is true that there are those who are very exuberant people. They're extroverts, as we call them. They talk about everything they think about. And there are those who talk like they're really Christians, and they're really not born again at all. They just have a good line, so to speak. And there are others who are very very quiet, and who dearly love the Lord. And yet they don't talk very much about it. That is true.

But now you must remember that you are not talking about someone that you're just going to visit for a little while, or that you're just going to have a casual acquaintance-ship with. You're talking about someone who's going to become one flesh with you, someone whom you must spend the rest of your natural life with, because in the life of the born again believer the word divorce is unknown. We may not even think about divorce. And so this is a giganticly big step that you are taking. You are committing your whole life to this person.

Therefore, the purpose of dating and the purpose of engagement is to make absolutely certain that you know this other person. And even though they may be reserved and very quiet, ordinarily, as they live amongst people, when it comes to a man and a woman who are contemplating marriage, in the intimacies of exploring each other's minds and exploring each other's thinking, there better be a clear statement and demonstration of where each stands before the Lord. And if this is not forthcoming, even though this person may be very quiet and ordinarily does not say a lot about it, if this is not forthcoming, then it is a dangerous matter to contemplate marriage.

This is very serious business. I just can't underscore enough how serious this is, that you know crystal clear where this person stands in relationship to the Lord. And if you have any doubts at all, then either extend the engagement for another six months, or break off the engagement until you do know, or whatever. But under no circumstance marry someone about whom you have the slighted doubt

concerning where he stands before the Lord.

I can testify of all kinds of men and women who have come to their senses after the honeymoon was over, and they've discovered that the person they thought was a believer was not a believer at all, simply because they never took the time, they never honed in on this question of exactly where the other person stood before the Lord.

CALLER: I talked to a person that knew him when he was young, and he was very religious.

HC: That doesn't say anything at all. We can be a very religious person when we're a child, simply because we're doing what daddy and mother wanted us to do. But the thing you have to discover now is, where does he stand now?

Now one of the sad things that happens on today's scene, and it's very sad, is that there is grievous violation of I Corinthians 7:1. There God says, "It is not good for a man to touch a woman." And the context is indicating that God is concerned about fornication, the possibility of sexual desire that ought not be there until after marriage.

Now the typical situation in our culture, and this is very very typical, not only with unsaved people but also with saved people, is that a boy and a girl or a man and a woman start going together. And then it isn't long at all before they are beginning to hold each other in their arms, they're beginning to kiss each other, they're beginning to engage in physical contact. And this shoves the focal point away from the area it ought to be, and it puts it on the physical to a very high degree. In other words, they become very enamored of each other because of this physical contact. And this body chemistry, of course, was put in men and women by God Himself, so that after marriage it would be the wonderful thrill, the wonderful blessing of marriage, the wonderful experience that should only be in the marriage relationship.

But because they violate I Corinthians 7:1, their focal point is on this physical contact. And because physically they feel such a marvelous oneness together, even though they may not even go all the way to sexual relationship, nevertheless they are not qualified any longer to know each other in their minds and in their spirits, because their thinking is taken up with this physical attraction.

If, on the other hand, they walked according to I Corinthians 7, and they said, "Well, all right now. We're going with each other. And the physical, that is for after marriage. That isn't for now. Now we are free to hone in on knowing each other's mind, knowing each other's thinking. We can find out what we like together. We can talk about the things of the Lord together. We can explore Scriptures together. And we're not going to be troubled by this physical thing. That we're going to save for after the marriage ceremony."

Now that sounds like an impossible task, but I'll tell you this, that if two people will follow that rule, then you've got the makings of a perfect marriage because then you're going to really have opportunity to know each other far better, and you're not going to get snared into a precipitous marriage because the physical attraction got too strong.

CALLER: I understand what you're saying. The Lord really never laid it upon my heart to find out what He had to say about what I just asked you. I just happened to think, I wonder what the Scriptures do say.

HC: Well, let me just encourage you to be very very careful. No Christian ought to ever marry with his eyes closed, or with only a half-way idea of how the other person stands before the Lord. If there's any doubt at all, delay the marriage. Don't go through with it,

regardless of wherever you might stand in your wedding plans, or whatever. These question must be settled, must be settled openly and cleanly and without any reservation, long before there is a wedding. And if they have not been carefully settled, then either you should stop going with that person, or any wedding plans ought to be pushed away, months and months or years away.

CALLER: Do the Scriptures say that if they don't assemble with other Christians, that's considered unequally yoked?

HC: Well, if a person finds that it's uncomfortable to be with other believers, and doesn't like the church, well then that's contrary to the whole concept of the Bible, that we are a fellowship of believers, that we are to love one another, and that we are to assemble together as a congregation. Automatically I would wonder, Well now, how can a person really love the Lord?

Ordinarily we're not to judge one another, but here you have to pass judgment at least to the degree of making a decision, is this person really born again or not? It's imperative that you know this before you contemplate marriage.

And if a person is uncomfortable or spurns relationships with those who are born again, then I would become very nervous. I would really wonder, I don't know. Maybe he is born again. But, wow! How is this all going to go after we're married? Because he's going to want to continue this way, and I can't live that way. The Bible tells me I have to fellowship with other believers. And we're one flesh. And if he's a child of God and I'm a child of God, we should be doing this together, with other believers. And if already before we're married he doesn't want to fellowship with other believers, well then, already we've got a problem, before we're ever married. And so who wants to walk into that kind of a marriage?

CALLER: Okay. He's very well educated and very well read, and he said that graduate school changed him. I'm wondering, how could that change a person in their faith?

HC: How does graduate school change a person in his faith?

CALLER: The more highly educated they become, perhaps it changes them.

HC: Actually, every person must make a choice as to whom he's going to serve. As Joshua said to Israel of old, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve. But as for me and my house, I will serve the Lord." All right. Now when a youngster is young, he probably will easily align himself with wherever his parents are. But as his education continues, and as he gets more into the world, whether it's in the armed services or whether it's on a job, or whether it's in graduate school, or wherever, his choices are going to begin to more and more lean toward the way that is most comfortable for him. And if a person is not born again, then he will gradually be attracted more and more to the world.

Now you can blame the graduate school, or you can blame the job, or you can blame the armed services, or whatever you want to blame. But the fact is, if he is not a child of God, he's going to find that this world is very enticing, it's very intriguing, it's a very wonderful place to be. And so he will be drawn away. And that's a tremendous warning sign, if you are going with someone.

Now on the other hand, if he is a child of God, if he has become born again, then as he is active in graduate school or active in a job, or active in the armed services, or whatever, he will begin to see the futility of the world. He'll begin to see the vanity and the emptiness and the shallowness and the deceitfulness of the world. And he will begin to get more and more uncomfortable, and want to be

drawn closer and closer to the body of believers. And this is what you really want to look for in a prospective husband.

May God give you much wisdom as you seek out this question. Good night.

The Christ-Centered Marriage – How Wives Can Help (522B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. This is my question. My husband and I are both born again believers, but our marriage is not Christ-centered, though. And my husband's interpretation of being head of the household is a little bit different than the Bible's. And my question is, if you could briefly give the scriptural passage found in the Bible of the husbands' and wives' duties as it pertains to having a Christ-centered marriage. And what is something that I could do as the wife to kind of help direct our marriage toward being Christ-centered, without being pushy or overbearing? And I'll take my answer over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. A very practical question, how can we have a more Christ-centered marriage? What is the responsibility of the husband and the wife in that marriage that would move it toward being Christ-centered? And how can a wife, realizing that her marriage is not as Christ-centered as it should be, in a Christ-centered fashion help to make the marriage more Christ-centered?

First of all, one of the best passages in the Bible that speaks about the relationship of husbands and wives, which ought to be kept in view from the very beginning of everything, is that which is found in Ephesians 5. In Ephesians 5:22 we read, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord." In other words, you have abandoned yourself to the Lord, that He is King of your life and that your whole life is in Him, and you must also realize that your life is committed to your husband, all subordinate of course to the Lord.

The Lord is first, and anything that your husband asks you to do that is contrary to the will of God, obviously you must be obedient to the Lord rather than to your husband. But in all things that relate to something where he's not asking you to go contrary to the Word of God, you submit to your husband as unto the Lord. You love him, you obey him, you want the very best for him. You think about the very best concerning him. These are the relationships of the wife to the husband.

And then we read in verse 23: "For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church. And He is the Savior of the body." Then it says in verse 24, "Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ." Oh, this continues with the wives: "So let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." All the way from verse 22 to verse 24 God is developing this thought about how the wives are to submit to their husbands.

Now in verse 25 God comes to the husband and lays down the rules: "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." Now that's a tremendous statement. You see, Christ loved us when we were unlovable, Christ paid the price of eternal death for us. He shed His blood for us. He paid a very dear price for us. And He loves us eternally.

And that's the way the love of the husband ought to be for the wife. He is to love his wife not because she's lovable, not because she makes him feel good, not because she's beautiful, not because of this or because of that or the other thing. He loves her with that tender, ongoing, faithful love because she is his wife. And he is really to give much in showing his love for his wife. That's the ideal that God lays down.

And when this relationship begins to exist between husband and wife, then you have a good beginning for a home that is Christ-centered.

Now in Ephesians 6:2, or thereabouts, God says, "Fathers, bring up your children in the fear and nurture of the Lord." Now that means that there has to be Christian training at home. That means that there has to be a deep and abiding concern that the children in the home are being trained in the ways of God.

Now if this is so, it means that we as husband and wife, as parents, are going to be a reflection of Christ because if we are a reflection of the world, if we speak like the world and think like the world, and that is the atmosphere of our home, then that is the way we're going to train our children. If we really expect to have a Christ-centered home, it means we have to guard our lips. It means that we have to think about those things that are noble and pure and of good report. We have to relate to the events that happen in our life in a way that is God-pleasing. We have to begin in our own lives, and then we have to be concerned about what we are teaching and what we are doing with our children.

Now one of the intrusions in our home that is more emphatic and more assertive than anything this world ever has known is the TV set. There is nothing that has brought the world into our home quite as dramatically as TV. And any of us know this, if we've ever had a TV in our home. It is a temptation that nothing can compare with. And on that TV screen you have the whole world at your doorstep. And it is a world that is not presented to us in a God-glorifying way, necessarily, at all. There might be a few good TV programs, but there's tremendous much that is not God-glorifying a bit.

And one of the things to begin to do to modify the character of your home is to try to restrict increasingly the use of the TV. And if your TV set happens to be not functioning, if something happens to it internally, hesitate a long long time before you call the TV repairman. It really is not a blessing normally in anybody's home. It detracts from the Word of God altogether.

Now another thing that would be very helpful, which is rather formal, and it can be very mechanical and very legal, but nevertheless it can be a great help, is to have a time of family devotions. Now in many families, or in a number of families that I'm acquainted with (we've made this a practice in our home), whenever we sit down for a meal together, obviously someone is going to ask a blessing on the food. We do that whether we're alone or whether we're in a restaurant, or whether we're together as a family. We always do that.

But when we're together as a family, at one or two or three meals, depending on what time of the year it is, you know, with the busyness of families, very frequently it may end up with only one meal a day that you're together as a whole family. But then after we have nourished our bodies, then we spend just a little bit of time also nourishing our souls. And so we read a portion from the Bible. And various members of the family can do this reading. In some families each child in the family has a Bible in front of him and reads a verse. And perhaps there will be time for comment. If there is something in a verse that strikes you, you can talk about it.

And then someone can return thanks, so it is a brief time of worship on a daily basis. This can help to focus your attention back on the Word of God. Now again this can be very formal, very legal, legalistic. It can be empty of any value. But nevertheless it is a beginning plan to follow.

Now what can I do if I am a wife and my husband is not too interested in these

things? What can I do?

Well, in 1 Peter 3:1-8 God is discussing there a wife who is married to an unsaved person. But there God talks about what a wife ought to be, and the application of course is also true in case your husband is saved. Let's just look at that a moment. 1 Peter 3: "Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands [that's Ephesians 5:22-24 all over again] that if any obey not the Word they also may without the Word be won by the conduct of the wives."

The "conduct" of the wives. In the King James you have "conversation," but that's an old English word for conduct. Now that's an interesting thing, you see, that the conduct of the wife can make an impact upon the husband, even if he's unsaved. And certainly if he's saved then it will even make more of an impact.

"While they behold your chaste conduct coupled with fear, whose adorning is not to be that outward adorning of plaiting of hair and wearing of gold or of putting on of apparel." That's the world, you see, that tries to attract the husband by the way she does her hair and the amount of make-up she puts on, and all of these other things. She thinks that this is what is going to excite her husband. But that's not what God is interested in.

"But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." Now you see, what God wants you to do is to be very meek. Oh, wives, it is so easy, you know, to let go against your husband. It is so easy to say far more than you should say. God is indicating here that, and of course elsewhere in the Bible God indicates that we husbands are to walk humbly before the Lord also. Jesus was meek and lowly of heart. Moses, one of the greatest leaders of the Old Testament, was of all men most meek. And all of us must walk meekly.

But also in a very real sense the wife, as she lives with her husband, is to be very meek in the home, and very submissive. And as the fruit of the Spirit is seen in her life, as she quietly goes about living to God's glory, this will make its own impact upon the rest of the home. She doesn't have to say a lot to her husband. She doesn't have to say, "You ought to do this, and you ought to do that," if she herself is doing these things that ought to be done and is the fragrance of Christ. You can depend upon it that it'll begin to rub off on the husband and also on the children, too, although in connection with the children we rule over them as mothers and as fathers. And in their case we not only are the example, but we also are going to teach them.

But let me put it the other way also. We not only teach them, by saying, "You must do this and you must do that," but we also are the example. If we are not the example, then we are going to be hypocritical in our teaching. It is going to empty a lot of the force of our teaching.

Well, I hope these suggestions help just a little bit.

Coping With a Difficult Husband (649A)

HC: Good evening.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I've been married for almost thirty years to a man who has been drinking for thirty-six years. He claims he just has a drinking problem, and he will not admit he is an alcoholic. Our children are no longer home. They're dispersed throughout the United States. Since the children aren't home, I take the complete brunt of my husband's arrogance, his obnoxiousness, and his shabby treatment. About three years ago he started listening to Family Radio. He reads the Bible. The station is on twenty-four hours a day. He believes in God. I'm at the point where I don't

know what to do. If I leave him, I know what I'm condemning both of us to, but I can't take it anymore.

HC: Let me make some suggestions to you. I understand what you're saying. We are in a very difficult situation. It goes on and on and on and on, and pretty soon we feel like we can't go on another day. We feel like we've had it. And we are ready to take some kind of drastic action. Now this is why it is so wonderful that God has given us His Word so that He has established principles for us to live by.

Now one of the marvelous principles God has introduced into His Word is that His mercies are renewed each morning. No matter how bad the day has been, and we think tonight, "I can't go on this way. Tomorrow is going to be worse, and the next day is going to be worse. How can I go on?" First of all, God says, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." That's a principle we have to follow. And then secondly, He says that His mercies are renewed each morning.

That incidentally is found Lamentations. In Lamentations 3:23 we read, "It is the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. Because his compassions fail not, they are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness." Beautiful promise of God.

Secondly, God tells us not to be anxious. Now you can become very anxious, "How can I live under this kind of a situation?" But God says, "Don't be anxious. But in everything, with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving." And there's a lot you can be thankful for. You can be thankful that the Lord has sustained you all through these years. You can be thankful that you are a child of God. You can be thankful that you can go to the Lord in prayer. You can be thankful that God has promised that He will never leave you nor forsake you, and so on. And you can therefore go to the Lord in your anxiety. Don't be anxious, but with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto the Lord.

Now God does not promise He will take the problem away. But He says, "And the peace of God which passeth understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." That's the wonder of it all. God will give us a deep abiding peace.

Now the snare that we get into when we do have a difficult situation is that we begin to feel so sorry for ourselves. We take our eyes off Christ, and we look at ourselves, and say, "Poor me. How can I go on?" And in ourselves of course we have no strength. But do you remember that beautiful song? "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will go strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

Just think of yourself abandoning yourself afresh on the Lord Jesus. Lean back on His almighty arms.

And so when your husband mistreats you in some way, when he abuses you, just think of this as another opportunity to show the grace of God. Now there is a practical suggestion that I might make. I say this very very carefully. If I were talking to your husband, I would say, "Husband, if you really think you're a child of God, you ought to love your wife as Christ loved the church. You ought to love her, regardless of whether she is lovable or not, or whether she makes you feel good, or whatever. This is the way Christ loved His church, when we were completely unlovable. As a husband we are to make it our business to love our wives." This is the way I would talk to your husband.

But now as I talk to you from the Scriptures, the Bible says of course that the wife is to submit to her husband. Now one area that provokes more problems in the home than any other place is the bedroom. And let me explain what I mean by this. The husband deals

crudely with the wife. He is brusque, he is unpleasant, he is downright nasty with the wife. She feels very inferior, she feels very incapable. She's not strong enough to lash back. But there's one area in which she subconsciously, if not consciously, can even the scale, and that is in the bedroom. When he wants to have intimate relations, she can hold back. Oh yes, she can give in, but she's holding back. And so there isn't any real pleasure in it for him. And subconsciously she feels she is entitled to this.

Now let me say this. The Bible says that that is wrong. That is an area a wife is never to use. The Bible says that your body belongs to your husband, even as his body belongs to you, and you are not to withhold yourself from the other. You belong to each other. You are one flesh.

You see, what happens is, when a wife holds back, then the husband is up against something that he cannot conquer. This is a real problem for a husband. He cannot get on top of that. There's no way that he can force his wife to be the intimate person that she should be, where she really gives herself wholeheartedly. The more he forces, the colder she becomes. And so he has got an unsolvable problem. And so his reaction to this is that then outside of the bedroom he becomes even more nasty. He becomes more abrasive, because he is living now with a problem he cannot conquer. He doesn't know what to do. It's beyond his ability. And so he is going to take it out on his wife. And the only way that he knows is by calling her names and becoming abusive in one way or another.

And so we get a vicious circle going on. As he becomes more abusive outside of the bedroom, or even in the bedroom, because he can't conquer this problem, she becomes more withdrawn and less responsive. And so that only increases his frustration. And so we've got a battle royal going, for which there is no solution.

Now the one area where a wife who loves the Lord must never never take advantage is in the bedroom. This is the place where you should drop all barriers "Husband, I love you", even though he's been a so and so all day long, in the bedroom, "I love you." And give yourself wholeheartedly. And only by God's grace can you do this. But God will give you that grace, if you really mean business with Him.

Now this has a two-fold effect. This is very dynamic. First of all, it removes this potential area for further frustration and therefore a rationale for ill treatment on the part of the husband against the wife. He is not frustrated, and so the reason for being abusive outside has greatly lessened. That in itself is already a big start.

Secondly, as he finds in this most intimate relationship that he has a wife who really does love him and does give herself wholeheartedly to him, this makes its own impact upon him. And if this is done consistently, pretty soon he wonders, "How can I have such a loving wife?" Hopefully in time a lot of the problem can be straightened out.

This I believe is very imperative. Now there are wives who feel, "You mean to say I have to give myself wholeheartedly when he treats me like a dog in the manger, when he is so abusive? He's not entitled to it." You see, that's not the question, what he's entitled to in our judgment. We have to be obedient to the Scriptures, and God knows what is best. And this is God's plan. And I have never found it to be that if we follow God's plan that in the long run it is going to work against us. It may seemingly do so for a bit, but in the long run it always comes out the best, if we can do it God's way.

Now it could be that your husband is drinking in frustration to some degree.

Maybe not. Maybe he does have a problem as to who is his god. You know, an alcoholic is someone who can't stay away from liquor and has found that in the alcohol he has found someone that he can trust. Life becomes a little bit unbearable. A situation develops that they cannot really cope with. But they have learned that they can go to the bottle, and as soon as they take that first drink life becomes a little more unreal, it becomes a little more rosy. They can begin to cope with life. And so that bottle has become their god. And that's why the Bible says, "A drunkard shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven." You can't worship the bottle and be a Christian.

If you're a child of God, when things become unbearable you go to the Lord. "Oh Lord, have mercy on me and strengthen me." You don't have to go to the bottle. If you find that you are going to the bottle, it means that this is proof that the bottle is your god and Christ is not your God. And so it's very serious business when a person finds that he has to drink in order to cope with life. It's very serious business because it can be a very great indicator that after all Christ is not his God.

Now wonderfully, the Gospel of salvation provides victory over this kind of a sin. And if your husband would really mean business with the Lord, that Christ is his Savior (and you can pray that this might happen in his life), it could be that the day will come when he'll look at this squarely in the eye and say, "Look, I've been duped. I've been taken by that bottle. I have been abused by that bottle. I thought that it was providing some way of escape for me, and all it is doing is guaranteeing that I'm going to hell, because it has become a god to me. And that bottle has got to go. And nobody can make me drink. Oh Lord, help me to trust in Thee, and help me to have the strength and the repentance to turn away from this sin," as he pours the bottles down the drain. And nobody can keep him from it. This is the victory of the cross, you see.

CALLER: I also have another problem. When he drinks, he'll put five or six shots in one glass, and maybe have three or four. He has trouble going to sleep, which is his excuse for drinking. But then he'll take a sleeping pill and a tranquilizer. These are prescribed, but I wouldn't dare tell the doctor.

HC: What he's doing, without realizing it perhaps, is flirting with death, because when you mix alcohol with tranquilizers and sleeping pills you are really taking your chances.

CALLER: I work in an emergency room, as a nurse, and I see this often. This is the thing I also fear: falling. There have been injuries.

HC: Sure that you want to do, first of all, is make sure that you in your life are doing things God's way. Now let me say something that may sound a little impossible, but I believe this with all my heart. God sends testing programs into our lives. Just about the time that we think that we have become a rather satisfactory Christian, we love the Lord and things are going reasonably well, then we discover there is someone in our life (and very frequently it is a husband or a wife or a son or a daughter), someone that is very close to us, who just won't let up. And they're a constant aggravation. Now does God know about this? Indeed He does. God has allowed this to happen.

"Why could He be doing this to me?" You see, as long as everything goes well, it's very easy to be a Christian and to think that I am saved. But if we're truly a child of God, the test of a child of God will be that in these aggravating circumstances the fruit of the Spirit can still be seen, the victory of the cross can still be seen.

And this is going to sound strange in a sense, but this is the wonderful place God has placed you. God has given you a husband who for the time being is a real testing program. And when he takes a shot that's too big and he begins to get a little abusive, or whatever it may be, you look upon this not as a disaster, "Oh, poor me. Now what do I have to endure? What's he going to do to me now?" But look upon this as a challenge. "Oh, tonight God is going to give me another opportunity to really stand for Him and show the fragrance of God." And you begin to pray, "Oh Lord, strengthen me now. My husband may begin to get abusive, and oh, could it be that I will speak very softly and very peacefully, and that I will bear no resentment against him, and that I will show my love to him. Oh Lord, could this be?"

And look upon this as an opportunity and as a challenge. Don't look at it as a defeat, "Poor me. Now he's going to let me have it again." Each time this happens, look at it as, "Oh, again tonight it looks like I have that opportunity." And you'll find that once you're able to do this (and by God's grace you can do this) you're going to find that your life is going to get much easier, and you're going to be a much greater help to your husband. He will have more confidence and security in you, once you're able to get on top of this. And by God's grace you can.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.
HC: You're welcome. And many of us will be praying for you that God will give you His wisdom and His strength. And we'll be praying for your husband, that he might see that alcohol and Christ don't work very well together. He's going to have to make a choice.

Questions on Remarriage, Salvation, and Raising Children (771B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi, Mr. Camping. I have a few questions I want to ask you. A friend of mine and I were talking about a relative of hers who is in prison. And after he got into prison his wife divorced him. I listen to you talk about divorce, that there is really no reason for divorce. She was telling me that there is really no chance of their reconciling once he gets out, and he is due to come out in a short while. And she was just wondering, if he did meet someone else and fall in love, would he ever be able to remarry? Would he have to live single?

HC: Yes. Once we are married it is till death do us part. We can get a divorce insofar as the law of the land is concerned, but that does not leave us free to remarry. If he's going to live by God's rules, neither he should remarry nor should she. And actually, they ought to work toward a reconciliation.

CALLER: He tries to write her, but she has no contact with him at all. And she is living with someone else now. If his wife should die, then he would be free?

HC: Yes. You have the rule correctly.

CALLER: Also I have a lot of confusion. Some days I feel that I am saved, and then there are other days when I listen to Family Radio and I hear things, and I get really convicted and I get really confused, and I start doubting that I'm saved. I've asked the Lord into my heart and to lead me in my life and lead me to choose the right way to go and the right things to say, and I have days when I say things I shouldn't say, and I feel really convicted, and I feel really bad, and I feel like I'm not really worth saving.

Yesterday I heard a man talking on Family Radio, and he said that if we're not as righteous as Jesus was, then we wouldn't enter the kingdom of heaven. And I don't understand what that means,

to be as righteous as Christ.

HC: There's a missing link in what you know about salvation. You have it very correct, that in ourselves we are desperate sinners; there is no worthiness in ourselves. The Bible speaks of us as being spiritually dead. And when it uses that kind of a figure it's horrible, because a corpse has to be put away. It stinks. There's nothing beautiful about it at all. And so the condition that we are in before Christ saves us is indeed terrible.

Number two, you've got it correctly, I think, that there is nothing that we can do to achieve our salvation. There is no way that we can become righteous and become worthy before God. It is what Christ does for us that's all important.

Now the law of God condemns us to hell. The law of God declares, "The wages of sin is death." And the death that God has in mind is eternal damnation. When we become saved it simply means this, that Christ took upon Himself all of our Sins, every sin that you ever committed or ever will commit. When He went to the cross, He took upon Himself all of those sins. He is eternal God, so He is able to do that. And of course He was found guilty. He stood before the judgment throne of God and was found guilty for your sins and my sins and the sins of everyone that He had come to save. And He endured the wrath of God, the equivalent of an eternity in hell, on our behalf.

Now that simply means that the law no longer can ever condemn us, because our condemnation has been taken care of in its entirety by the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing more that the law can do against us. And so we before God we become as if we are without sin. The righteousness that Christ has provided, in that He faithfully obeyed God in going to the cross on our behalf, has now been counted for us. We stand before God as if we are perfectly righteous. And what a wonderful condition this is.

Now what happens? When we became saved, judicially all of our sins were covered; every last sin was paid for. But insofar as our salvation is concerned, it's a two-part program. The part that you're already sensing in your life is the fact that God gave you a resurrected soul, a new soul. And in that part of your life you never want to sin again.

The Bible says that that which is born of God cannot sin. But in your body you have not been born of God as yet. Your body is still your same old body, and it has to go into the grave if you die before Christ returns, and return to the dust, exactly like the body of an unsaved person. You cannot go into God's holy presence with your present body, although you can go into His holy presence with your soul. And that's why when believers die in their soul they can go immediately into the presence of Christ, because at the point that they were saved they received their eternal resurrected soul, but not their body.

Now in our body we still lust after sin. We feel sorry for ourselves, we feel lazy, we engage in self-pity, we lust after the world. We have all the temptations from the outside because of our body that has not yet experienced salvation. Now God guarantees that we're going to get our resurrected bodies on the last day, but at this point in time we have not received that as yet. So our body is still lusting after sin.

Now because our soul, however, does not want to sin, there is conflict. And that's why at the end of the day, as you have already intimated, you feel miserable. You're under conviction, thinking, "Oh, why does it have to be this way? And how is tomorrow going to be any better?" And that's the life of the believer, that we recognize that today was not a perfect day because we see the sin, where we fell into temptation, and so we ask the Lord to forgive us so that we might not have that sin between us and God.

We don't have to ask Him to cover it by His blood because it was already covered by His blood. But we want to level with God about it. We don't want that sin to stand between us, and we want Him to strengthen us so that we'll begin to turn away from those besetting sins.

And as a matter of fact, the life of the believer is a life of growing in sanctification. We get victory over this sin and over that sin and the other sin, and every time we get victory over another sin we find it was covering up a couple of other sins. And so it's a constant growing all of our life. But we never arrive, because we still have a body that lusts after sin.

CALLER: So how can you know in your heart that you really are saved?

HC: First of all, do you trust what the Bible says, that you're a sinner, that you're under the wrath of God, and that Christ is the one who became sin for you and paid for your sins? Do you accept that because the Bible says so?

CALLER: I accept everything that's in the Bible.

HC: All right. And you also know deep in your heart, when you look at yourself honestly (and salvation is the moment of truth; we have to take away our rose-colored glasses and all of our pretenses and look at ourselves exactly as we are), you are ready to say that you know that you want to do God's will, that is your earnest desire, to do God's will, even though you don't always do God's will. But really this is your desire, both in doctrine and in practice that you want to do God's will. And that's an evidence of being saved.

Or, another way of putting it is, you find that when you do sin there is struggle going on within you. You don't like it. Oh, you like the sin at the moment. All sin is attractive for the moment. But afterwards you just feel miserable. "Why did I do that? Why do I fall into that sin?" And you just feel upset within yourself, and that's an evidence of the fact that you are a child of God. Or it can be that kind of an evidence.

And taken all together, you can soon begin to see that "Yes, I know that I'm a child of God. I know that I want to do God's will. I know that I love the Lord Jesus as my Savior. I know that I trust that He has paid for my sins." And now, the more you read the Bible, the more you ponder the verses in the Bible, the more your faith will be strengthened. Faith is a gift of God, but it works in our lives as we read the Scriptures. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

CALLER: Last night I had a nightmare. I dreamed that the Lord had come and I was tied on this rope, and I was left behind, and everybody was laughing. And today I've been worried all day.

HC: That nightmare revealed an inner lack of trust in your life. It was not a message from God, of course. A dream simply tells us something about what's going on in our subconscious. Every one of us starts with the faith that God gives us, but we have to cry out, "I believe; help Thou my unbelief." And right now you need to have your faith strengthened, that you know that you're a child of God.

Let me encourage you to read I John 1:9: "If we confess our sins . . ." Now the word "confess" is the key word. It means more than admitting our sins. It also means that I admit that I am a sinner, and I also don't want to sin. I look at myself honestly, and really I want to do God's will. That is confession.

But look what the rest of the verse says: "If we confess our sins, He [that is, God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now that is a tremendous statement, because God is going on record that He is absolutely faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, if we confess our sins.

That is, if we find in our life an earnest desire to do God's will, and we unhesitatingly admit when we do sin to God, we don't kid ourselves that this does not happen in our life, we're very honest before God insofar as our sins are concerned, then we have the assurance that we are a child of God.

CALLER: I have a lot of guilt, and I really feel bad, and I keep hearing my mother say, "Well, that's your curse. It's going to be like that forever because of what you did," because I had my son outside of marriage, and I'm still not married. And I have problems with him.

HC: The big question you may be facing is, has Christ's blood covered that sin that you committed, when you lived in adultery? Is that so bad that Christ cannot cover that altogether?

CALLER: I know that if you're sincere in asking for forgiveness that . . .

HC: Remember that this is a very serious question, because if you don't trust that Christ can forgive all your sins, then you're not trusting Christ. Then you are effectively calling Christ a liar.

And it is true that when you have lived in sin, and this sin haunts you because here's the evidence in this son who doesn't have a father, and now every time something doesn't go quite well you wonder, "Is God reminding me of my sin again? Is this some kind of penance or a penalty that I have to pay?"

Well, the fact is that no matter how much you have sinned, you could have not only lived in adultery, but you could have lived in the most corrupt way possible. You could have lived in the most depraved way that man could describe. And yet all of that sin is covered by the blood of Christ, if you have become saved.

And so what is happening in your life, if you are a child of God, is not penalty for the fact that you lived in adultery. But it is the natural outworking that sin takes. For example, a man is a drunkard, and gradually that drunkenness destroys him. He gets cut off from his family, he loses his job, he gets cirrhosis of the liver, he gets brain damage.

But now he becomes saved; he becomes a child of God, truly saved. Are all of his past sins connected with drunkenness (and they are many) all paid for, insofar as Judgment Day is concerned? The answer is yes, absolutely. Is God going to punish him in any way for his past misdeeds as a drunk? The answer is no. But the natural outworking of his former life still has to follow. He still may die of cirrhosis of the liver. Just because he became saved it doesn't mean that he will be reconciled with his family. He may never get his job back again. You see what I mean? There still is that natural outworking.

Now you have a child. If you're having problems with him, that's not because of punishment that God is putting on you, if indeed you are a child of God and your sins have been paid for.

But it's a fact that you don't have a father to help you rear this child. Perhaps you're not the wisest mother. And you have not brought him up in the fear and the nurture of the Lord. You probably have doted on him. You probably have felt very guilty about this, and so when he was very small, when he was one year or two years of age, you never wanted to spank him or speak too harshly against him.

CALLER: You're absolutely right.

HC: And so you were ruining him all the time, because you were not training him in the proper discipline. And that's the natural outworking, you see, of guilt in your life. But it is not a punishment of God because you formerly lived in adultery.

CALLER: So actually it's my own doing.

HC: It's your own doing. And the

quicker that you accept it and ask the Lord for the complete trust that all your sin has been paid for, the quicker you will be able to look at your son without that guilt complex. And you can look him right in the eye and say, "Now look, you're my son, but now I've got to get busy, hoping it's not too late, to bring you up in the fear and the nurture of the Lord. And there has to be some discipline here. And I've got to take this matter in hand right now."

CALLER: I got him into Sunday School, and I'm going to start going to the same church that he goes to. And I've been reading to him. I've been starting in Genesis and reading to him.

HC: And remember that if he disobeys, that is, if he is disrespectful, and I don't mean every little thing, but there comes a point when you see that he is not obeying, that he is not recognizing your authority, that you have to take him in hand, and he needs that spanking that God has provided a place for. And his tears will dry up, and he'll be grateful after he's had the spanking. It's a very important part of the discipline that may come, if you find that he is denying your authority.

And then you love him up and go on from there. And you can pray the Lord for wisdom to rear him in a way that's pleasing to Him.

CALLER: I've told him what I heard on Family Radio, that when a child disobeys his mother he's disobeying the Lord.

HC: That's exactly right. And God has admonished us as parents to bring our children up in the fear and the nurture of the Lord and to use the rod when it is necessary. And if we do not, then we are disobedient. And you can explain to him that if you do not chastise him whenever he needs it, then you are being disobedient to God.

CALLER: That's what I told him. I said, "Any time that you don't mind me and I don't make you mind me, then I'm disobeying the Lord, and I'm in trouble."

HC: That's right. Now you've got the right idea. May the Lord give you such wisdom, and also a real recognition of His grace.

CALLER: Thank you, Mr. Camping.

Pregnancy and Unequally Yoked Couples (853B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Brother Camping. I went to a Bible study yesterday, and the pastor's wife taught the Bible study. Is that in accordance with the Word of God?

HC: That is contrary to the Word of God, if men were present. And since you are a man and were present, therefore it was contrary. The Bible says, "I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men." That's I Timothy 2:12. This is exactly the predicament that the church is in today. The Bible's rules are very clear, but the theologians are deciding more and more that there are other considerations. And they're restudying and figuring out how they can get around what the Bible has to say. But the Bible's rules are very accurate.

CALLER: Oh, I see. Also I have a question about marriage, about being unequally yoked. If a pregnancy is involved with an unequally yoked couple, must they marry?

HC: The question is, here is a Christian young man (could be an old man, too, but he's a Christian), definitely a Christian. And he has become romantically involved with a woman who is not saved, and she becomes pregnant. Now what is his Christian duty? Is he to marry her? The problem is, if he marries her he is in violation of II Corinthians 6, which says that we are not to be unequally yoked. On the other

hand, he has fathered that child, and he has a responsibility to that child. Of course this is what sin always does. It just gets you into a great big mess. But what he will have to do now is care for that child. It's his child. And yet he cannot marry the mother, as long as she is unsaved.

CALLER: And you can tell a Christian by their fruits. Is that correct?

HC: Yes, "by their fruits ye shall know them." And the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, self-control. Or, putting it in another way, the fruit of salvation is that there is an earnest ongoing desire to do the will of God.

CALLER: I even doubt myself many times, the things I do, and so, on.

HC: If we find that there is ongoing sin in our life, of course we're going to wonder whether we're really a child of God. That's a fair question, because I John 2 says that if we say we know Him and don't keep His commandments the truth is not in us, and we're just lying to ourselves. And so that should frighten us quite a bit. But on the other hand, if we really are a child of God, we know that the power of sin has been broken, and we are to turn away from that sin. We're to repent of it. We're to ask God for a hatred for it. And there should begin to be victory in our life over this sin and that sin.

CALLER: Also, what does the term "bastard child" mean in the Bible?

HC: Well, in the Old Testament the Bible spoke about illegitimate children, using an old English word "bastard", saying that an illegitimate child could never enter into the temple. By the same token, anyone who was deformed, or crippled in any way could not enter into the temple, or anyone who was, let's say, of the nation of Moab, or Ammon, because they were cursed nations, could not enter into the temple. Now again God is not saying that these people could not be saved. He is setting up figures and types. And the temple, in the Old Testament, was a picture of figure of the body of believers. Those who were deformed, or those who were born illegitimate, or those who were citizens of Moab or Ammon, were pictures of someone who is still unsaved, someone who is under the wrath of God. And of course someone who is unsaved cannot be in the temple of God, cannot be in the kingdom of God, unless he becomes saved. And so while God set up these physical types, so that an illegitimate child or a deformed child or person could not come into the temple, under no circumstance was God teaching that they could not be saved.

CALLER: Okay.

HC: Thank you so much for calling and sharing.

DIVORCE

Divorce and Polygamy (196E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: My question is about divorces. I know that in the Old Testament people had lots of wives, and I read in Deuteronomy where it said that if there is something about your wife that you don't like, then you can put her away. You can divorce her. And the New Testament says that if there's adultery, then you can divorce your wife. And I thought I heard you say that that was a bad thing, that you shouldn't do that. And I'm just really confused about that. Does it say anywhere that you should only have one spouse? I know it says that you should cleave to your wife or to your husband. But does it say anything about having two wives, or three wives, or anything like that?

HC: A question is raised concerning divorce. In the Old Testament it is true that divorce was very easy to be

obtained. And the disciples talked to Jesus about this, and Jesus said, in Matthew 19, that Moses allowed divorce "because of the hardness of your hearts." In other words, because of the continuing wickedness of Israel, God permitted divorce.

It is just like today. People do sinful things. All right, they divorce when they should not divorce. God doesn't strike them down. God doesn't instantaneously put them to death. He allows these things to happen, because of the hardness of man's heart. The recompense will come on the Last Day, on Judgment Day. If that person does not become born again, then he will have to answer to God for his sins, even as Israel ultimately would have to answer God for their sins of these easy divorces. It was because of the hardness of their hearts.

Incidentally, the comment was made that lots of people had lots of wives in the Old Testament. That's not really so. It was very uncommon to have many wives. Noah only had one wife. Adam had one wife. Abraham had one wife. Oh, it's true that he bore Ishmael by a concubine, but that was a very special consideration. Hagar was not a practicing concubine. This was just in accordance with one of the customs of that day that possibly through Hagar, the concubine, Sarah his wife might bear a child. And in that sense Hagar became a wife. But this is a very uncommon kind of thing.

Isaac had one wife. Now Jacob started out to have one wife, but was deceived by his uncle. And so he ended up with two wives. And then he added two concubines. So Jacob went beyond the idea of one wife. Joseph had one wife. Moses had one wife. Some of the kings began to have harems. They followed in the footsteps of the heathen kings. David did this. He had a number of wives. Solomon carried it, as far as we can say, to an ultimate conclusion, in that he had 700 wives and 300 concubines. But these also proved to be a tremendous snare in his life, because as a result of all of his wives, he began in his old age to worship other gods. And as a consequence the kingdom was almost completely destroyed at the time that he died. And so Solomon didn't get away with it, either.

But ordinarily in the Old Testament there was one wife. There are these exceptions, but they are really rare, as compared with the usual. Now the Bible indicates that God created mankind man and woman. And God uses the singular. Let me read from Matthew 19. And every word in the Bible is important. In Matthew 19:4 it says, "Have you not read that He who made them from the beginning made them male and female? For this reason a man (a man, not men) shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (not the three shall become one, or the four shall become one, or the five shall become one, because there is more than one wife or more than one husband). "The two shall become one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder." That is the Biblical rule. One husband and one wife, and they become one flesh.

The Biblical rule is that divorce should not be contemplated, ever. And today, when we consider that so many people begin to go together, and then they begin to think about marriage, and right in the forefront of their thinking is the idea, "If it doesn't work out, we can get a divorce," that's how terrible it has become today. Divorce must never be thought about.

Obeying Divorced Parents (219F)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: My question is: If a family is divorced, do both parents have rights to giving blessing over marriage and future activities of the children involved?

HC: The question is, If the parents are divorced, do both parents have responsibilities or authority over the children, insofar as their future plans are concerned?

This of course is one of those questions that arises out of a sinful, sinful situation, that's becoming more prevalent throughout the world today. It's one of the sad questions, because actually this ought not to be. The Bible doesn't really get into this question. People who are divorced normally are living in very great sin. The children are still children, and they are to be obedient. But they don't have a household anymore. They don't have a father as the head of the house.

I really don't know. This is the bewildering mess that comes with divorce. It reminds me of what we read in Judges, again and again. "There was no king that ruled over them, and each man did what was right in his own mind."

CALLER: What about children of divorced parents, where the father is not living a Christian life? Do they still obey him, or should they ask the Lord to lead them?

HC: Having said what I've just said, if a parent is divorced, even though he's unsaved, he's still a parent. And I think the children should still be obedient to the father, even though he is a divorced father, even though he is unsaved. Incidentally, nowhere in the Bible does it say that we are to obey our parents only if they are born again. We have to obey our parents regardless of their relationship to Christ.

And I would think that they still must obey their parents, but of course it will be very difficult, because you have such a messy situation.

CALLER: Are there any suggestions for children, scripturally, either to listen more to the mother that's saved, and not to the father? Or how would you work that out? Or what if they both don't agree in a situation, for instance on a marriage partner for the child, when he gets older? If one gives his blessing and one doesn't, how would you work that out?

HC: The question is, where you have a father and mother who are divorced, and now the youngster grows up and is facing such questions as the choice of a marriage partner, and so on, and if the mother is saved and the father is unsaved, who is the child to listen to?

Obviously, of course, the mother who is saved is frequently going to give the more Biblical advice and direction, because she will be conditioning her advice by the Bible, whereas the father, if he was unsaved, would not. In the case of marriage, for example, if the mother was saved, she would certainly counsel her son or daughter to marry a saved person, whereas the father could care less, in all likelihood, as long as the person his child was going to marry was rich, or had some other attribute that appealed to him. And obviously, the son or daughter must obey God, which would be to marry someone who is saved.

The question, however, becomes more difficult if the father says, no, you should not marry this one that is saved, and the mother says yes, you can marry him. Now we come to a point where the son or daughter has to really pray the Lord for wisdom. And it would be very difficult to give a blanket answer to that kind of a question.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

HC: Good night.

Coping with Separation (225D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'm very sad. I want to say that my wife and I are both Christians. My wife and children left me

some time ago. You know, with no intention of divorce or anything. It's just a separation. It's just gone on and on and on. We see each other on weekends and are extremely happy in each other's company. She says there is no problem whatever between us anymore. There is nothing unforgiven or unresolved, no bitterness, no malice, nothing. And yet she won't move back.

She says she is waiting for God to tell her when. And yes, to answer your question, we are engaged in Christian counseling. But apparently it isn't reuniting us. And I was just wondering what is the next step? And I'd be happy to hang up now, unless you have a question of me.

HC: Well now, it's obvious from your statement that you desperately want reconciliation in the fullest sense, and she is not ready for that reconciliation. And this means, therefore, that all you can do is be very very patient and pray that God, in His divine providence, in His grace, in His mercy, might incline your wife's heart to this.

You have to wait on the Lord for this. Now if I was talking to your wife, then I would tell her that she is living in a sinful relationship because the Bible says, in I Corinthians 7, and maybe in a gentle way, if you're going to a counselor and if she's willing to listen to the Bible, you might point this out, in I Corinthians 7 it says in verse 3, "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights. And likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another, except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer. But then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control."

More than that, the Bible says that the wife is to be obedient to her husband. She is to obey her husband's desires in all things lawful. And so you have to be very patient with your wife. There is something going on in her life that's not right, and God has to deal with her on this matter.

CALLER: I've waited so long. It's breaking my heart.

HC: Well, now, maybe God is testing you. You know, God sends testing programs into our lives. The thing we've got to learn, and all of us have to learn this in one way or another, and God sends chastisements into our lives because He does love us and because He does want to strengthen our faith, and one of things we have to learn is patience.

You know, you think about how patient God has been with you. How many times have you sinned against God in your lifetime? Well, you don't know. There's a whole long list, isn't there? How often has Christ forgiven you? How patient has He been with you? And He continues to be just superbly patient with you. And so we have to learn to be patient with one another.

We think that things ought to go our way right now. We know what's best, and why can't it be tomorrow, or at least no later than the day after tomorrow? But we must learn to be forgiving again and again and again. We must learn patience. And so just relax in the Lord. Leave it with Him.

When you find the strain in your life, when you find the tension in your life because of it, what does Philippians 4:6 and 7 say? "Don't be anxious about anything. But with prayer, and supplication, with thanksgiving" (and you've got a lot to be thankful for: your wife has not remarried someone else; you still are having conversation with each other; you're experiencing a day at a time, now and then, together; you can thank God for your salvation, and that's everything; you have God who will

never leave you nor forsake you, and so on), "with thanksgiving, make your requests known to the Lord." Now the Lord doesn't promise that in five minutes He's going to solve it all. He simply says, "and the peace of God that passeth understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Christ will strengthen you so that you can patiently endure, patiently endure.

And when you become impatient, just think of what Christ patiently endured on your behalf.

CALLER: Yes, sir. Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Unresolved Bitterness Following Divorce (533A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I just wanted to express my deepest sympathy for that woman that called who had lost her children, through her husband leaving her, because I have experienced the same thing. I have three kids also. Mine ranged from about eighteen to twenty-seven, just a little bit older than hers. But I raised those children, and I was a good mother to those kids. They had to depend on me rather than the father, really.

And I raised them in a good Christian home. We were Baptist people. But when he left me (we were together for twenty-five years), they just seemed to leave me, too. You know what I mean? I don't know why they do this. But I thought we were just as close as any mother could be to her children. But when the father left they just pulled away from me. They weren't respectful to me anymore. They just didn't act like they wanted to be around me anymore. And you know, I had never, never heard of that, unless it was some mother that was a drunkard or was mean to them, or something like that. But this wasn't the case at all. And I could just cry for that woman last night, because I've shed so many tears, and I was so ashamed of it, because I love my kids, and it was a shame to me and I didn't want anybody to know it. So I wouldn't talk about it to anyone.

But in a way it did me good, too, to know that there was another woman that had experienced that. And I'll tell you, you know, it may be common to man, and all of that. But it doesn't lessen the hurt. It doesn't lessen the pain at all. I know it's common to man, and all of that. But no one knows the pain and the agony that you go through when you lose your husband, especially when you get in the middle years. You see, a man can just walk away, he can marry someone young, he can pick up his life and just go right on living. There's no problem there. But it's not that way with a middle-aged woman. When she loses her husband, that is half of her. You might just as well saw her right down the middle. That's about the way it is. So she not only loses him, you see. She loses her children, which just intensifies it. And it's just like you're looking in every coffin of your husband and your children. They're dead to you. Yet they're alive, and not loving you. So it's worse than death. I wish I had buried my children and my husband rather than walk away and forget me like I didn't even matter.

HC: You see, actually, what you are emphasizing is the fact that when two people become married, they are one. And this intimacy is not just in the fact that they live together as one person, but actually, it enters into their whole life experience. And so divorce indeed is very traumatic. As you said, it's like cutting yourself in half. And it is very difficult.

And of course the fact that your children forsook you only emphasizes again the terrible sinfulness of divorce. Your children obviously are confused. They don't know which parent to follow, and

this is trauma for them. Unfortunately your children took a wrong path. They were not nearly as concerned for you as they ought to have been. But sin breeds sin. It's the nature of sin that it brings destruction, it brings misery into the lives of all that it comes in contact with.

Now the marvelous thing, however, and this is where we have to finally focus our eyes, is that while we cannot trust man, there is nobody on the face of this earth, no human being that we can put our trust altogether in, because we all have feet of clay, we're always going to disappoint someone else, and in certain cases, when this kind of sin that you're speaking of enters in, then it is a terribly grievous disappointment, yet there is one that we can always trust, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. And if as a result of all this it causes us to intensify our trust in the Lord and our consecration to Him and the fact that we must abandon ourselves afresh to Him, then it can be useful to the Lord in our lives.

CALLER: I will be honest with you. It drove me further from the Lord. Now I know it should have pulled me closer, and all of that. But I am not Jesus Christ. I am not in my glorified body. And I do need the companionship and the love of flesh and blood. This is just the way it operates.

HC: But you see, then you have to face the question, if this drove you further from the Lord, then you have to raise the question, then am I really a child of God? In other words, does God mean what He says when He says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," when He tells us that we are to trust in Him, when He tells us that we are not to be anxious about anything but with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make our requests to the Lord?

If we find that we go through a deep misery of this nature (and many of course do), and we find that there is bitterness in our soul, it's driving us away from the Lord, then we have a bellwether. We have an indicator, we have a caution light, if you will, that we must examine our relationship with the Lord, are we indeed born again? And it could be, in God's gracious mercy, in His fantastic long-suffering with an individual, that He allows this terrible testing program to come in, this terrible trial, to that this person will get an objective look at himself and realize, "well, after all, I'm not saved. I'm not saved." And then with this awareness the horror steals over him, "Well, if I'm not saved, I'm still subject to hell. And that's a terrible thing. Oh God, have mercy on me. Oh God, I too want to know that I am saved." And he can make it his business to make sure that he has turned his whole life over to the Lord.

And in that case the suffering that he went through and the terrible situation he went through will turn into a tremendous blessing, because obviously it is a million times better to go through this life without a family and go into eternal life as a child of God than it is to have a beautiful family in this life but wake at the Judgment Throne knowing that I have to still pay for my sins.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I'm going to admit that I am confused, because when I listen to preachers and I hear you, it puts a doubt in my mind about my salvation, because you're saying that all I need to do is stay close to the Lord and read the Bible and pray, and this sort of thing. And it is not enough for me, which does leave the question in my mind, am I really saved? And yet when I turn to the Christians, it seems like I am. It seems like I've done everything that the Scripture says to do.

HC: For example, if we find that we have a bitterness in our soul, "I just cannot forgive my husband for what he did to me", then we have clear evidence that we're not saved, because the Bible says if you do not forgive your fellow

man for his trespasses, neither will I forgive you. And so in our shock at finding this out, what is the first thing we're going to do? We know that there's nothing we can do. We aren't saved because of what we do. We're saved because of what Christ has done. All we know is that we discover I'm a sinner. I have this bitterness in my soul. My sins are not forgiven. And that means I'm going to hell. And "Oh, Lord," we're going to begin to cry out in our shock and consternation and misery, "Oh Lord, have mercy on me. Oh Lord, I don't want to go to hell. Oh Lord, save me."

And the first thing we're going to do, we know from the Word of God, is we must repent of our sins. We see this bitterness in our soul that is the evidence that we're not saved, and so we're going to be crying out, "Oh God, take this bitterness away from me. Help me that I will be altogether forgiving, and give me a hatred for this kind of life that I've been living. I've been going away from Thee instead of being drawn closer to Thee. And oh Lord, I don't want to go this way anymore."

Salvation, you see, is the moment of truth, when we strip away all the veneers of self-pride and self-sophistication, and whatever else we want to call it, and we look at ourselves very nakedly, that we're sinners under the wrath of God, and only by abandoning ourselves to Christ, only by throwing ourselves on His mercy, hanging our whole life on Him. "Oh Lord, I just want to do it Your way from now on. I've got to quit this self-pity. I've got to quit this selfish thinking that my life is the worst that anyone ever had."

And I've got to begin to look at Christ as the one. Look what He did for me, or what kind of an offer He is making. He left Heaven, He was stripped of all of His glory, He was spit upon, He was reviled, His own did not receive Him, the Bible says. That is, He became a human being, and He was a Jew and the Jews did not receive Him. The whole world did not receive Him. He was crucified for my sins. He didn't deserve any of this awful wrath that was poured out upon Him. He did all of this for those who are being saved.

And so why should I feel sorry for myself when I realize what Christ has suffered? And if I have been pitying myself and feeling sorry for myself because of my suffering, I'd better start looking at someone else who has suffered much more than I have, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. And I'd better ask for forgiveness for all of the sin that has come into my life as a result of this.

CALLER: As you say, I might not be saved. But I just cannot be a Jesus Christ. I just can't. I'm a woman, I'm flesh and bone and blood. As you say now, maybe I'm not saved. I thought ever since I was eleven years old that I was. But now if that is enough, if I stick close to the Lord that much that I don't need a companion, I can go through this life after spending twenty-five years with a man and children, if I can turn around at this age, go back and say, "Hey, I don't need all of this, it never meant that much to me," and "away with this," if I can do that just by getting close to the Lord Jesus Christ, then I guess I'm just not saved.

HC: Well, you see, in the flesh you can't do this. In the flesh this is a grievous thing in your life that you've lost your husband and your children. But in Christ you can have this strength. Remember what the Bible says? "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." And the first thing I have to do is recognize, I have no strength. I have no strength. My strength is all what God gives me. But I know that I want to do it God's way. And therefore I go to the Lord and begin to do it God's way, trusting that He will strengthen me.

And this will only happen as you focus your eyes back on Christ and off of

yourself. Our big problem as human beings is that by nature, and I'm talking about all of us, we're very selfish, we're very self-centered. And when someone hurts us, we feel hurt right to the core. And we just carry on tremendously when in our own souls because of what someone has done to us.

But God indicates that we're not alone. We can know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and we can become a child of God. And we can rise above the circumstances. We don't have to let the circumstances bring us down into the dust and bring us into a feeling of total misery. We can trust in the Lord, and He will strengthen us. But we must take our eyes off of ourselves. We must begin to put our eyes on Christ, and we must begin to be obedient to Him.

Now we don't do this in our own strength. We do this only as Christ strengthens us. But we begin to do it because we know that we're in trouble with God, we know that we're under damnation if we are not saved. Now we don't start obeying God because in that way we're going to be worthy, in that way God will say, "Well, I guess this is a pretty nice lady, so I'll save her, too." No. We do these things because we find a repugnance to sin in our life. We just don't want to sin anymore. We've had it. We know that we want to love Christ. We are abandoning ourselves to Him. And therefore repentance comes.

And actually, all of this repentance and this trust is a product of the fact that God is beginning to deal with us. He is beginning to draw us. And so we just keep doing it God's way. That's why last evening I spoke at length to this lady and said memorize Philippians 4:8. Memorize it, "Whatever things are true and lovely," and so on. And let that be a part of your life, and let that be the control in your life, of your thought life. This is one way that will help you to repent of your sins.

God, you see, has made provision for each of us, regardless of how sad our condition has become, how much our suffering may be. And that provision of course is through the Lord Jesus Christ. But if we really mean business with Him, then we want to turn away from our sins, and we want to be obedient to Him.

And so we have to start by saying, "Oh Lord, forgive me. I've been so selfish, so self-centered. My pride has been hurt. And really, when I look at myself honestly, I'm nothing. I'm nothing. It's only what Christ can make of me that amounts to anything. I thought I was somebody. Of course it hurt me grievously when my family left me. And of course it is a real hurt when I've been one flesh with my husband for twenty-five years and now he's gone, and my children that I bore have forsaken me. This is a grievous hurt. But oh Lord, I know that You understand, and I know that somehow all of this is for my blessing, even though I can't understand it at all. And I know that You care for me and that I can be Your child if I'll only trust in the Lord Jesus. And oh Father, help me to have that trust, that confidence in Him. Help me to have an earnest desire to turn away from my self-pity and this bitterness that I have. Help me to be altogether forgiving."

And as you become obedient, because God is strengthening you to become obedient, then you will find that the trauma is being lessened. You'll find the satisfaction of obedience within your soul. And you'll begin to have the peace and the assurance that you really know your sins are forgiven. And that will be wonderful. That will be wonderful. It will sustain you, even though you did without ever having your children or your husband again.

CALLER: It just seems like I was called upon to do the impossible, you know?

HC: Yes. Remember the promise. Now

God is very faithful. This promise is tremendous, you see. We think that we're called upon to do the impossible. But if we trust in God, we know that He doesn't lie to us. And He says that He will not allow us to be tried above that we are able. And He has tried you. He has put you in a testing program. And through this He has given you a very objective look at yourself. And you see that you have a desperate need of Christ as your Savior, as the one that you can have complete trust in and confidence in. And He will never let you down. Now your husband did. You did have some confidence in Him, you did have some confidence in your children. And they let you down very badly. This is because they're human beings, and they're plagued by sin, as all human beings are.

But when you turn to Christ and abandon yourself to Him, He will never let you down. And then you're on the road that leads to eternal life. Then you know, well, all right. I'm going to go through this life, it's a veil of tears. I have my sorrows, it's going to go on for a little while. But I have something far more glorious than this, far more glorious, that I'm waiting for. And that is the New Heaven and the New Earth. And I'm going to spend eternity there. And that's what I'm going to start thinking about. And I'm just going to praise God for each day as it goes by and ask Him for strength to face the question of the day and the problems of the day. But this is not where it is, this is not where the real action is. The real action is still coming, when I'm going to spend eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ. And then you're going to find that indeed you can live out your life and still be useful to the Lord, and the bitterness will be gone.

When it comes to a point in your life when you know at the bottom of your heart that you have forgiven your children for what they have done to you, and you have forgiven your husband for what he has done to you, so that instead of feeling bitter toward them and angry toward them, instead you will have an honest, sincere compassion and pity for them, because they are acting like those who are unsaved and probably are still sentenced to hell, then you will have come to that point where you can know, "I'm born again, because I'm beginning to think like Christ now."

Now this can happen in your life if you will begin to cry out to God for His forgiveness and His mercy. This is the promise God gives to us, that if we seek Him we can surely find Him. The fact that a person might think he is saved when he is eleven years old or twelve years old, or he's been in a church, is no proof of anything itself. And very frequently, and I'm more and more convinced of this as I read the Bible and as I study the lives of people, God puts us through these trials because He loves us, and He wants us to realize, you thought you were saved but you haven't come to that point. That is still coming. And I need this trial in your life in order that you might really, I'll use this trial in your life so that you really might come to your spiritual senses and realize that that wasn't salvation, after all. And then you can bless God, you can praise God that this did happen to you.

CALLER: Well, it must be. I have worked on this thing, I've figured it, I've talked and I've counseled for eight years. I can't come up with an answer for it. But there must be some area in my life that He's trying to reach.

HC: Now you have to admit, and I'm gathering this, and I'm not judging you. You're calling seeking counsel, and I'm trying to help you, and therefore I'm speaking very candidly to you, because I don't show any love for you, I'm not helping you if I just try to say nice things to you. That won't prove anything. But you have to admit, at least I suppose you would have to admit, from what you

have said, that deep within your heart there is a real bitterness there, a real lack of forgiveness toward your family for the terrible thing they did to you.

CALLER: Yes.

HC: And if that is there, and it's been there these eight years, then you have evidence, "I'm still not saved," because that cannot be there if you're a child of God. And therefore praise God tonight that you know this is a fact, and now you can get busy and do something about it. And if I were in your shoes right tonight, I would pour out my heart to the Lord, "Oh Father, I've been criticizing my family, I've been saying bad things about them, I've been thinking bad things about them, and all the time I'm the one who was in need of salvation. Maybe they need salvation, too, but that's between them and You. But I know I need salvation. And oh Father, here I have this bitterness in my heart, this lack of forgiveness. And oh Father, forgive me, forgive me. Strengthen me. Give me a hatred of my actions. And instead replace this bitterness with love for my family and compassion, and pity. And oh Father, help me to trust in Jesus Christ instead of in myself or in my family."

CALLER: Would you take just a half a minute to do something for me? You could forget my husband, but would you pray for my children, just for about thirty seconds? I'd sure appreciate it.

HC: Well, I would surely do this. I don't normally pray on the air, but in this particular instance I will . . . (Prayer follows)

CALLER: Well, I sure do appreciate you, Brother Camping, because I've just worked at this thing for so many years, and I don't know what else to do.

HC: Now you just call on the Lord, and pour it all out to Him. Tell Him all about it. And just the wellsprings of your heart flow forth. Don't hold anything back. Just cry out to God. He is the one that understands everything. And He is the one that can do something about it for you.

CALLER: Okay, and God bless you.

HC: Good night.

When Your Partner Divorces You (547C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Brother Camping. We have a friend whose wife is divorcing him, and I wondered if you could tell me from Scripture what his position should be.

HC: The question is, someone is being divorced by his wife. What is his position? Well, the Bible indicates in 1 Corinthians 7, in talking about the unbelieving wife being separated from the husband, and the same would be true the other way around because God doesn't make a distinction between the husband and the wife, what applies to one applies to the other, in verse 10: "Let not the wife depart from her husband (or be divorced from her husband), but if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband." And so that is the position of your friend, that he should remain unmarried, or else be reconciled.

And then it says in verse 15, "If the unbelieving depart, let him depart." In other words, if you have an unsaved wife who wants to leave, then that's the way it is. She's going to want to leave." Let it be so. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases. God hath called us to peace." That is, you're not under bondage to try to maintain that marriage, because God has declared, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

CALLER: The word bondage there, that wouldn't mean that a person was free to remarry, would it?

HC: No. There is nothing in the Bible that would suggest that he was free to remarry. Actually, he should make every effort to be reconciled to his wife, even though they may be divorced. As long as she does not marry anyone else, then he ought to make every effort to be reconciled with her. And if she marries someone else, then he'll have to remain single if he wants to remain in accordance with the Bible.

CALLER: Can you make any suggestions about reconciliation, how to approach it?

HC: Of course I know nothing about the case. But first of all, he wants to make sure that he is walking humbly before the Lord. One of the things that brings on a divorce is that neither wants to admit that they are wrong. Both are convinced that they are right, and pride gets in the way. And the Bible talks about confessing your sins one to another. And no matter how bad his wife has been, there's always something that isn't quite as correct as it could have been in the life of the other. And so he should go to her and ask for forgiveness for anything that he has done, and freely admit if he has done anything that would cause it. And he ought to really make some real overtures to indicate that he loves her and that he wants her as his wife.

CALLER: I See. Thank you very much, Brother Camping.

HC: Yes. And by all means pray God for wisdom and for His grace in this matter, because there comes a time when you just don't know where to turn. But ask the Lord that He will give your friend patience and self-control and a real desire for forgiveness, and a humility to be willing to admit whatever wrongdoing he has been guilty of.

CALLER: Thank you.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Is Adultery Grounds For Divorce? – Understanding Matthew 19:9 (599B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like to know what is the difference between an annulment and a divorce?

HC: What is the difference between an annulment and a divorce? An annulment is supposed to be an action whereby it is recognized that a marriage has not taken place. For example, if someone had a marriage license to marry somebody, and yet officially they never became married, they never completed the legal procedures they had to follow, if a Justice of the Peace or a minister or somebody did not actually marry them, then they are not really married, and that marriage license could be annulled.

Or, let's suppose that someone was married by a minister of the Gospel, and they had a marriage license, but they never came together as husband and wife. Right after the marriage something happened so that they were separated, and they never did live together in the sexual union, even for a moment. Then a marriage did not really take place. And therefore it could be annulled.

But unfortunately, there are many annulments taking place today where in actuality there was a marriage. There was a marriage license, according to the eyes of the law they were married, and they lived together in sexual union. But to avoid the blight of calling it a divorce, it is called an annulment. But in that case the annulment is a divorce, and there really isn't any difference at all.

CALLER: But isn't there a reason to get a divorce in Matthew 19:9?

HC: The question is, doesn't Matthew 19:9 give us a reason for divorce? Well, if we took that at face value, if we isolated that verse from the rest of the Bible, it would appear to say that for the

cause of fornication a divorce could take place.

Now the Greek word for fornication is pornea, from which we get the word pornographic. Now Jesus said in another place, if any man thinks adulterously about a woman, he already has committed adultery in his heart. Therefore, if anyone engages in any kind of conversation or thinking concerning pornographic material or action, he would already be guilty of fornication.

And that would mean that any woman who ever caught her husband telling a dirty story, which would be fornication, or looking at a "girlie" magazine, or making some remark that was an immoral remark, would have cause for divorce. And by the same token, any man who found the same kind of a thing in his wife, that she was repeating some story that was of a pornographic nature, he would have cause for divorce, if that is what that verse is saying.

In other words, there could be divorce all over the place, because who is there that is not guilty of fornication to some degree at some point in his life?

But this is not what that verse is teaching. This was a cause for divorce in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 24:1 we read that if a man found some uncleanness in his wife, he could put her away. Now the word uncleanness was normally translated nakedness, and it had to do with sexual impropriety, with sexual impurity. If some man engaged in a sexual action with his mother, let's say, it was said that he saw the nakedness of his mother, or of a brother or a sister. And the word nakedness is the same Hebrew word that is translated uncleanness in Deuteronomy 24:1.

So effectively what God is saying in Deuteronomy 24:1 is, if any man found any fornication in his wife, then he could put her away. Well, in Matthew 19:5 and 6 Jesus declared, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." There is not to be divorce for any reason. Well then, in verse 7 the Jews reminded Him and said, "What about Moses?" They were referring to Deuteronomy 24:1. "Didn't he allow divorce?"

And then Jesus answered them in verses 7 and 8, "From the beginning it was not so. But because of the hardness of your hearts God gave that law." In other words, because you were in rebellion against God, God allowed this, that if a man found fornication in his wife he could put her away. But that was not God's intention. "From the beginning it was not so."

And so in verses 7 and 8 God is very clearly indicating that fornication is not a cause for divorce. It had been a cause for divorce for a rebellious nation, that was in rebellion against God, but that was not pleasing to God. That was not God's will. And Christ is setting that possibility aside when He said, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." And then in verse 9 Christ is simply saying, and there's no other reason except fornication, or besides fornication. He's already talked about fornication in verses 7 and 8. And there's no other reason besides fornication whereby you could have a divorce. There is no reason for divorce, in other words. And then He concludes the argument in verse 9 by saying, "If anyone marries a divorced person, they commit adultery."

There is no grounds for divorce that the Bible knows about.

CALLER: None whatsoever?

HC: None whatsoever. The Biblical rule is, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." And no Christian marrying must know the word divorce. That ought to be a word that is unknown in his vocabulary.

CALLER: My mother has written down here for me something to ask you. Let me let her ask you this . . .

HC: Hello.

CALLER: Hello. Just because you've been married before a Justice of the Peace or a preacher, does this always mean that God has put you together, or sometimes can men put a couple together?

HC: Well, that's a good question. When God says, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder," how can we know if a marriage is one that God has put together?

Well, notice that God goes all the way back to the beginning. He says that in the beginning the two became one flesh. In other words, He's talking about all of mankind. Therefore, regardless of whether we're a Christian or not, if we are married in accordance with the law of the land and if we are living together as husband and wife, then we are married in the eyes of God. If the law allows a marriage to be true, if it's by a Justice of the Peace or by a ship's captain, or whoever it is, then that is marriage, if they've come to live together.

You see, if that were not so, then we would have to conclude that the only people who are married in the eyes of God are those who are born again believers. Everyone else in the whole human race would not be married, because they're unsaved. How could that be what God has joined together?

But remember what Jesus said about the Samaritan woman in John 4? She was very unsaved. She was an adulterous woman. And Christ said, "You have had five husbands." And so He recognized marriage for those who were altogether unsaved, just as much as marriage for those who are saved.

CALLER: Thank you.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Living As a Single After Divorce (855C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Harold. I wanted to ask a question. In the Bible doesn't it refer to God putting our sin as far away as East is from West?

HC: Yes.

CALLER: And if He says that He puts it as far away from Him as East is from West, and we actually delve into it a little further, He says that we are to forgive our brother seventy times seventy. But if we really look at it literally, if we are to be Christ-like as Christians, and the word Christian means Christ-like, then are we not charged to be like Him in every respect?

And one of the respects I'm referring to is to put, in other words, as Christ forgives sin, and He says, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow," and if He does indeed put your sin as far away from Him as East is from West, and we forgive our brother seven times seventy . . . what I'm leading to is this: If we forgive our brother the first time as God would have us forgive our brother, then there really isn't a second time, is there? In other words, if the first time is indeed forgotten, and it's put away . . .

HC: Oh, well, yes, except that your brother sins against you a second time. You've forgiven him and put it away as far as East is from West. That certainly is an application. But now he sins the second time. Now what are you going to do?

Well, you forgive him all over again. And again it's completely put away. Then he sins a third time, and a fourth time, and a fifth time, and a sixth, and seventh, and eighth and ninth, and tenth, and on and on and on. How often should you forgive him completely? And the answer is, as long as you're alive, the same way Christ has forgiven us again and again and again and again. As long as we live

Christ has forgiven us, if we have become a child of God.

CALLER: What I'm saying is, if you forgive him after the first time, if indeed we put it as far as East is from West, then how can there really be a second? There can only be a first. Each time it's done it's really ultimately not the second time.

HC: Okay. From one vantage point I see what you're saying. That would be true. It would be a new first time. But from another vantage point, and a more normal vantage point, we could say, "Well, he sinned against me. I have forgiven him altogether. And now he sins against me a second time," — not second time in the sense that I'm remembering the first time, but second time only in that he at least did it once before — and I'm not remembering that, in other words, you can play with words here, at this point.

CALLER: The point I'm trying to make is this, Harold. And I asked you this once before, but I didn't really have time to digress on it at any length. But if a person is not saved, and he becomes married, and indeed he is unequally yoked, or whatever, because he's obviously not saved (either a husband or a wife, in this case), and he becomes saved, indeed in his ignorance he did not know. It's like God should forgive them, for they know not what they do.

So what I'm trying to say is this. If indeed somebody gets married and ultimately gets divorced, not having the knowledge of good and evil, as we would when we are Christians, as you and I would have, or others listening, if we in our ignorance err, and we become saved, and God draws us to Him, and we've become a child of God, by grace, and all the things that go with it, then indeed how is it that we could be in such a turmoil with respect to getting remarried. Even though we've become saved, we're charged with the fact that "Aha, you cannot get remarried, because now you are divorced." It just seems like . . .

HC: No, I'm afraid that you are mixing two concepts that are unrelated. Oh, they're related in a sense, but basically they're unrelated. On the one hand, God establishes laws, let me give you another illustration that may confuse it more, or maybe it will help.

On the one hand, God says that we all stand on the same ground. In Christ there is no male nor female, nor Jew nor Greek, nor slave nor free. That means that if I'm saved, my wife is saved, my children are saved, we all stand on exactly the same ground. And immediately you could say, "All right, we all stand on the same ground before God. We're all children of God. We're all joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. We're all of royal blood (using all the terminology that goes with salvation), therefore we all have equal authority."

We can conclude that. We stand on the same ground before God. But that is not correct, because God also has introduced government into the human race. And government still has to be observed. Even though my wife and I are on the same ground as born again believers, we're both sons of God, we're both of royal blood, and all of this, nevertheless my wife has to have a certain kind of relationship to me and I to my wife, and my relationship to her is going to be different than her relationship to me. I have to care for her and love her as Christ loved the church, and she has to be submissive to me in all things lawful, and to love me. This is the government that God has established.

Now likewise when we come to the marriage relationship, you can say, well, here is someone who has been married and divorced as an unsaved person. And that sin is completely paid for, and it's all gone. Now does that mean he starts all over again, as if he has never sinned, and the next marriage is a first marriage,

because the other one is completely forgotten?

No, no, God still establishes the rules of the marriage relationship. And those rules of the marriage relationship stand whether a person is saved or unsaved. God still has that government that applies to the institution of marriage. Otherwise the marriage relationship would become a shambles. The institution would become a shambles.

CALLER: You know as well as I do that the laws, and I'm not trying to play semantics with you, but as a Christian I'm trying to figure this all out in my mind here. And I also realize that before there were laws something like the Jewish laws. But in this case, now anymore, it's just irreconcilable differences. She may or may not like the way you part your hair. It's not a question anymore of morals or ethics, or anything that used to be part of the marriage ceremony or part of the traditional vows, or whatever, it's changed to such a degree . . .

HC: You of course know why this is. The moment that you start down a path of sin, it's like the fable of opening Pandora's box. Pandora's box in the fable was a box that was loaded with sin. And once that box was opened, you never could bring it back in again. And that's the way sin is. You start down a path of sin, and sin breeds sin. You become more and more sinful.

Now we see this very dramatically in the marriage institution. As soon as the church decided—and many congregations have been falling over themselves to make these decisions in the last two or three decades—as soon as they decided that it was okay to have divorce if the other partner has committed adultery, then that opened the door.

Then the next thing, they studied some more, and they decided it was all right to have divorce for desertion. And then they studied some more, they had some more committee meetings, and they decided that it was okay to marry after divorce. And then they studied some more, and they decided that it's okay to divorce because you have an unsaved husband. And then they studied some more, and now it's okay to divorce because I don't like the way you part your hair. I mean to be ridiculous about it for a moment, but this is the way sin is.

Now God set up very tight guard-rails around the marriage institution: "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." And if in man's wickedness he is going to divorce the wife that is saved, or the wife is going to divorce the man that is saved, then let that partner remain single, and let him not be married again, because God is concerned that the marriage institution be kept as holy as possible, for the protection of the husband, the protection of the wife, and the protection of the children.

But as soon as the church began to make its own rules concerning this (and of course the world is always looking to the church, whether they realize it or not, as their standard; the world will always live a little more sinful than the church), and if the church allows it, then the world will go a little more sinful. And when the church goes a little more sinful, then the world can go even more sinful.

And so, today, what do we have? The marriage institution is just about destroyed. Sexuality and sexual perversion and all the other things that have entered into it are going like Sodom and Gomorrah never even dreamt about.

And it all starts when you begin to destroy the marriage institution. God has very carefully laid these rules out for the protection of the family, and we can't rationalize around it. We've just got to try to be obedient to what God has declared, for our own good. God did not lay down these rules in order to be harsh to us, or in order to have a detrimental kind of a

thing for the human race. He did it for our own protection.

One of the biggest problems today is that man thinks he is more wise than God. He thinks he's more wise than God in the number of children he thinks he ought to have in his family. He thinks he's more wise than God in connection with marriage and divorce. He thinks he's more wise than God in what kind of a gospel ought to be proclaimed; it ought to be this kind of a gospel rather than the whole counsel of God. He thinks he's more wise than God in just a whole lot of things.

And every time he takes an action that's contrary to the Word of God, he is doing a terrible disservice to the human race. He is making the human race suffer for it, not only immediately, but also eternally under damnation.

CALLER: I'll close by saying that I just find it difficult, because I'm in that situation. I wasn't saved at the time of my marriage. I got a divorce. I've been single now eight years. And it's tough. Being a bondservant, it's difficult when I see, "Thou shalt not lust," but then it says, "Thou shalt not fornicate." But it also says, "Thou shalt not remarry." I mean, it puts you kind of in between a rock and a hard spot.

You look at the churches today, and it's like marriage is going out of style. And I understand what you're saying about how depraved the world is getting. And I don't want to sound like Job and start arguing with the Lord. I know better than that. But on the other hand, I'm just betwixt and between, trying to figure this whole thing out.

HC: Let me help you a little bit. And I have to admit, I cannot empathize with you because I'm married. And I've never had to face that problem. But on the other hand, I've counseled with many many people in my lifetime, and I'm fairly familiar with what the Scriptures teach. There are some basic principles that you might keep in mind. And I really would like to assist you in any way that I could.

Number one, we live in a world where we are brainwashed to think that the sexual action is an integral part of mankind's natural and necessary response. In other words, wasn't it Freud who really put the sex act as the very mainspring of all of society's actions? And that is a lie. God has created man, and God is the one who has put the sexual desires within men and women.

And yet God, with full knowledge of the way He has created man, indicates, particularly in I Corinthians 7 (and read that very slowly and very carefully), that man can live a celibate life. And there are some very great advantages in the single state. That's the first thing. In other words, remember that even though the world's mores and the world's philosophies are such that you begin to think that unless you can have a sexual outlet of some kind, you are not able to live a normal life. But that is a total lie.

Number two, the Bible says, "Flee fornication." Now when you find that you're troubled by any kind of a sin—and this would be a very serious trouble for someone like yourself, who has been married and now has to live a single life—you want to get as far away from it as possible. It means that if there are certain TV programs that turn you on, don't watch those. Discipline yourself. If there are certain books that you might read that will get you into trouble, and get you thinking wrong, don't read those books. If there is certain company that you keep, certain friends that you visit, and by the language they use or the stories they tell, or whatever, it outs you into that frame of mind, don't have those kinds of friends. "Flee fornication."

A third thing you must remember, and this is very very important, the world wants what it wants right now. And if they feel like they're deprived of

something, they want their rights, and they're going to have it. Well, the world may as well have it, because this is all they have. When they die, the next thing that happens is Judgment Day and eternal damnation. And this is the only place where they're going to have any of these things that their heart might desire. And even though what they're desiring is only leading them deeper into hell, nevertheless I can understand that the world wants what it wants.

But for the child of God, we have to take a long look. We have to get our life into perspective. And that's why it's so wonderful to have the Scriptures to assist us in this.

Now the Bible talks about eternal life. The Bible talks about spending an eternity in the New Heaven and the New Earth, where there is no suffering or sorrow, or anything. On the other hand, the Bible speaks of our life on this earth that we're strangers and pilgrims. The Bible indicates that we are like the grass that comes up in the morning and dies at night. Our life is like smoke, that is here and then it's gone.

In other words, God is indicating that this life, which seemingly is a long time, actually, as compared with eternity is like a drop in the ocean. It's like nothing.

And so you have to decide. Am I going to have my mess of pottage, my bowl of soup, like Esau wanted, and he sold his birthright for it? Or am I going to say, "Well, all right. So I have to live a few years, more or less. And I don't have everything that my neighbor has, or somebody else has. But on the other hand, I have eternal life and Jesus Christ is my Savior, and I'm living for eternity. I'm not living for today. And oh Lord, help me to focus my eyes on eternity. Help me to focus my eyes on what's really important."

Now incidentally, God lays down a program for the believer, which is a magnificent discipline, namely, that when God saved us He expects us to serve as His ambassador. We are representatives of the kingdom of God. Therefore, in everything we do, we are to act as children of the King. And, as an ambassador, Christ as it were makes His appeal through us. In other words, we are to use every means to share the Gospel with others. We are to look around wherever we are how can I somehow minister to someone's spiritual needs? And when you begin to fill your mind with that activity, that's a wonderful antidote to the other kind of thing that can grip hold of you.

You see, in other words, God gives us some principles to follow so that even though you have to be in the concentration camp, as it were, of this kind of discipline, you can survive through it. Now if you were actually in a concentration camp you couldn't get out. But you can fight against the bars, and you could beat against your captors, or make your life miserable, or you could reconcile yourself to the fact, "Well, all right, I'm in this concentration camp, or I'm in this prison," or whatever the situation may be, "and now, within the confines where God has put me, I'm going to serve as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ."

CALLER: Thank you, Harold. And pray for me when you get a spare moment, because I'm sure there are a lot of brethren who are in the same situation.

HC: I will, and many will be praying for you.

CALLER: All right. Thanks a lot, Harold. Good night.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

The Issue of Remaining Single After Divorce (857A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I would like some information on the subject of divorce. I personally myself have never been married, and therefore never divorced. And so this doesn't apply to me, although I do have people who are my friends who have heard you on the radio and who have heard other people, and are somewhat confused regarding how people view this. The main thing is, if somebody is not a child of God, and he marries and then divorces, maybe five years later, then comes to know Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord, is it right to say that this person is to remain single as long as his partner is alive?

HC: The question is, when God outlines sin in the Bible, or describes what sin is, does it make any difference whether a person is saved or unsaved when he commits that sin? If someone is unsaved and commits murder, is it just as much murder as when a saved person commits murder? When a person commits adultery who is unsaved, is it just as much sin as when a saved person commits adultery? And the answer is yes, sin is sin.

And likewise when a person has divorced, which is a sin, if he has divorced when he is unsaved, then that's a sin. And the same laws would apply as if he was saved. God's laws are for mankind. It's only the true believer who is really going to pay attention to the law of God and worry about whether he has broken the law of God. But the laws are for mankind.

Likewise the laws on marriage and divorce are for mankind. Jesus, when He's talking about "what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." He reaches all the way back to the beginning. "From the beginning God made them male and female, and the two became one flesh." And so He umbralls the whole human race by that statement.

Therefore the big difference is, if these two people who were divorced when they were unsaved continue unsaved, they eventually would remarry, probably. And that would just make the sin worse. But on the other hand, because they did become saved after they divorced, and the Bible is very clear that the one who marries someone who is divorced commits adultery, they know that they cannot marry again.

CALLER: May I read a certain part of Scripture and get your opinion on it? It's I Corinthians 6:9 to 11: "Do ye not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the immoral, nor the idolaters, nor the adulterers, nor the sexual perverts, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor the drunkards, nor the revilers, nor the robbers will inherit the kingdom of God."

And verse 11 is the one I would like your opinion on more than anything else. "And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

Now to me it would seem to me that we have been cleansed. We are a new creation, as II Corinthians 5:17 says. And as I would understand it, if I was married and divorced prior to my conversion and my new life in Christ, that would have been washed away, as the other sins that I had committed were.

HC: In other words, what you're saying is that when the man on death row who has murdered someone becomes saved, because he's washed, because he's cleansed, therefore that murder rap can't hang over his head any longer. Or the man who has stolen before he was saved, now that he became saved, he doesn't have to spend any more time in jail paying for the fact that he did what he did.

You see, when it talks about being washed or cleansed or justified, it means that in the sight of God we have become absolutely as if we have never committed

that sin. That is, that sin was paid for. The sin still exists, but Christ went to the cross and endured the wrath of God, the equivalent of an eternity in hell, in paying for that sin. And so God cannot hold that sin against us any longer.

But that doesn't change our condition in this world. We still have to obey the rules that God has laid down for this world. That doesn't mean that now we can forget about the fact that we have a wife somewhere whom we have divorced. The fact is, "what God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

You see, there's an aspect of marriage that is not clearly understood at all. But the Bible has got some very surprising language. The Bible says that when two people become married, and this has to do with anybody, in any kind of a marriage situation, whether they were believers or non-believers, or whether it was a hasty marriage or whether it was a marriage after very careful consideration, whether they're married in a church, or whether they're married before a Justice of the Peace, it's immaterial. Two people become married. And God fuses them or welds them into one flesh. God joins them together as one flesh. Now that's language that boggles the mind. There's no other human relationship that exists like that, where two people, from God's vantage point, are one flesh. They are one. And that's the Biblical language.

You see, when the secular world talks about marriage, they talk about it as a partnership, they talk about it as a contract, or as an arrangement, or as two people living together, or whatever language they want to use. But from God's vantage point, when He looks at two people who have become married, He says, "What God . . ." Now notice it says, "What God has joined together." God puts His stamp on that marriage and says, "Now you are one flesh." And then He adds, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

That's how seriously tight the marriage is. Now God did this, of course, for the protection, not only of the marriage institution, but also for the protection of the wife, for the protection of the husband, for the protection of the children, because the family is the basic unit of society. And there's no language like this in the Bible anywhere, that is as strident or as strenuous, or as peculiar, or unique, as this. They have become one flesh.

Now when they divorce, therefore, they are violating God's rules. They are adulterating that marriage. They are engaging in fornication; they are engaging in adultery. That marriage is adulterated. Now when they marry somebody else, now that's an adulterous marriage because they have violated the first marriage. They belong to their first partner. But once they marry that second partner, again they become as one flesh, because that too is a marriage. But it's a marriage that began wrong. It was in violation of the rule of God.

CALLER: Okay. When you first started speaking a moment ago, you said in God's sight the sin of divorce, if a divorced person comes to know Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord, is forgiven. Correct?

HC: Well, it's true that if someone has violated any rules of God, any . . . Here's a person who not only has divorced, but he has committed incest, he has been a child-beater, he's murdered, he's committed every sin in the book. And now he's become a child of God. Every one of those sins is paid for by Christ, so that he will never have to stand at the judgment throne to answer for them. But that doesn't change his place in society. That doesn't mean that now he doesn't have to answer to the law of the land for some of the sins he has committed. It's only insofar as Judgment Day is concerned that he'll never have to answer to God for those sins.

CALLER: Well, if the sin of divorce still exists when a person becomes a child of God, as you said, how did Christ then pay for this sin, if it still exists?

HC: No. You must remember that judgment comes on the last day. If you commit a sin, God does not judge you here and now, in this life. It's at the last day that you have to answer for that sin. And then God will find you guilty, and He will plunge you into hell because of that sin, and for all the other sins that you have committed. And it is that judgment that God covers by Christ's blood. Christ took upon Himself our sins so that we might become the righteousness of God.

But God did not take out of the way the fact that we have to live out our life according to the rules that God has laid down. And the rule that God has laid down is that someone who is divorced is not to remarry. That's simply the rule that God has laid down. Otherwise we would make a shamble of the rules that God has laid down. Then I could argue, "Well, I've murdered somebody, but I shouldn't go to the electric chair because my sins are forgiven; I have been justified by the Lord Jesus Christ." But the fact is, I still have to go to the electric chair.

Here's a drunkard. He's ruined his life through drink. He's got cirrhosis of the liver, his family has left him, and lo and behold, he becomes saved. Because he is saved, he's not going to go to hell. He's not going to be threatened by hell because of the ugly things that developed in his life, together with the sin of drunkenness. But that does not mean that he's not going to die of cirrhosis of the liver. That doesn't mean that now he's going to get his family back, necessarily. He still has to live in this world according to the rules that God has laid down insofar as the way this world goes. That still has to follow through.

And so we can't say, "Well, we can forget those things in the past as if they never happened, and now begin all over again," as some would like to do with divorce and remarriage. The Bible says that a divorced person is not to remarry. And that's transparent as to when he was divorced or when he was saved, or when he was not saved. It's irrelevant. It is simply a rule that God gives to mankind. A divorced person commits adultery if he remarries. That's a rule that stands all by itself, and it is not changed at all by anything else the Bible teaches.

CALLER: Could you please quote me the passage where it says that a divorced person is not to remarry?

HC: Oh, yes. It says, for example, in the Gospel of Mark. We read, "If a woman shall put away her husband and be married to another, she committeth adultery. Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another committeth adultery against her."

Or let me read from Romans 7, just so that we'll get this very clearly before us. In Romans 7 we read in verse 2, "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth. But if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress. But if her husband be dead, she is free from that law so she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man."

CALLER: In the same chapter in Romans Paul says, "For I am speaking to those who know the law." So if somebody has not been aware of the law, and then comes to know the Lord, in the first verse it says, "For I am speaking to those . . ."

HC: Are you saying that ignorance of the law does not make you guilty? If you drove . . . (just to take a case in modern jurisprudence, and our modern jurisprudence is very very close to the Bible in many places) . . . you're driving down the street and a police officer

stops you, and he says, "Lady, do you realize that you just went through a school zone, where you had to slow down to twenty miles-per-hour and you went forty miles-per-hour?" You said, "Officer, I didn't see the sign. I didn't realize it." Do you think that's going to stop him from giving you a ticket?

CALLER: No, I do not.

HC: Of course it isn't. He's going to give you a ticket because you broke the law. If we break the law of God we still stand guilty before that law. Just because we didn't know we broke the law, that doesn't make any difference. We broke the law. And so if someone divorced in ignorance, and I feel just immeasurably compassionate and sorry for these dear folk who are in churches where pastors are encouraging them to divorce their husbands, because their husbands are philandering or doing this or doing that. And I could weep about that. What a terrible thing these wives are being told to do, because they're being told to violate God's rules. But just because they've been told wrongly, that doesn't make the sin any less. They have sinned against God when they divorce their husbands.

CALLER: I know. It just seems somewhat to me, though, that the restriction that you lay down regarding divorce and remarriage, etc., is as though, when somebody divorced before they came to know the Lord, therefore according to you, they cannot remarry, and it's as though some type of a stain was left on them, and that the blood of Christ was not thoroughly cleansing them.

HC: No, you see, you can't go by our own thinking. And just realize, now just realize how grievous this is. Fifty years ago it would have been very very difficult in virtually any denomination or church to find a divorced person. And then the church began to let down the bars, and they decided that yes, in the case of fornication you can divorce. And then in the case of desertion you can divorce, in some churches. And then, oh yes, they were divorced before they were saved, so they can remarry. And so on and so on and so on.

Today we look at the marriage institution, and it is an absolutely shambles. It is screaming out to high heaven for retribution. What is happening? It's simply because this poor person and that poor person, the law of God was just too stringent. Now what everybody fails to realize (and I lay the blame right at the church, because they are the ones that encourage a departure from the law of God, and I'm talking about virtually every denomination, and what they have done is destroyed the family), they fail to realize that God has laid down these very careful laws, so that there would be protection for the family, so that the children would be protected, and the wife would be protected, and the husband would be protected.

But because they felt sorry for some dear soul because she's married to a beast of a husband, or whatever, or because of this or that, they slowly on changed the rules, so that today deacons marry and divorce, pastors marry and divorce. There is no restraint at all. It's just a horrible, horrible mess that has developed. And it all has taken place because man wanted their own sensual desires rather than to be faithful to God.

God did not lay down the rules to hurt us. God laid down the rules to protect us. The very fact that people fifty years ago, when the church did not permit divorce or remarriage after divorce, the only people who divorced went out there, way out on the edge, where they were doing all kinds of other sins, where women were first beginning to smoke cigarettes, like in the movie colonies, and so on. And everybody recognized it as flamboyant, flagrant sin. But a typical citizen of the U.S., even though he was

unsaved, would never think about divorce.

But once the church began to break down the rules, that gave the signal to the unsaved of the world, "Oh, that's all right. We can divorce now, because the church also agrees that we can divorce." And each time the church made the rules more lax, then that gave the signal to the world, you can go further. And so now we not only have a marriage institution that's in a shambles, but we have sexual promiscuity that is making this world, particularly our U.S., look worse than Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now it is true that an individual who got caught in this, and now is divorced, cannot remarry. And I could weep for them that they got caught in this. But on the other side of the coin, if we really have become a child of God, and we read the rest of the Bible, we find that after all, we're only strangers and pilgrims here. We're only just passing through. This earth is not our home. We're looking for eternity, an eternity of bliss with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, to live a single life is not that bad in itself. God explains in 1 Corinthians 7 that there are some very signal advantages in living the single life. There are a lot of extra things that one can do for the Lord if they are not plagued by a husband or a wife. The Bible itself indicates that that creates its own difficulties when you have a husband or a wife.

At issue is, is my will sold out to God? And if God has said I can't marry, fine. I know an individual, for example, who's been divorced in the past and realizes that there can't be a marriage. And he is very happy in the Lord, and being used of the Lord in a tremendous way. I know another individual who has been divorced and can't marry, and can't stand it. And so life becomes miserable. It all depends on whether our will is really sold out to the Lord. But we don't have to try to reconstruct the laws of God based on what makes sense, or what's rational, or whatever. We'd better be as obedient as we can to the Word of God.

CALLER: What do you think is God's greatest attribute? And why?

HC: What is God's greatest attribute? Oh, I don't think I could answer that, to say that God has one greatest attribute. God has revealed Himself as infinitely holy, as infinitely just, merciful, gracious, righteous. All of His attributes are just absolutely outstanding, far beyond our minds to cope with. And I think it would be impossible to say that one is greater than another.

CALLER: Okay, thank you very much for your time.

ON BEING SINGLE

Staying Single and Artificial Insemination (349C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I have a question. Do you think there is anything wrong with artificial insemination for the single female? And the second question is, as far as a Christian single woman living the single life, if she has a desire to marry, do you think that God would keep her single? How does she know that indeed the single life is what God wants for her?

HC: All right. Let me see if we can look at these two questions which are interrelated.

Let's answer the second question first. What does a single person do, as they begin to grow a little older, and they begin to have a desire, a natural desire, to become married? How can they know what God's will is in this kind of a situation?

First of all, we read in the Bible that God, of course, has created us. He put all

of these desires within us. He is the one who designed us. God knows all about us. God indicates in the Bible that there are certain blessings that come with marriage. And one of those blessings, and maybe one of the major blessings is the matter of procreation, the matter of bearing children. The husband and wife are blessed by this.

But the Bible also indicates that there is blessing in being single. Read particularly 1 Corinthians 7. You will find there that God indicates that there are certain definite blessings in remaining single.

Now how can I know what God's will is for my life? The first thing I know is that if I'm going to marry, I must marry someone who is a born again believer. God has laid down the rules in 11 Corinthians 6, that we are not to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. So that immediately means that under no circumstance am I to look in the direction of unsaved people, in thinking about a future husband.

Secondly, I must realize that for me to be married it means that someone has to be interested in me, even as I am interested in them. Marriage is not unilateral. It's a matter of mutual desire for each other. Now there may be a young man who would love to marry me, but I wouldn't want to marry him, for whatever reason. That's perfectly normal. That's my prerogative. Just because he wants to marry me, I don't have to marry him. There may be a whole host of reasons why I don't believe that he is the one that I would want to live the rest of my life with.

On the other hand, there may be somebody that I would like to marry, but he doesn't want to marry me. And so then we know that the mutual relationship that is required for marriage has not occurred as yet. So we continue then to be available. That is, to move in circles. We don't want to go into a room and shut the door and hide away from society. No one's going to know about us there. We're going to move in circles where there may be those whom we can meet out of which we may find a marriage partner. And if no one shows up, wonderful, wonderful. We know that at least to this point in time it is not God's provision that I marry somebody.

If, on the other hand, someone does become interested in me, and I in him, and if he is a born again believer, and he's convinced that I am a born again believer, we date together, we find mutual compatibility in many things, then we know that we have God's blessing upon a marriage. Then we know that it is God who is bringing us together.

CALLER: Until that time period then, there's nothing wrong with praying for a marriage partner, if indeed it's God's will?

HC: We must, in this kind of an instance, of course, pray, "Father, if it is Thy will." We never want our desires in any sense to be superimposed upon the will of God. Now God has a perfect will. God knows exactly what is best for us. We express our desires to Him, but we realize that our desires are tainted by our own sinful thoughts, and so on, realizing that we cannot be perfect in our desires. We therefore entrust this matter altogether to God, by saying, "But Father, Thy will be done."

Now I believe that every marriage, even the marriage of unsaved people, even marriages that are wrong marriages, ultimately were known by God. And God worked out His plan for the human race through our sins, or in spite of our sins, or whatever. I say this because the Bible teaches that those who are saved are chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world.

You referred in your question to artificial insemination. That is contrary to the Word of God, I would feel, for a single

woman to desire artificial insemination. Effectively, you're trying to engage in a marriage prerogative without marriage. You're trying to circumvent what God has established, that a man and a woman are to come together in marriage.

Now just because two people are married, it doesn't mean that God is going to give them children. There are many parents who don't bear children. On the other hand, there are some that God may give quite a number of children to. But as I started to say, those who are to be born again were chosen by God from before the foundations of the earth. Now that's a mind-boggling idea. I think of myself, for example. I am what I am because I had a certain father and a certain mother. And there were only these two people, out of the whole human race, who could have produced what I am. In other words, every human being is unique, aren't we?

And they in turn could only be precisely what they were because they had a certain father and mother. And you can go all the way back to Adam this way, can't you? So that means that if God knew me from before the foundations of the earth, as He knew every born again believer, He knew exactly who our parents were going to be, He knew exactly who our grandparents were, and our great grandparents, and so on, because otherwise I couldn't be me. I would be somebody else.

So this is a great comfort, you see. This emphasizes that in these matters, of marriage and of the bearing of children, we are to rest altogether in the Lord. It's His program. We are just to be available. We are to seek His will. But we are not to insist on our will in any sense. We're simply to be available, knowing that whether we're single or whether we're married, we can have a joyful life serving the Lord.

CALLER: You really tied that in nicely. OK, fine. Thank you.

Some Cautions Concerning Singles Groups (596A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I wonder if you might speak to the singles' situation as it becomes more and more prevalent in our time of divorce, and so on. It seems to me a very important ministry within a church, because there are many who were never married, divorced people, widowed people, but more and more and more divorced in a church. And people, most particular divorced, have hurts of all kinds, and they need the fellowship, and so on, of the church people.

But I also find in singles groups (and I am one of these people) that I see more singles groups involving separated people. Their marriage is not over as far as the legal status is concerned. Would you speak to that?

HC: Yes. You've really put your finger on a very insistent problem that is developing within the church, namely, the whole matter of singles. Now the reason it's a problem is that the church (and I'm speaking very broadly of the church, because this varies to some degree among the various denominations and congregations) as a whole is rewriting the rules of the Bible, to permit divorce under certain circumstances and remarriage under certain circumstances, altogether contrary to what the Bible teaches.

And because they are rewriting the rules to allow all of this, there is a multiplication of divorce and the attendant problems that go with it. Now if a church is very faithfully and very definitely teaching that divorce under no circumstance is in agreement with the Word of God, number one . . . Number two, that once there is a divorce, as long as the other partner is living that there is never to be marriage with another person

but that every attempt ought to be made to reconcile with the first partner as long as that first partner has not remarried, then yes, indeed, to have singles groups, where you can comfort each other and encourage each other in the ways of the Lord and try to find helpful activities as singles, and so on, is all fine.

But unfortunately, to a high degree, singles groups are being developed so that those who are divorced or who are still married but in the process of being divorced can begin to find other partners, that eventually they might marry. And that I believe is an activity in the church that is utterly contrary to the Word of God. That is the tough thing that we're facing today within the church.

Now the Bible lays down these rules not to hurt us, not to isolate us, not to put us in a box where we can't move. But God has laid down the rule concerning divorce and remarriage because God wants the very best for mankind. But when we begin to develop a society where divorce and remarriage is countenanced, then the very basic building block of society has been destroyed, and your whole society is going to fall apart. And we see this to a high degree in our world today, as we look at the broken homes and the sexual promiscuity and all the other ugly things that have arisen out of this kind of thinking. That is the awfulness of this.

Now if a church has a lot of singles, then let those who lead these singles really speak positively and definitely about what the Bible says, that there cannot be remarriage. And if you are divorced and your partner is still single, they should encourage reconciliation, and make every effort to try to achieve that kind of reconciliation. And if it is really taught that no one is to be encouraging anyone else toward a divorce, then I can see that a singles group could be very very helpful, and a real asset to a congregation. But I'm afraid that not too many of them are approached from quite that vantage point.

CALLER: In fact, there are so many. I was brought up in a church which said you are not to be divorced. You are to make every attempt to make this marriage work. And after a long, long marriage it didn't work. And even to this day I am praying for a reconciliation. However, it's over and done with, as far as the courts are concerned. But when the church is saying you must go on and live, that certainly there will be some nice Christian person who will come along, and your life will be fulfilled, I can't seem to answer to this. I can't see how this could be right.

HC: Well, it is not Biblical at all. And it's sad that the church teaches this. I'm afraid it's being taught simply because those who rule in the church are not reading the Bible carefully enough. And long ago, I have seen this in denominations through the last several decades. Step by step the rules are changed, to accommodate to the lusts of mankind, that it's a desirable thing to have divorces in certain situations, and so on, and remarriages in certain situations.

It started out where this was felt just a little bit among some of the less involved members of the congregation. And then it came a little more deeply in the congregation. Now we're at a point where we hear of deacons and elders who divorce, and we hear of pastors who divorce and remarry. And it just is a commentary on the terribly sad spiritual condition of the church today. We have departed so far from the truth.

CALLER: Would there be passages in the Bible that you could outline, or do you have a paper on it, or any tapes? I am already divorced, and my husband is living with someone who is supposed to be a Christian, but they're happy and so that makes it all right. I'd like to be able

to help other people before it's as late as it is for me.

HC: Yes. I don't have any papers to offer. When I went through the I Corinthians study, we got into I Corinthians 7 and there were a number of messages that really related to this question. And if you would like cassettes of I Corinthians 7, you can write in to Family Radio and ask for them, and they will be sent to you. This might be helpful.

CALLER: I Corinthians 7.

HC: Yes, because that whole chapter really deals with the matter of the marriage relationship.

CALLER: I actually became a Christian through seeking advice regarding divorce or settlement, and so on. So it's hard for me to relate to the fact that it isn't right, but I know it isn't right.

HC: The Bible is very clear. In Matthew 19 Jesus said, "What God has joined together let not man put asunder." And in verse 9 He says, "Whoever marries a divorced person commits adultery." And in Romans 7:2 and 3 God indicates that as long as a woman's husband is living, and she marries someone else, then she is an adulteress.

The biblical language is very specific and very clear. The problem is that we're living in a day when man does not want to obey the Bible. He wants to have his own way. He wants to do what he wants to do. And so many study committees have been formed by church leaders, and they have figured out ways to get around the specific language of the Bible and come up with edicts that sound like they're biblical, but really they are not biblical at all.

And they've come to the point where they say, yes, for adultery you can be divorced. Others say, for desertion you can be divorced. And then the next conclusion is that if you've been divorced for these reasons, then you can be married again. And yet all of this is flatly contrary to the Bible.

CALLER: I'm not as concerned about what you just said as when there is a separation or a problem in the marriage, when ministers or religious advisers say, "Well, he's treating you this way, so you don't have to live like that. And you'd better seek legal advice." And all of a sudden you realize that you're going completely opposite from what you really ought to be doing.

HC: You see, the reason that counselors today and pastors today give that kind of advice is that they have already accepted the idea that a divorce is biblical and that you can remarry under certain conditions, and that that is biblical. And so then any situation that seems difficult for a wife or for a husband, they say, "There are better things that you ought to be having." And they begin to encourage separation, which again is flatly contrary to the Bible.

In I Peter 3, God talks about a wife married to an unsaved husband, a husband who might deal very sorely and very badly with that wife. And yet she is to be submissive to him, and through this submission and through the fragrance of Christ as it's shown in her life, perhaps the Lord will provide salvation for this husband. That's the rule that God lays down.

But these things are forgotten, because we live today by our emotions and by our want-to's: "I want to do this," "I want to do that." And if we possibly can find a book somewhere or a pastor somewhere who will agree with our want-to's, then we feel we have biblical sanction for what we're doing. And this is very sad.

CALLER: Now once a person is in that position, and they look back and see the wrong of what they have done, what do you suggest?

HC: Well, the wonderful thing about sin is that, or let's put it the other way. The wonderful thing about salvation is that regardless of how sinful we have lived,

regardless of all the terrible things we have done, we can have total forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 14 – PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

WITNESSING

The Cultural Impact of the Gospel Witness (142B)

CALLER: I'm taking Anthropology now, and I thought that would be a good chance for me to be a witness for Christ, seeing as how they're talking about religion, and so on. But I can see already, as you were saying once, that so many people are antagonistic to the Gospel that they really couldn't care less.

But the other day they were talking about Americans thinking that our culture is better or supersedes others. And I think they were trying to use it in relationship to what we teach, when we go over there. And I wondered how that relates to the Gospel. We're told by Christ, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel." But when we go, how much of our own culture is supposed to rub off on the people? Are we supposed to just go over there and be neutral about the way that they live?

HC: The question is, when we bring the Gospel, just what part of that person's life is it to relate to? Our answer, of course, comes from the Bible. The Gospel has to do with the spirit of man. It has to do with his obedience to God. Now if he is living in a way that is breaking God's rules, then the Gospel is going to have an impact upon his life, upon whatever department of his life in which he is breaking God's rules.

Let's use an outlandish example. If you go down to some tribe of headhunters somewhere, where they are murdering each other, then they have to give up murdering each other if they accept the Gospel, even though they may think that this culturally acceptable, to eat the flesh of other humans. But once they become saved, that practice has to go.

But on the other hand, if they have a practice of living in a grass house, up on stilts, the Bible is silent concerning that. They can be just as God-glorifying Christians in a grass house on stilts as they can in a Western house of some kind.

CALLER: So in other words, even though we're to go there and bring the Gospel to them, we really shouldn't be concerned about, for instance, whether they become capitalists or not. You know, a lot of people want to go over there, and they want to change their whole system of things. And I was wondering if we should have kind of a "hands off" policy about that.

HC: I don't think we are going there to mold them into our ways. Our ways may not necessarily be better than their ways. We are there to bring them the Gospel so that they might have eternal life. And if they're starving, we may bring them some food. If they are dying of disease, we may teach them something about medicine, to help them. Or we may teach them some farming practices, if we think that this will keep them from starving.

But the main goal is to simply bring the Gospel. And certainly we're not there to change their culture.

CALLER: Thank you, I appreciate it. I'm happy to talk with you again.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Witnessing in the Workplace (222B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Brother Camping. I'd like to share a situation with you and take any answers or suggestions you might have over the phone.

I'm an employee with a large multi-million dollar financial type institution, in a supervisory capacity. Consequently, I have twelve or fifteen people under me. And my question, basically, is this. How much should Christians proclaim the plan of salvation, their Christianity?

Specifically, I have abided by the policies of the particular corporation I work for, and have honored them. At the same time, I really feel rather miserable if I'm not totally given in to God. Incidentally, I have surrendered to the ministry and am going to Bible college at night. I do not seek out people, or preach to them, or tell them that certain lifestyles are wrong, and so on and so forth. I do pray, and have asked for opportunities to witness and to share my faith. People consequently have come to me, and I have explained the plan of salvation to them, and have told them what I felt they needed, which was simply Jesus Christ.

The reason I'm asking this is that I was approached by my supervisor, who told me (incidentally, he professes to be a Christian, at least a church member) that religion was not to be discussed or talked about. I would like to take your answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. Good night.

We have a very practical question: How can I conduct myself as a born again believer when I work in a very secular institution, a factory or a business, and am under the rules of the company?

First of all, during the hours when you are paid a salary, your first responsibility, of course, is to do the work of the company. And I'm sure our caller understands this entirely. If you would spend time witnessing to others during this time, when they should be working and you should be working, you are really stealing company time that doesn't belong to you. This is not time allocated for witnessing.

Now that's a very important factor. And many believers feel, "Well, we should witness any time." But when we are being paid for our services, we are not called upon to witness during that time. Now if you happen to work for a Christian employer, and he is willing to let us witness to others during the period that we are being paid, well, fine. He is actually paying us as we spend time witnessing. But if our employer does not include that in the company policy, then we should not do it.

There are two areas that we particularly have to be careful about as we are spending company time. First of all, we want to make sure that we are as obedient as possible to all of the rules that are laid down for us, as long as those rules do not conflict with God's rules. If our superior would ask us to lie, if our superior would ask us to steal (and these things are very possible in today's day and age), then we would have to say, "No, I'm sorry. I can't do that." Now we might risk losing our job. But we would have to take that risk, because we must be faithful to God's rules.

Secondly, we want to show the fragrance of Christ as stress situations develop. One of the differences that show up in the life of the born again believer, from that of an unsaved person, is in times of stress. Some people show where they belong when things are going very well. And we can tell very quickly where they belong by the language they use, swearing and cursing. A born again believer, of course, would have nothing to do with that. Or, there are those who are always telling off-color jokes and dirty stories, and so on. A born again believer would have nothing to do with

that.

But on the other hand, you could have an unsaved man in the company, who ordinarily doesn't swear and lives a clean, moral life. How am I different from him? I'm a born again believer. Well, it's in times of stress that it particularly shows up, when the pressure is on, when we've been ill-treated, when someone has really done a nasty thing to us. Now the differences begin to shine. If we're not saved, we're going to react like the world. We're going to lash back. We're going to murmur. We're going to complain. We didn't get the salary raise. We have terrible working conditions, and so on, and so on. . . . murmur, murmur, murmur, complain. This is what the world does.

But as a born again believer, we are patient. We are the fragrance of Christ. When we are reviled, we revile not again. And it's in this place that we're really going to be witnesses with our lives, even though we're never saying anything. And incidentally, if you believe you're a Christian and someone working in the company with you does something dirty to you, and you feel that you have been offended, and you find that anger is right there and you're ready to lash out, and you do, and you complain to everybody who will listen, and this thing goes on and on, and you have bitterness in your heart, then you'd better start asking yourself, "How do I relate to Christ? Am I really born again? Maybe I'm not born again at all. Maybe I just thought I was, because how can I live this way? How can I react this way? There's something deadly wrong in my life."

Now more than that, as a born again believer working in this employ, you're going to be sensitive to the needs of others. And you may sense that there's another person over there who has a particular trouble. And maybe during the coffee break, or at lunchtime, you'll try to become acquainted, and see if you can't very quietly be of some help. Now at lunchtime, when you're on your own, when you're not employed at that particular moment, you are free to witness. You are free to invite someone to your home to witness to them. But during working hours, you have to keep your nose on the grindstone, so to speak. You have to be faithful to your employer, because he's paying you to do work for him, not to witness.

But even while you're working for him, you can be doing it in a way that shows the fragrance of Christ, as you react to stress, as you make sure that you are obedient to God rather than to your employer, if your employer is asking you to do something sinful.

Well, that's just a bare outline of a good subject. I hope it will help you a little bit.

Witnessing and the School Teacher (243A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I'm preparing to get a credential in Elementary Education. And as far as far as I know, I would like to teach in an urban setting in a public school. And I am a new Christian. And I was wondering, during the time that a teacher has the responsibility of teaching all the various subjects, like Math, Reading, and so forth, how can a Christian elementary school teacher be a witness, without preaching? Because I know that the Education Code has very strict laws regarding the teaching of religion in class. I'm not clear what they are. And I'd like some suggestions on your part.

HC: I am not familiar with all the codes, either. But I would say this, to make a couple of general statements. First of all, in your department as a teacher, as you stand in front of the class, you are the fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. And as you are diligent, as you are tender, as

you are kind, as you, in your relationship with the other teachers, show no jealousy, that you show no vindictiveness, that you show obedience to the School Superintendent, and all of these things, without saying a word you can be the fragrance of Christ.

Secondly, you can become very concerned about your students. You may see a student that seems troubled. And perhaps at recess time, or during lunch hour, or some time when you're not teaching, you can talk to this student in confidence and see if you can help. "Is there something troubling you?" Perhaps it is a home situation, or whatever. And then you can at that time very gently begin to witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, because you aren't in a classroom situation then.

And I think certainly in your teaching you can emphasize your own trust in Christ, that you have found that as far as you are concerned, you want to live to God's glory, and that you believe that the Bible is the Word of God, without telling the children, "You also must believe this." I'm wondering if that could be faulted in any way.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you so much for sharing that good question.

How Do You Witness the Gospel? (244C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I was wondering what kind of approach you're to use when sending out the Gospel. What exactly are you supposed to say? I know that there's different ways of approaching. In other words, I know that God is a God of love, and God loves us. And you were saying that we are under God's condemnation, that is, the unbelievers. I remember that you had said something about the fact that this approach of saying that God is a God of love, is something you didn't quite understand.

HC: Well, let me ask you. If someone was in a burning building, and you knew that at any moment the floor was going to collapse, and they would be plunged to their death, and you came to talk to them to show them the way of escape, what would you start talking about? Would you start talking about, "You know, we're having a picnic this afternoon and I'd surely like to invite you to the picnic." Would you start talking that way? No. You'd say "Hey! You're in trouble! The floor is going to collapse any minute, and you've got to get out of here. You're on the threshold of death." That's how you'd talk, wouldn't you?

All right. When Jonah came to Nineveh, he had the knowledge that in forty days God was going to destroy Nineveh. What did he talk to them about? Did he come there and say, "People of Nineveh, God loves you, and He has a wonderful plan for your life. And He's just waiting for you to come to Him." Did he talk like that? No. What did he say? He said, "Repent." He said, "Repent, because God's judgment is upon you."

Now you see, we first of all must be absolutely honest when we bring the Gospel. Now there's a fantastic desire on our part to sell Christ. Now if I was selling vacuum cleaners, or anything else, I would be tempted to put everything into superlatives, wouldn't I? And I certainly wouldn't accent the bad things that I knew about my vacuum cleaners. I certainly wouldn't point those out. At least I would be sorely tempted not to do that. I would try to just point out all the good things, and make it as palatable as possible in order to make that sale.

Now this is what most of us do when we are presenting the Gospel. We want to create a climate of good will and happiness. And so we want to accent

nice things, all the attractive features of the Gospel.

But the Bible doesn't come on that way. The Bible has ugly things to say. The fact is, this idea that God loves you is foreign to the Bible. If you read Psalm 5 (and we have to be honest), in verse 5 God says, "The boastful may not stand before Thy eyes. Thou hatest all evildoers." Well now, that's pretty rough, isn't it? "Thou hatest all evildoers." And in Psalm 11:5, "The Lord tests the righteous, but the wicked and him that loves violence, His soul hates. On the wicked He will reign coals of fire and brimstone. A scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup." Now if we're going to be honest, we have to come to someone and first of all tell him where he stands in relationship to God. We can't concoct our own salvation. We have to be faithful to the whole counsel of God.

The fact is, how can we really tell someone he ought to be saved, if we don't first of all tell him what he has to be saved from? This is the thing that's a mystery to me. If I go to someone who is an unsaved man, living his wicked life, and I say, "You know, God loves you" . . . "Well, isn't that nice? God loves me. What else?" . . . "Well, He's got a program for you. And you know, I want to tell you about the Lord Jesus Christ" . . . "Well, tell me about that. God loves me. I would like to be identified with this Lord Jesus Christ."

And so I can become identified, and yet I can still continue to be the kind of a person I am to a high degree, because God loves me as I am. You see, what am I being saved from? "Oh well, you're going to be saved from your misery, your loneliness. You'll have a purpose in your life" . . . "Well, that's good. That's good. I would like to have a friend that I can count on, because so many of my human friends are just not trustworthy. And yes, I have to admit I've been kind of running around in circles, and it would be really great to have a purpose in my life."

But is that salvation? That isn't salvation at all, is it? Salvation is to be saved from sin. This is what salvation is. Salvation is to recognize the dismal, the awful truth that I'm a sinner, and I'm under the wrath of God. And God is going to pour out His anger on me, because I am a reproach to Him. I am the wicked one. I'm at war with God. I'm in rebellion against God. And I'm in trouble. God created me, and I've rebelled against Him, and I deserve His hatred. I deserve His wrath. And what am I going to do now? What am I going to do? I'm going to be destroyed eternally because of my sins.

Well, now, now God has something wonderful to say to you. You can know the love of God. You can know how to be reconciled with God, if you'll trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, God made provision for those who will believe in Christ, that they can have their sins already paid for. They can go into Heaven without ever having to face the Judgment Throne. Now that's something worthwhile talking about, isn't it?

CALLER: Okay, I know that. But my main question is, how do you approach other people? Sometimes I find that I have difficulty talking to different people, using different ways to talk to them about the Word of God.

HC: Your question really is, How can I open up the conversation? How can I get into the matter of speaking to someone?

It's going to depend entirely on the situation. I would think, first of all, as a prerequisite, we ought to be praying much for opportunity to witness. It is God's work that we are doing. We're not doing it in our own strength, or in the flesh. And God has to set up the opportunities. And we have to be sensitive to opportunities.

Secondly, it is going to depend on the situation. If you're talking to someone,

you can start talking about the weather. "Oh my, isn't it a warm day!" And from there you can say, "You know, one thing I've learned is that there is a God in Heaven who controls the weather. He is the one who upholds the universe by His power. When men complain about the weather, really, effectively, they're complaining to God." Well, that will be kind of shocking thing to this person. And he may not be interested at all in talking about God. He begins to sense what's coming. And the Bible says, "Don't cast your pearls before swine." We don't have to force the Gospel on someone. If they mock the Gospel, or if they turn a deaf ear to it, we turn and go to someone else.

But they may sense that you want to talk about God, and the door opens up a little bit. And then you can say, "You know, God has a lot more things to say in the Bible. And one of the terrible things I've discovered is that the whole human race are sinners, that all of us are under the wrath of God. Have you ever thought about that?" And now you're right into the whole message of salvation.

Or you might be talking with somebody, and maybe you've just read in the newspaper about a tragedy, where someone has died, or where there has been a holocaust of some kind. And you can start talking to someone about that newspaper article. And then say, "You know, there's a tragedy facing mankind that's infinitely worse than that. I've been studying the Bible" . . . [You notice you should always go back to the Word of God because it is your authority. It isn't what you think. It's what the Bible says]. . . "I've been studying the Bible, and I discover that the whole human race is headed for a terrible tragedy. And that is because man was created by God."

In other words, there are many many different lines that you can start out with. You can talk about the fact that people are worried about what's going on in the world. What does the future hold? And it's very simple then to simply turn that conversation to saying, "You know, there's one in the universe who knows about the future, and that is God. And I've been studying the Bible, and I discover that God indeed has got some very definite things for the future. And they're not good for the human race. The wars that we're hearing about, and the threat of nuclear war, and all this, are child's play, compared with what the world really has to face." And then again you can go right into the condemnation that is upon man.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you.

Witnessing to Children — The "Little Ones" in Matthew 18:14 (247A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I have a question concerning children. I do child evangelism work. On the basis of Matthew 18:14, what do you think of that message? Secondly, assume that you went to a village and there were ten children there, and you saw those children, and you knew that you never would pass that way again. What would you do about their salvation? I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you.

Let's answer the second question first. Suppose that you came to a village, and there were ten children, and this is the only time that you would ever be able to be with them. What would you try to do concerning their salvation?

Of course the first thing that you would do would be to begin to pray that God would give you wisdom, and that God would give you an open door to speak with them. These children might be so occupied with their play, with their preoccupation with the things they are doing, they don't even want to listen to

you. So first of all, you have to pray that God might bring their attention to what you have to say.

Secondly, as you pray, you want to pray that what word you brought to them would be applied to their heart by the Holy Spirit, by God the Holy Spirit. We have the promise that God's Word will not return void, but it will accomplish the purpose for which it was sent. And so you would also beseech the Lord that His purpose in this case might not be the purpose of judgment, not be the purpose of a savor of death unto death, but that it might be a savor of life unto life.

And so then you would begin to look for opportunity to speak with these children. Now the message of salvation is one.

There's not one message of salvation for adults and another for youngsters. There's not one message of salvation for people with an intellectual mind and another for someone else. When we read the Bible, we find that God has one Gospel, and that Gospel is that we are in trouble with God. We are sinners.

And we can talk to children about sin. They know that there is wrongdoing. And they know about punishment. They know about justice. They know that if someone has done wrong, then there has to be punishment. And so, of course using language that they can understand, we can tell them about the fact that all men are sinners, and that there is a God in Heaven. And of course even before we begin talking about sin, it might be well to talk about God in Heaven. And that is easily a conversation opener, as we make reference to the beautiful flowers in the garden or the fragrance of the roses that are nearby, or the song of the bird that is singing in the trees, or any other object that reveals the glorious God in creation.

And from there we can go into the fact that God created man too, and that man has rebelled against God, that man is a sinner. And these children can know this, when you see how often you disobey your parents, how you feel anger in your heart when your mother asks you to help with the dishes, and what have you.

Now the Bible gives very solemn truth concerning this. It says that we must be punished for our sins. And this is something that is a terrible thing. But there is a way that you can know the love of God. There is a way that you can really pass up any kind of punishment for your sins, and that is if you'll place your trust in the wonderful Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. And then you can begin to talk about how God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Now I'm not sure that you would have the attention of all ten children throughout this lengthy discourse. There might be one or two who really become eager, who really are listening with rapt attention. There might be more than one or two. And you will really sense that the Word of God perhaps has found root somehow in the hearts of these youngsters.

Now concerning Matthew 18:14, if we read this and isolate it from the rest of the Bible, which is a typical thing that we do if we're not reading the Bible carefully, we would arrive at the conclusion that every little one is going to be saved, because it says here, "It is not the will of My Father who is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Now that says very plainly that it's God's program that every child be saved.

Now immediately, however, having said that, we sense that that cannot be the full story, because we look all around and we see people who are grown, and they're not saved. In fact, most of our friends, and most of the people around us, are not saved. And they were all once babies. There isn't a man living today that didn't start out as a baby.

Also we have learned, as we've studied the Bible, that once we are a child of God, once we are born again, once we have eternal life (and all of this is required in order to be saved, in order to be right with God, in order to go to Heaven), then we will never perish. We have eternal life. And so we immediately sense, "Boy, there has to be another meaning to this. It can't mean that, that it's God's program that every little one is going to go to Heaven, because then all the grown people would be saved, because once we are born again we can't lose that salvation."

But even if we didn't think of that, we still must examine this in the light of the context. And when we just look at the context, we find that God isn't really talking about little children. He's not talking about physical babies. We go back to verse 1 of Matthew 18: "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?'" Now that's the question Christ is going to answer in these first 14 verses. "And calling to Him a child, He put him in the midst of them and said, 'Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children . . .'" In other words, He's making the child the parable, if you will. He's making the child the historical fact, but he's using that child as an illustration of the way we must become in order to be born again, the same as He healed the blind man. Even though He healed the blind man of a physical ailment, He's showing by this the fact that God has the power to heal us of our spiritual blindness. There is the salvation side of the story that is being unfolded when God does a miracle.

Now here, too. Here is the physical side of the story. Here is a little child, sitting on Jesus' lap, or standing there in the midst of the disciples. And now Christ is going to unfold the spiritual story, the salvation aspect of this physical demonstration. And He says, "Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you shall never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."

And so now He is saying, therefore, that anyone who is to become born again must be like a child. That is, even as the child has a naive trust in his parents, he has a wide eyed astonishment at the creation of the world all around him, he is simple in his beliefs, and so on, so we spiritually are to have a naive, child-like trust in God. We are to have wide-eyed astonishment in our eyes as we see the wonders of God's love, of His saving love. We are to walk humbly and simply before God, even as a child does. A child knows he's a child, and does not put on airs. He does not ordinarily try to arrogate for himself the standing of an adult. But he is a very humble personality, as compared with people in general.

And so it is as a born again believer. We must be humble. We must walk humbly, with that child-like trust. And so now He goes on in verse 5, and says, "Whoever receives one such child in My Name receives Me." Now He's talking about those who become born again believers. He's not talking about physical children now, although they can be included. They too can be saved. But the focal point has shifted very quickly from this child to the born again believer, who must be like a child. "Whoever receives one such child in My Name receives Me. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

In other words, make sure that if you are teaching those who are children of God, those who are born again believers, make sure that you are teaching Bible truth. Otherwise you're going to have to do some reckoning with God.

And finally, let's go down to verse 10: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones." Which little ones? Well, the born again believers, those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, regardless of whether they're young or old. "For I tell you that in Heaven their angels always behold the face of My Father who is in Heaven." In other words, this is picking up the story of Psalm 91, that He gives His angels charge over us.

Now notice how in verse 12 God very neatly emphasizes again that He's talking about born again believers, because now He goes on and says, "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them is gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go in search of the one that went astray? If he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of My Father who is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish." You see? He's talking about the whole message of salvation. The lost sheep is anyone who is becoming born again. And these are the little ones that Christ came to seek and to save. God has chosen us in Christ from before the foundations of the world, and it's not His will that we are to perish. He is going to seek for us, and He's going to find us.

I'm reminded of Ezekiel 34, where God said in verse 15, "I Myself will be the Shepherd of My sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled. And I will strengthen the weak. And the fat and the strong I will watch over. I will feed them in justice."

Thank you so much for that call.

Witnessing to the Terminally Ill (249A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I was wondering if you could help me with a problem I've been having. I'm a nurse, and I occasionally run into patients in the hospital who tend to blame God for their condition. Just today a doctor told a lady that she had a terminal illness, and her reply was, "Why did God allow this terrible thing to happen to me?" And I was wondering, What would be the best thing to say to people like this?

HC: Well, if I was talking to someone with a terminal illness (and actually that would include everyone, wouldn't it? - we're all going to die), I would certainly try to bring the conversation around to talk about eternity, and talk about God, who created us, and tell this person, "You know, very quickly now you're going to have to face God. And are you ready to face Him?" "Well, what do you mean by that?" Well, then you can start very simply to talk about the fact that the human race is under the wrath of God because of their sins. But God has provided a marvelous way to know the love of God, and to guarantee for us eternal life, eternal happiness and bliss, if we'll only recognize our sinful condition and cry out to God for mercy, and trust in Christ as our Savior and Lord.

You see, someone with a terminal illness is struggling with her disease. She is fearful as can be of what might come, and rightly so, because eternity is pressing upon her. And she must not be denied the knowledge that there is a way of escape, that there is a way where the future can look more bright than anything this world has ever held for her. But in order to achieve that bright and glorious future, there has to be a firm and honest recognition of where she is now, that she's under the wrath of God because of her sins, as the whole human race is.

CALLER: That's really beautiful. Okay. Thank you.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

On Being a Christian in the Workplace (318A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: What do you do when your boss tells you, "It's all right for you to think about Jesus when you're off the job," but he doesn't want you to do a thing about evangelism when you're on the job? I don't feel personally that I can honor the request of the boss because I feel that Christ must come first in my life, regardless of who says what.

HC: That's a good question. I'm glad you raised that, because Christians very frequently think they are doing something God-glorifying when they are actually doing something sinful in this regard. I'll be glad to answer your question.

The question is raised, and, it's a very practical question, how am I to practice the presence of Christ on the job, when the boss says, "You can think about Jesus on your lunch hour, or when you go home, but you forget about Him when you're on the job."

The reason this is a practical question is this. A lot of times we as Christians fail to realize that when we are on the job, when we are working for someone else, our time at that time belongs to our employer. It is God's program that we are to honor the requests of our employer during that time.

Now don't jump to the wrong conclusion. When the employer requests that we're not to think about Christ, it doesn't mean that. That would be disobedient to the Bible. But let's suppose that you're on the job, and your friend, whom you're working with, or the fellow that you're working with, during the working hours says to you, "You know, I'm having a real problem with a sin in my life. Can you help me?" The temptation at that point is to stop your job and witness to him of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that may not be, because your time is being paid for to do the work for your boss.

The proper reply should be, "I would be delighted to. How about eating lunch with me tomorrow? Or how about coming over to my home tonight so that we can really visit over this?" Then on your own time you can really unfold the riches of the grace of God. But on company time, no, no. That's not time to do your witnessing. You're not paid for this. Now if it's your own business and you don't have an employer that you're working for, fine. Then you can do it during company time. But if you're an employee, then do your witnessing during lunch hour and after working hours.

This however doesn't mean that you have to live like the world does while you're working. You can still witness, but you're witnessing without taking time off from the job. What do I mean by that? You see, as a Christian our life ought to be the fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's suppose that you're on the job and an incident arises where maybe the boss comes to you and says, "Say, 'so and so' said that you . . ." and he accuses you of some bad workmanship, let's say, for the sake of this discussion. As an unsaved man you probably would lash out in anger. "What do you mean? What's he talking about? I wouldn't have done anything like that." And away you would have gone.

As a Christian you however walk very humbly. As a Christian, when you're reviled you revile not again. And so your reaction to this accusation is going to be altogether different. It is going to be a reaction that will manifest the fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. You're going to answer very humbly, very mildly, very tenderly. "Perhaps he has misunderstood. Shall we examine the work that I have

done and see if there is any truth in it? If I'm wrong, then I don't mind being corrected." And so on.

Or perhaps there is a time on the job when extra labor is required. And because you're a Christian, you're going to be the one that is going to work the hardest. I really believe that in any company those who are the born again believers ought to be the finest employees, the most zealous, the most loyal, the hardest workers of anyone else, because they're working to please God ultimately rather than their employer.

In our reaction to problems on the job, in our reaction to work loads, in our diligence, in all of these things, we're going to be the fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we're witnessing all the time with our life. But insofar as taking time to stop working for our employer during working hours in order to witness about the Lord Jesus Christ to someone, that can't be. You can't take company time to do that. You should wait until after working hours. Then you won't be stealing from your boss.

Some people operate, and they do this unconsciously, under the theory that the end justifies the means. What verse in the Bible is that? Well, that's not found in the Bible. In other words, if the end is God-glorifying enough, then the means by which it is accomplished don't necessarily have to be God-glorifying. And the case in point here would be, it is a God-glorifying ideal to be realized to witness to someone in their distress of the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ, even though I have to steal company time to do it. The end is so God-glorifying that it justifies the means.

I believe with all my heart that if the means are not God-glorifying, the end won't be God-glorifying, either. If we're really going to achieve and strive for an end that is God-glorifying, then by all means let's make certain that the means we employ to arrive there are also God-glorifying.

While we're working on the job we owe our time to our employer. Therefore, if the opportunity for witnessing arises, whereby we would have to stop work, all we have to do is make sure that we remember we've got lots of hours when we're not working. Most of us don't work more than forty hours or so on the job. There are many hours that are our own.

The interesting thing is that very frequently we are ready to spend time witnessing on the job, but we wouldn't think of spending a whole evening to invite someone over. Oh, many of us would, of course. Of course many would. But we may have a ball game tonight, you know, to go to, or something else that we've really longed to do. We see our fellow employee in great need, and he wants to hear the Gospel right now. So we're willing to take company time, but we're not willing to forego some pleasure that we might have outlined for the evening. And so instead we take the company time.

The rule should be that no, we can't do it on company time. We owe that to the employer. But we have this evening when we have a program lined out for our own pleasure. I can forego that. I control that. I'm willing to lay down my life for my friend, and spend my time with my friend tonight.

A Guide to Witnessing (563A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I was just listening to what you said about witnessing to others. You kind of got me worried. When I witness to others, I try to give them the plan of salvation, and I try to explain to them that we have to receive Jesus Christ into our hearts, and believe that God raised Him from the dead, so we shall be saved. And I don't know if I'm right when I tell them that here we make our Heaven or our hell.

Either we accept it here, or we don't, because after we die we're just dead. If we accept Jesus Christ here and try to live the ways of the Lord, I believe we have to try to bring the Gospel to others and help others understand how to receive Jesus within their hearts. But I'd appreciate it very much if you would help me.

HC: At this point what you said begins to make sense, but you haven't answered the big question. And maybe we could talk about this a little bit together. When you tell somebody to receive Christ or to turn their life over to Christ, why do they have to do this? In other words, are you telling them what their predicament is, why they must do this? Is it just that they're going to be dead and they can't go to Heaven if they don't do this? The word is salvation, and what does the word salvation mean? It means that we have been saved. Saved from what?

CALLER: Hell.

HC: From hell. All right. In other words, the way we have to present the Gospel, and the Biblical way, is that first of all we have to indicate that the Bible teaches that all mankind is a sinner. We are sinners, and there is none righteous, no, not one. There's no one that does any good. I don't care how nice a person is, no matter how nobly they have been living, no matter how decent moral lives they have lived. In God's sight every human being is a sinner. They violate the laws of God, and God indicates that they are going to hell. They're going to come into judgment, to answer for their sins, and they're going to be cast into hell to spend eternity there.

Now that lays the foundation as to why we need a Savior. And that's the first point we must get across, that the Bible teaches that we're in a terrible situation, an awful situation. The second thing we have to tell them, I think, is that there's no way out of this predicament by ourselves. We can try to live a good life, we can be noble in our every thought and action, we can read the Bible and try to obey every Commandment. And none of this is going to get us out of hell or out of God's judgment, because every little sin that we commit condemns us afresh and is going to send us to hell anyway.

Now these are bitter pills for people to swallow. And a lot of people by now have turned their hearing aid off, they've changed the subject, they don't want to hear anymore, because this is very unpalatable. It's very unacceptable. But nevertheless this is what the Bible teaches, and we have to begin where we are.

But then comes the good news. We can know the love of God. God has provided a way of escape from this hell, from the damnation that we so rightly should have. And we can know the love of God by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Now notice I didn't say accepting the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't really accept Him. We believe on Him. God is the one who accepts us. He is the one who takes us as His children. We do not accept God. That puts the authority in the wrong place. We believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Now to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is to come to that point where, in our fear, in our trauma, in our consternation, we cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me. I'm a sinner. And I want to trust in Jesus as my Savior. I understand that somehow He paid for the sins of those who believe on Him. And I want to hang my whole life on the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in Him as my Savior and Lord."

And if a person really means business with this, if he really does trust in Christ, then he will repent of his sins. He won't want to sin anymore. And he will have an earnest desire to know more about this Savior, and he'll begin to ask all kinds of questions of the Bible, and so on. This I believe is presenting the whole counsel of God. Then a person knows

what he's saved from. He's saved from the wrath of God because Christ has come to be his substitute, or to take his place in bearing the wrath of God for his sins.

CALLER: In other words, if I start speaking to them about the Lord, I can't lie to them. I tell them we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, all of us. I say that the only way that we can get out of this predicament, ourselves we can't do anything so we have to believe in the Lord. We have to believe in Christ because He died for us. And if we do not believe this way, then we're going to be damned, and to begin with, we're damned already. The only way we can come out of this is to go before God and believe that Christ died for our sins.

HC: That He is the one who, yes, and to die for our sins means that He endured the wrath of God that we should have had. In other words, when He went to the cross it was as if He spent an eternity in hell on our behalf. You're on the right track now, I believe.

CALLER: Is it wrong if I tell them that if we do not believe the ways of the Lord we're going to be damned to burn in the fire?

HC: You can put it this way. If you don't want to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, then you have to give an account of your life to God on the last day, on Judgment Day. And if sin is found in you, and there will be sin found in you because every man is a sinner, you then will have to pay for your sins on your own behalf, and God will put you in hell eternally so that you can pay for your sins.

And so we have to make a choice. We either have to trust in God, trust in Christ as our sin-bearer, as the one who has paid for our sins, or if we don't want to trust in Him, then we have to pay for our sins by ourselves and spend eternity in hell doing it.

CALLER: Thank you, Brother Camping.

HC: You're welcome. And may God bless you as you reach out to witness to others.

Are We Accountable For Not Witnessing? (564A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: If we fail to witness to someone, and he dies unsaved, will his blood be upon our hands?

HC: The question is raised, if somebody dies, let's say somebody came into our life, and we had opportunity to witness to that person, but for some reason we did not witness to that person, and then that person died. Would that person's blood be upon us?

The question is raised on the basis of what we read in Ezekiel 3, for example. In Ezekiel 3:17 we have this: "Son of man (God is talking to Ezekiel, who is a prophet of God), I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. Therefore hear the word of My mouth and give them warning from Me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity. But his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked and he turn not from his wickedness nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul."

Now I think that is the reference that is in view here. Actually, if we are an unsaved pastor (and there are unsaved pastors), if we are an unsaved Christian (and there are many, unsaved Christians), we may be attempting to witness, or we may not be attempting to witness. But the likelihood is that we will not bring the whole counsel of God.

I think, for example, of a lot of the

Gospel witnessing today, and it really scares me. Gospel witnessing that emphasizes the love of God, and that's perfectly acceptable, but never emphasizes the wrath of God or the judgments of God, or hell and damnation. Every attempt is made to make the Christian life as palatable, as acceptable, as enticing as possible. The idea is, we are salesmen for Christ and we are trying to get as many names on the dotted line as we can. And therefore we don't want to emphasize the negative, we want to emphasize the positive.

And as a consequence we are not warning of hell and damnation. We are simply getting people excited about the idea that they too can get on the bandwagon for Christ. But when they're on the bandwagon, when they say they're saved, they really don't know what they're saved from. And these people are going to die in their unsaved condition, that is, these who have been witnessed to, because they have never been told what the true Gospel really is. And those who have brought this kind of a Gospel indicate they don't know what the true Gospel is, either. And so they have been blind leaders of the blind. They have given stones for bread. And the wrath of God will be visited upon them as an additional punishment, because they have led these others astray. That I think is what's in view.

Now if we're truly a born again believer, and this is going to sound a little awesome, and it's something that, let's see if I can put it correctly. I hope I can. But the fact is, if we're truly a born again believer, we will be compelled within our soul to try to be as accurate in our Gospel offer as we possibly can, because we have a high regard for the holiness of God, the holiness of the Word of God. And under no circumstance do we want to sugar coat the pill if the Bible will not allow us to. We have a clear indication of what we are saved from, that we are saved from eternal damnation. And so we don't hesitate to tell those to whom we are witnessing that they are subject to hell unless they turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the nature of being born again. We want to be, one of the characteristics of being born again is that we want to obey the law of God or the commandments of Christ. And that would indicate then that in our witnessing we will want to be as faithful as possible. We will be disturbed in our soul if we discover that we've been exaggerating, that we've been emphasizing an aspect, let's say the love aspect, to the detriment of the wrath of God aspect.

Now obviously, if we're bringing the whole counsel of God, we're going to talk about the love of God just as much as the wrath of God. But by the same token, we're going to talk about the wrath of God just as much as the love of God. If we're really honest before the Lord as we read the scriptures and then share this with others, this is going to come out. And if you would like to check this out, read the Bible. And start keeping count of the verses that talk about the wrath of God, and keep keeping count of the verses that talk about the love of God. And you're going to find that there are at least as many verses talking about the wrath of God as the love of God and maybe a lot more.

Now if as a born again believer we meet somebody, and we kind of feel that yes, I ought to witness to this person, but the situation doesn't open up and we don't, and the next thing we hear, that person died, is his blood upon us? No. No, not a bit. We didn't take the opportunity to witness to that person, but in our life we are witnessing to people. We aren't able to seize every last opportunity. Sometimes the door isn't opened. Sometimes the conditions aren't right. Sometimes we aren't prepared. But that is not what God is talking about here.

What God is talking about here is someone who comes as a prophet. Remember, "Ye are the watchmen." You are recognized as the watchmen. You have a duty to warn. And therefore, if you just give good tidings and don't give the rest of the story, that the enemy is coming, and then city is taken, then their blood is upon you.

And so the moment you begin to witness, then you have declared yourself as the watchman. At that point the question arises, how am I going to witness? Now I have declared myself. I am the watchman on behalf of this person. Do I dare bring less than the whole counsel of God? That I think is the point that has to be made right now.

Witnessing to a Person of Another Religion (645B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Brother Camping. Today I was witnessing to my employer, and I ran into somewhat of a problem in that after relating to him personal experiences of what it was like to be a Christian, and he was responding by saying, "Yes, I have the same thing in my religion," finally I pinned him down and asked him, "What exactly is your religion? What is it that you believe in? What's your salvation program?" He related to me that he believes in the Jain religion, which is an Eastern belief. And so I asked him, "What is the program for salvation? Is there a man? According to my religion, the only way to get to Heaven, the only way to gain entrance, is through Jesus Christ." And he said, "Jesus Christ was one of many." He said that there were fifty-six, according to his religion. This is a form of reincarnation that he's relating and which he believes in. And he says that there were fifty-six Christs who came to the earth. Now immediately there was a conflict, and I told him that I didn't want to argue; that wasn't my point. The only thing I was trying to do was to make sure that he heard the Word, that according to the scripture that there was only the one way to get into Heaven, and that was through Jesus Christ.

And he said, "Well, I have everything that you have." And I said, "Well, I think you're missing one thing I have," and I just kind of left it at that. And then I couldn't really argue with him. So the last thing that I said was, "I guess the way that we'll really find out which one of us is right, the turning point will be when the Rapture comes," because we have discussed the Rapture and he believes in the Rapture. And I said, "Now when that comes one of us is going to be gone and one is still going to be here. And when that happens I feel that it's going to be me that's gone and I believe it's going to be you that is left here because of what you related to me. And I want you to remember what I've told you here." And I said, "I'm saying this, feeling that we are in the end times and that time is very near, and there's no way for me to argue to try to persuade you any different. This is your religion and you seem very entrenched in it." He said, "Yes." He's spent a long time, he's familiar with the Bible.

At one time he was telling me about this book that's about the teachings of the Lord Krishna. And he said he would like to give me this book. And I finally said, "Yes, I would be interested in reading it, because possibly I feel I might be able to find some scripture to maybe discredit." I said this totally on faith because I'm not a Bible scholar, near as much as you are. I find the Lord leads me to things all the time, and He's constantly showing me new things. But my command of it is not nearly great enough to be able to sit down and disprove another man's religion, which is what this would lead into.

HC: Let me make some suggestions to you. I appreciate what you're trying to do, and you're not doing it a lot differently than I would have done it many, many years ago when I was fairly young. I got into these same situations, these same debates, and so on.

But the more I study the Bible, I am convinced that there are some things that you are doing that are moving down a wrong path. And let me see if we can find out what would be a more Biblical path.

First of all, we do not come with the scriptures to argue or to coerce or by rhetoric to convince somebody that they should become saved. We come with the scriptures as the sword of the Spirit. The Bible is the Word of God, and it is the Word of God that God uses to convict men to salvation. We do not do the saving. We have to be very conscious of this. We do not do the saving. It is Christ who does the saving. And we want to bring the Word of God as faithfully as we can bring it, even though the person that we're speaking to may argue or protest and say, "Well, I do not believe it is the Word of God." Well, that's his problem before the Lord. But we are faithfully to declare, "This is what God has stated."

Now insofar as what the other person believes, we are not to have them bring their doctrine to us. In John 10 (that little epistle near the end of the Bible) declares, "If someone does not bring you this doctrine, give him no greeting." We do not have to know what the false religions teach in order to counter point for point what they teach. We can be ignorant of what they teach. All we know is that they are not the Gospel of the Bible, And that's sufficient. We don't knock down argument after argument. We simply present the Word of God as best we can. All of us have a different understanding or a different ability in the Word of God. I may know more verses than you and may be able to explain it in a little different way than you, but God can work through your personality, as you explain it as best you can and as you share the Word as best you can, and God can bring salvation to an individual just as readily as He can through the testimony that I might give.

We are witnesses and we're witnessing concerning the Word of God. And so if I were witnessing to your boss, I would probably do it this way. I would probably say something like this, "You know, as I read the Bible, I discover that the whole human race is under the wrath of God and is subject to eternal damnation." And really underscore this, that this is what the Bible teaches, and that there is no way that I or anyone else can escape that damnation by what we do. But God has provided a wonderful way of escape through the Lord Jesus Christ. And then explain that Christ came as our substitute, as the God-man, to satisfy the justice of God in paying for our sins. That is why the Bible says in John 3:16 that God gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish. And if we trust in Him as our substitute, then God's wrath has been taken care of by Him, and on that basis we can be saved. And this is what you desire for the one that you're speaking to. But then we have to leave it up to the Holy Spirit at that point to convict, because we can't force anyone or argue anyone into the Kingdom of God.

CALLER: All right. That's exactly what we both avoided. We didn't let it get to that. When it got to the point where he said, "I believe that there is not just one Christ, I believe that there are fifty-six of them," then the only thing I could think to say to him was, "Well, the Rapture will be the telling..."

HC: Yes, but you see, you can say that to him, but actually, it's not the Rapture that finally we want to look at. We want to look at the Word of God. All you can say is (very humbly, and very meekly),

"Well, you know, I have put my trust in the Bible, and the Bible does not teach fifty-six Christs. The Bible teaches one Christ and that is the Christ that I've placed my trust in. And I know of no other way of salvation than through Him." And just leave it there. Let the Bible be the testimony, you see.

CALLER: All right. Thank you very much. You've been a big help.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

DISCERNING GOD'S WILL

How Do We Discern God's Will For Our Lives? (006D)

CALLER: Mr. Camping, if you're at a crossroads in your life, is there any way that you can know what the will of God is?

HC: The only statement of the will of God is the Bible. Now when you come to a crossroads, and you want to know whether to go this way or that way, the Bible will not ordinarily speak directly to the question. But it will give you a lot of information whereby you can evaluate which path to take. For example, if it were a crossroads involving marriage, the Bible says, "Don't be unequally yoked to an unbeliever." So that is one thing that has to be considered.

So whatever it is, we have the general rule, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Whatever you do, eating or drinking, do all to the glory of God. "Ye are My witnesses." Christ, as it were, is making His appeal through you. And so on, and so on. In other words, the more we know the Bible, the more we will be sensitive to the will of God. We will be able to look at each option, or each alternative, and select the one that will give us the best opportunity to live to God's glory.

Now let's assume that we have selected one path to follow, and maybe there's another path that looks almost equally right, but we select this one. Now if God shuts the door, in other words, we thought there was an opportunity to go that way, and yet God takes the opportunity away. We thought we were going to be able to go to school, but the money that was going to pay for it was not forthcoming. Or we started to take a certain course, thinking we ought to go into this kind of discipline of learning, and we find that our minds can't cope with it. And we begin to flunk that course. These are ways in which God closes the door, and then we have to look for another path that also accords with His will.

Does God Have a Timetable for Answering Prayers? (013D)

CALLER: Yes. I'd like to know if God has a timetable for answering prayers of born again Christians. And if so, if you can give me some Scripture to back it up.

HC: Does God have a timetable? We know that God is perfect in His wisdom, perfect in His program, perfect in His desires for our lives. To use an illustration, we may be praying for an unsaved husband, let's say, or an unsaved child. And insofar as we are concerned we are quite convinced that nothing could be more wonderful than to have that unsaved husband or unsaved child saved about five minutes from now, after we begin praying. We really think this is just the most wonderful idea possible, and certainly nothing could be better than that. Now God may have in mind to save that husband or child, or whatever else that we are praying about, but God may have a lot of other plans that have to be worked out first.

For example, He may want that unsaved husband to be, first of all, a real testing program in the life of the wife, so that her faith will be strengthened, so that she will grow to a very high degree first. Or

maybe He's got some other things that He wants to happen in that family's life before that husband is saved. God may take two years to answer that prayer, or He may take sixty years to answer that prayer. With God, the Bible teaches, a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as a day.

In other words, God does not keep time like we do. God is really outside of time. He is in eternity. The Scripture I quoted, incidentally, is II Peter 3, where the question in view is, "Why is God so slow about coming? Why doesn't He, with all the wickedness that's in the world, come in judgment and stop all of this wickedness?" And in II Peter 3:8 God says, "But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

In other words, in this context God is saying that He is very patient with unsaved men, because He doesn't want to come before everyone who is to be saved has been saved. And so God's timetable is unrelated to our timetable. We think it has to happen right now, especially when it seems so beneficial to everybody concerned. But God has got a much more wonderful plan in mind, frequently, and He is much wiser. He knows what He is going to do with this sad situation that troubles us so much, and how He's going to make that work for good. He promises, in Romans 8:28, that all things work out together for good for those that love Him, who are called according to His promise.

And so the Christian is asked to patiently wait upon the Lord, and the wonder of it all is that every time we become anxious about the question that we're coming to the Lord with, we can go to Him with it again, and again, and again, so that afresh we can rest in Him.

Discerning God's Will for Our Lives (231B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I have decision to make. I have prayed and asked people's advice, and so on: What should I do? Should I decide "A" or "B"? Now I have said to myself, "I'm going to decide, and I'm going to do it according to God's will." But how do you decide whether something is really God's will? In other words, how do you determine if it's God's will or not? This is not only for that decision but anything from now on.

HC: The question that's raised is a very practical question that we all face virtually every day of our lives. And that is, how can we know God's will? When we're faced with the decision of which school to go to, if we're a student, or faced with the question of whom we're to marry, if we are concerned about that, the question of what town shall we live in, what job shall I have, what color shall we paint our house, what kind of a car shall we buy, all of these questions require decision making.

Now how can we know what is the pleasing thing to do? Well, God of course did not give us His Bible telling us about the color of the house that we are to live in. Nor does it describe the city that we are to live in. There are many details that are not found in the Bible.

But God lays down the basic principle by which we are to view any decision, any question. And as we bring to bear upon the question at hand these basic principles, we can soon begin to decide God's will.

Let me talk for a moment about someone who is planning to get married. What is God's will? Shall I get married, or shall I not? Well, the Bible doesn't say that we must be married. The Bible indicates that

we can live in a very happy relationship to God in the single state or in the married state. But it does say that if we do get married, we are not to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. And therefore it's imperative, if we are interested in romance at all, that it is with a fellow born again person.

If it's the matter of "Which job shall I have?" or "Which town shall I live in?" there are other rules that do apply. The Bible says, "Whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." The Bible tells us to "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." The Bible says that we are His witnesses. The Bible says that we are ambassadors of Christ, Christ as it were making His appeal through us. The Bible says that we are to be humble. We are not to be conceited. And so on and so on and so on.

As you read the Bible, you find basic principles. All right. Now you are faced with a decision. And so if you want to, you can think of it like this: I can do "A" or I can do "B." Now if I go in the "A" direction, will it be most to the glory of God? In other words, in this way will I be serving Him most greatly, or will it be to God's glory if I go in the "B" direction? If I go in the "A" direction, is that going to enhance my ability to be a witness? Or will it be enhanced if I go in the "B" direction? Can I really say that going in the "A" direction effectively is there because of a desire to seek first of all the Kingdom of God and His righteousness? Or is it possible that I should go in the "B" direction? Or maybe I should maintain the status quo and go in neither direction.

You see, the better we are acquainted with the Word of God, the more sensitive we are to the way God speaks to us and thinks through His Word, the more we're going to know what kind of path to follow. Now we may finally decide to go in title "A" direction, that that appears to be most desirable in the light of the principles God has laid down. And then, by that time, God may have shut the door to go in that direction. And so then we have to look again. It may not be God's will at all that we go that way.

The fact that a door is open, however, in any direction, is not in itself indicative that God is blessing that particular move. You might be considering different alternatives. One door is wide open, and the other is not nearly as wide open. And yet the door that is wide open may be a program where you are not going to live to God's glory. And God may be testing you. He may have opened the door to see what you will do. Will you go contrary to His will, or will you not? You have this opportunity to go contrary to His will.

The best way to test any decision is by the Word of God. And God has given us the basic principle, even though He has not spelled out in detail the individual decision. Now God has given us a mind, and more than that, God has given us contact with Himself through prayer. We read in James 1, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not." That is, He does not reprove us when we come to Him admitting our ignorance, admitting the fact that we need wisdom from on high.

And very frequently we come across a decision that has to be made, and after weighing all the possibilities in light of anything we might know from the Bible, we still don't know which way to go. Well, wonderfully, we have recourse to prayer. We can pray for wisdom. We can beseech the Lord that He will guide us in this. And how God will move in this we don't know. Perhaps after a while we'll just have the settled feeling that this is the way we ought to go, rather than the other way.

"Was That God Talking to Me or Not?" (240B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Brother Camping. From time to time I've heard people call in to you, and they say that God has spoken to them in certain ways. And I've heard you make the statement that, "How did you know that that was God speaking to you?" or "Are you sure that that was God who was talking to you, or was it the devil talking to you?"

And I have a question about something that happened to me in the last ten days, that I would like for you to answer me, to sort of clear my mind up on things. I had a bone scan. I went into the hospital ten days ago. And the next day after I went in, I "spaced out" on some medicine that they gave me, and I was spaced out the whole time I was in there. And right in the middle of this whole thing, it just seemed like God split the curtains open and communed with me, and just told me not to worry, that everything would be all right, and not to worry, that there wasn't that much longer to wait. And then everything just seemed to close up, and I didn't remember anything else that happened.

Now was that God talking to me or not?

HC: More than likely it was hallucinatory, or it could have been a result of the medicine you had been taking or it could be the result of a lot of things.

CALLER: That's the only thing that was clear during that whole period.

HC: You see, the whole question that we face is this: What is the revelation of God to us? Is the Bible and it alone to be looked upon as the divine Word? Or may we look for the divine Word in another way, and from another source?

You see, if I, for example, were thinking, let's say I was going into an operation, and I was thinking much of the fact that I am in the Lord's hands. All is going to be well, because He never leaves me nor forsakes me. And so on and so on. It's possible that under the medicine I might receive, or under the stress, or whatever thing it is, it's possible that I may believe that God is speaking to me.

But actually, God has spoken to me in His Word. Now He may bring to my memory a comforting verse that I had read in the Bible, that previously had appeared there. But He will speak to me through His Word.

CALLER: Well, I know since this has happened (I was released Saturday), I have had an inner peace that I haven't had in years. And I seem to be closer to God than in a long time. Like you say, maybe He was speaking to me through His Word, and He brought this up in this form, as a matter of letting me know that He still cared.

HC: Your question is a good question. When you have this kind of an experience, and now you find a peace within your heart, you have to ask yourself a very fair question, "Do I have that peace within my heart because I sense that God, in a mysterious and supernatural way, has opened the curtain between the natural and the supernatural, and has specifically spoken to me? And is that therefore the reason that I have this peace? Or do I have this peace because I know what the Bible teaches me, and it has promised me that God will never leave me nor forsake me, and He has carried me through this operation, or through this experience, whatever it is, and therefore I have this peace?" And there's a vast difference, you see.

If your peace is there as a result of your belief that there has been a supernatural opening, where God has spoken to you directly, apart from the Bible, then it's a peace that is not based on a good foundation. You want to place your trust only in what you read in the Bible; the Bible is the Word of God.

CALLER: I firmly believe in every word in the Bible, that it is inspired by God.

HC: But you see, the question that we have to arrive at is: Is it possible that there is an articulated Word of God, a verbalized Word of God, over and beyond the Bible? That is the real core of the question. And that is the heart of the question.

Now I believe the Bible teaches that it alone and in its entirety is the divine Word of God. And any other experience I might have, that appears to be an articulated Word of God, I may not look upon as being a Word of God. It is simply something that has come out of my own mind, or it is hallucinatory, or whatever. But it is not to be looked upon as from God.

Now it doesn't necessarily all have to come from Satan, of course. Our minds, you know, can be very confusing at times.

CALLER: Could it be an angel of God that's doing this, maybe?

HC: No. It would not be an angel of God. It would not be that, because God will not violate His own rules. You see, in the days of the Bible, before the Bible was completed, at that time God occasionally would send a special message by means of an angel, for example, to the Virgin Mary, and to Joseph, in a dream, and so on. And that was par for the course in those days, because God had not completed His Word.

But when God completed His Word, He said we're not to add to the words of this book. And so while angels are present with us, and while angels care for us, as the Bible teaches, they will not break the silence between the supernatural and the natural. They will not add another word to that which we find in the Bible. And if we want to find out God's will for our lives in any way, we are to go to the Bible.

CALLER: This just seemed to real and so genuine and so sweet, that it just you know, I really wanted to talk to you about it, to see how you really felt about it.

HC: You see, frequently there are those who have had a dream. And the dream has been very, very vivid. Now we all dream, every night. And sometimes our dreams are completely submerged in our subconscious, so that we're not even aware that we've dreamt. But occasionally we'll have a dream that is very vivid, so vivid that we can almost remember every detail of the dream.

Now there are those who are exercised by these dreams. They really believe that God has spoken to them in this dream. Now this is where the problem arises. The dream in itself was not bad. The dream is typical of what people have. But it depends on how we look at that dream. The moment we look upon that dream as the voice of God, then effectively we are saying, "I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, but I also believe that God has spoken to me in this dream. And now I have two sources of divine truth. I have the Bible, and I have this dream. Both are authoritative for my life."

And this is what the Bible warns against. It says we're not to add to the words of this book. The Bible alone is the authority for our life.

So if I would have that very vivid dream, and regardless of how holy and marvelous and wonderful the dream is, I would recognize, "Okay It's a dream. It's not a message from God. It came out of my subconscious somewhere, I'm not to look upon it as the voice of God at all. The only voice of God is what I read in the Bible." Then I'm on safe ground, you see.

CALLER: Before this happened, this incident that I just told you about, the doctors and nurses didn't tell me until I was ready to leave the hospital, but they told me, for that spell, that they did not expect me to make it through. They did

not expect me to live. And they said there seemed to be a change in my life.

And so how do I explain to somebody else, as a Christian, something like this?

HC: First of all, doctors and nurses do not know what God's program is for you or for me. A lot of times they will make certain speculations, or guesses, as to what will happen. Sometimes they say, "Well, this is a fairly normal operation. The possibility of dying on the operating table is very remote." And that person can still die on the operating table.

On the other hand, a person can undergo quite severe surgery, where the likelihood of coming through seems to be fairly remote. And yet everything goes well, and there is healing, and everything comes along very well. You see, God is the one who takes life, ultimately, God is the one who can care for us in these various difficult times. And doctors and nurses don't know that much about what our bodies can take, and so on.

CALLER: But I have two good Christian doctors, and they realize this. And they know that my faith is the one thing that has carried me through, and has caused me to outlive the prognosis that I should have been dead twenty years ago. They know that my faith in God is very strong, and they know that God has really looked after me.

HC: All right. When you talk about this experience, all you have to do is very humbly indicate that God cared for you. He brought you through a very difficult experience, and God in His mercies cared for you, so that you came back to health again.

Now it could have been God's merciful plan for your life that on the operating table He took you. And that isn't bad, either, you know. To leave your body and to be present with the Lord if you are indeed a born again believer, is not to be despised in any way. But it was God's program that you not die on the operating table, and He cared for you. Now insofar as . . .

CALLER: That's the most wonderful feeling in the world, to just know that He cares

HC: Yes. Now He teaches that in His Word. Now had He taken you on the operating table, He would have been caring for you. The fact that He restored you to health again indicates He cares for you. The Bible teaches that whatever happens, if we belong to Him, we know it is for our good. It is best for us. And in this you rejoice, you see.

Now the fact that you had this particular experience on the operating table, where it seems like God was speaking to you, I would discount that. I would simply say that, "Well, okay, I had what appeared to be a very vivid dream, but I know that that comes out of my mind. I know that if I want to know what God has to say to me, I have to look in the Word."

CALLER: Does God speak to any of His children, in this dispensation, at all?

HC: Through His Word. Through His Word God speaks to us. Otherwise God would be violating His Word. Then we would have the situation where each one has his own source of divine truth. He can have the Bible, plus whatever God is bringing individually to that person. And that would mean that you have all kinds of gospels. In fact, this is exactly the reason that we have an increase in other gospels.

CALLER: Well, thanks very much. You cleared up a whole lot for me, and I appreciate that very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Serving God Out of Fear? (339C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I wanted to ask you if you would comment on a person serving God out of fear.

HC: You ask me to comment on the question of a person serving God out of fear. And you're thinking of fear in the sense that I'm going to serve God because if I don't serve Him, He's going to send me to hell.

CALLER: Right.

HC: That's an interesting question, and I don't know what the implication in your mind of this question is, but I do know this, that many have told me, "Well, I'd like to become a Christian, and I'm interested in the Christian faith, but don't talk to me about hell. You're not going to scare me into salvation. You're not going to make me fear hell and therefore I'll want to be saved. Don't you dare do that."

Actually, we have to let the Bible show us what salvation is. The Bible talks again and again and again and again about the wrath of God. It talks about the terrible situation of Judgment Day, that there's weeping and gnashing of teeth, that their torment goes on forever and ever. Chapter after chapter of Jeremiah, chapter after chapter of Isaiah, of Ezekiel, of Revelation, talks about Judgment Day. You can depend upon it, that Judgment Day and hell are a very integral and important part of the Gospel message.

Now we immediately sense the reason that God talks about Judgment Day. How can we know what we're being saved from? Or how can we really desire salvation if we don't know what we have to be saved from? If you go to a person and don't describe hell to him, and don't say anything about judgment and the wrath of God, and you say, "You ought to believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, God loves you, and He has a wonderful plan for your life, and now you ought to believe in Him," and you don't talk about Judgment Day and hell, he may decide to get on the bandwagon with Christ, he may decide to become affiliated with the church and be identified with the body of believers, but he hasn't the slightest notion of why he's being saved or what he's being saved from, has he?

It's only when he realizes that he's a sinner, and that he's under the wrath of God, and he trembles and he's scared to death, yes, scared to death, that he's going to come broken before God, "Oh God, have mercy on me. I'm a sinner. I don't want to go to hell. I don't want to come under your judgment." That's the way the Bible presents the Gospel.

When Jonah came to Nineveh long ago, he didn't come to them with the statement, "God loves you." He came to them and said, "You better repent, because in forty days God is going to destroy you." And the whole city repented in sackcloth and ashes. They were scared to death that God would do exactly as He said He would. That is the way God presents salvation.

Then we know why we're being saved. Now once we are saved, once we have placed our trust in Christ, that is, once we have become born again, we don't serve Him with that fear any longer. That fear has been translated into a reverence, into a high regard for God as our Father. We know that we're no longer under judgment. We know that we're no longer under condemnation in any sense. We'll never have to stand for judgment in any way whatsoever. We know that we have eternal life, and we've become a child of God. We love Him with all our heart.

And so in our service for Him as Lord and Savior it is never from the vantage point of abject fear, if I disobey God He's going to throw me in hell. We know our sins have been altogether paid for by Christ, and all fear of that kind is removed. Do you see the difference?

CALLER: If there's a problem where you're not really certain of salvation, that mean that you're still serving Him out of fear?

HC: Well, if we are serving God and believe we are saved, and we're walking like on a tightrope, or on the edge of a precipice, worrying that "my, if I ever sin too much God is going to cast me into hell," and so we have that kind of fear, that "I'd better be a good person, I'd better do it God's way because He's going to punish me, He's going to throw me into hell," that is not true salvation. That has nothing to do with salvation. That is a salvation of good works. That is a salvation whereby we are believing that by our good works we are being worthy before God, and therefore we deserve salvation. That's not the salvation of the Bible.

The salvation of the Bible teaches us that our sins have all been paid for. We don't obey God because we fear His punishment. We don't obey God because we fear that He's going to throw us into hell. That's not possible. We obey God because we love Him with all our hearts. We obey God because this is the new natural desire of our born again, resurrected soul. We have been given our resurrected souls, and now in that part of our being there is an ongoing desire to serve Him.

That is the reason that we constantly want to be more and more obedient to Him.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Do Not Misapply the Bible + Mt 7:1 (413C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I have two questions, and I'll take my answer over the air. I'm a born again believer, and I'm living in Sacramento. But I went to live in Stockton with my aunt for a while. And I feel that God wanted me to come back to Sacramento. And so I was reading in the Bible, and it said, "Go now." And I prayed that God wouldn't want me to go to Sacramento again, because I was afraid. And then it said, "Go now or you will be cursed." And I just want to know, could I be cursed?

And also, I know that the Bible says, "Judge not lest ye be judged." So what about judges and the people on jury trials?

HC: Fine. Thank you for sharing those good questions.

In relationship to your first question, never read the Bible that way. Just because you happen to find a phrase in the Bible that seems to relate to a decision that you must make, that isn't the way God brings truth to you. Suppose you were contemplating committing suicide. This is a dumb thing, of course, but I'll use it as an illustration. Or suppose you were contemplating doing some other sin. And then you were reading the Bible, or you opened the Bible and the phrase popped up in your eyes and it said, "Do it now," or "Go now." Then is God giving you a message that now you should go ahead with this sinful act? You see, that doesn't make any sense at all.

The decision whether you should live in Stockton or in Sacramento, or any other city, has to be based on an evaluation of how you can live most definitely to God's glory. There are certain rules that you read about in the Bible, as, for example, the Bible says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Is it easier to seek the Kingdom of God, is it more beneficial to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in Stockton or in Sacramento? Well, maybe you can't determine that. The Bible says, "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The Bible says, "Ye are My witnesses," and so on.

As you read the Bible, you try to find anything at all where God has laid down rules for our life. And then you examine

the question at hand in the light of these rules. Is it possible to live more to the glory of God? Is it possible to witness better there? Or is there someone I can help there? Is it possible that there I might make myself more available to the service of the Lord? These are the kinds of questions you must face, not look for a phrase that seems to leap out at you as you read the Bible.

Now in answer to your other question, when Jesus said in Matthew 7:1, "Judge not lest ye yourselves be judged," we must follow the Biblical rule of always interpreting scripture by scripture. If we isolate Matthew 7:1 from the rest of the Bible, we could easily conclude that under no circumstance could we serve on a jury, or could we serve as a federal judge of some kind. But when we study the rest of the Bible, we find that while the general rule is, "Judge not lest ye yourselves be judged," there are exceptions to the case.

Those who are in governmental employ as a judge, that is, if you serve on a jury or if you are a federal judge or a civil judge, that is permitted in the Bible. The government has been given rule over the citizens, and therefore they can make judgments. You read about the role of the government to the citizens in Romans 13, the first six or seven verses.

In the case of the church, those who rule in the church, the elders and the deacons, and the pastor, those who are given that rule or authority, may make judgment concerning the spiritual activities of the members of the church. If they are not living in accord with the Word of God, then they may make judgment, and if necessary they can excommunicate such a person. You might read I Corinthians 5 to see this kind of activity in action.

We parents of course can judge our children, whether they are living for God or not, whether they're doing right or wrong, and we can apply the necessary discipline to them.

These are areas where God allows judgment to be made. These are exceptions to the general rule. The general rule, however, is that we are not to judge our fellow man. That's somebody else's business. We find this is true in our political arena, don't we?, in our civil relationships. We can't go to a neighbor whom we think might be committing some kind of a crime and put him in prison. We might decide that it's wise to tell somebody about the activities going on next door, so that the proper investigation can be made. And if this person does look guilty, he can be brought before the judge, who is rightfully authorized to make judgment, and he can be examined by this judge to discover whether indeed he's doing wrong. And if he were doing wrong, he might be cast into jail.

But it is not our role to make judgment. And incidentally, I can't underscore this enough. This is a luxury that many people in the church really hate to give up. It is such a sweet moment, it is such a desirable idea, when we can look at someone else in the congregation who is doing something sinful, or doing whatever they are doing, and we can pass judgment on them "Oh, my, look what Mrs. Jones is doing now. And something really ought to happen to her because of what she is doing," or whoever it might be. This kind of activity is altogether opposed to what the Bible teaches.

If we see someone living in sin in the congregation, it's not our job to go to that person and point out his sin. Now some of you are going to be violently unhappy with this, but this is the fact. It is not our job to go to that person and point out his sin. What we think is sin might not be sin at all. Maybe we don't understand the whole situation. We're not appointed in that role. We can pray for that person. We can pray, "Oh Lord, is it possible that Brother 'so and so' or Sister

'so and so' is having a problem? And if they are, "Oh, Father, wilt Thou undertake on their behalf?" and so on. And we certainly can try to visit with that person in general, and maybe try to have some Bible study, or whatever. And if they begin to talk about their problem, then counsel can be given. But if they do not talk about their problem, then it's not our role to get into this matter at all.

Now if it became a flagrant kind of a thing, the rulers in the church would know about it, of course. And they, logically and legitimately, can make judgment. They can go to this person and begin to ask questions and try to discover what is going on. And if there is sin that's going on, they can counsel with this person to turn away from his sin and to cry out to God for mercy, and to discontinue living in this wrong way.

How Can I Know What My Life's Work Is? (587A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi. My question is, how do you know about your life's work? What guidelines can you follow that will let you know that you're doing what you're supposed to be doing, that the course that you're following is the true course that God meant for you? I was in an entirely different business, and something happened. And it just seems like a series of incidents happened, and they just lead me to an entirely different field. And I'd like to know what kind of guidelines I can seek in the Bible that will tell me whether I'm on the right track or not. Can Satan have a definite influence in getting you onto something else? Or will God stop that?

HC: The question is, how can I know what my life's work is? I'm a Christian and I want to do it God's way.

First of all, God does not lay down specific guidelines for me, telling me that I have to be a bricklayer or a housewife or a mason, or whatever. But He does lay down general rules that I can examine vocations with, to see if this is my life's work.

For example, the Bible indicates that whatever I do, may it be done to the glory of God. Whether I eat or drink, or whatever I do, do it to the glory of God. The Bible says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." The Bible tells me that if I don't work, then I shouldn't eat. The Bible declares that if I don't take care of my own, that is, my own household, then I am worse than an unbeliever. And so on and so on. God lays down general rules by which we can evaluate any particular job.

Now if you're a wife, then your first responsibility is to take care of the home and to make sure that that is a first responsibility in your life. If you are not a wife, then of course it leaves the door a little wider open to other occupations. But whatever your occupation is, you want to make sure that it meets these general rules that God lays down.

Now beyond that, God gives us a fairly wide field. Obviously, you don't want to get into an occupation that would make you live in sin in any way, or commit sin. Obviously you would want to do something that would give you opportunity to witness if at all possible, because we have a task to be a representative of the Lord. Whatever occupation we get into, we should look upon that as our mission field, so that we can use it as an opportunity to, in gentle ways, tell others about Christ. We obviously will seek an occupation that is somewhat compatible with our talents and abilities. One person would never make an engineer, and another person who might make a dandy engineer would never make an artist, and so on.

CALLER: Okay. I was just a little bit apprehensive, because I was wondering, what kind of power, if you are a born

again believer, which I am, could Satan have, and make everything go smoothly toward this other end?

HC: Satan has no power over you if you are a child of God. The Bible says you've been transferred out of his kingdom, or his dominion, into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, he is always there, harassing and trying to get us to fall into sin. On the outside he comes at us, with other gospels and with the temptations of friends, things we read, and so on. And so you have to be very careful who you listen to, because through this kind of activity Satan may be trying to entice you into something.

But insofar as entering into your mind, or having control over you, no, that's an impossibility once you are saved.

CALLER: But through friends and associates, and perhaps management, it could possibly be done. So that would be something to watch out for?

HC: Well, yes. In other words, you want to make sure that, but if management asks you to do something that is not sinful, then it's not Satan. Satan will always tempt into sin. And you have to be obedient to management. The Bible lays down very clear rules that servants are to obey their masters. And that also includes employee/employer relationships. You work for management, and as long as they don't ask you to do something sinful, you may not agree with what they ask you to do, you may not think it's wise, you may not think it's the most efficient thing to do, but if they're the management then you must be obedient to them as long as you work for them.

CALLER: Okay. Well, I certainly thank you very much.

SMOKING, ALCOHOL & OTHER BESETTING PROBLEMS

Salvation is for Alcoholics Too (094B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a problem. This is not a religious problem. I'm an alcoholic. Not too bad, but I do drink. I know it's sin. But my wife left me about six weeks ago, and she said it was because I drink. Well, that's up to her. But my wife called me, and I said, "I do believe in God. I'm not the best church man there is, but I never mistreat people. But I do drink." She hurt me. See, I still have feelings.

HC: Let me ask you. You drink because you find in alcohol some kind of an answer, don't you?

CALLER: Well, I don't have to think. I think when I sober up. I still have the same problem I had before I started to drink. You see, I turn to drink when I have a problem.

HC: First of all, I sense that you are disappointed in yourself. You wish that you could be a better man.

CALLER: Yes.

HC: And in your frustration, in your feelings of self-pity, and so on, you find that you can face life if you can only take a drink.

CALLER: Yes. That's about the only way.

HC: That's the way you can face life. Life isn't quite as cruel. The rough edges are taken off. And you can get along this way.

CALLER: How do you know that?

HC: Well, because I can hear what you're saying. Now you see, one of the problems is that we as human beings kid ourselves that we're really kind of important, that we really ought to measure up to something. We really think that we ought to be somebody.

Now actually, when we go to the Bible and let the Bible tell us about ourselves, we don't find that at all. The Bible says that we're nothing but hopeless, rotten sinners. We're under the wrath of God, and there's nothing good within us. There's nothing that we have in our life to be proud about. There's no place that we're going that's worth anything in ourselves.

That's the first thing the Bible teaches. Secondly, the Bible teaches that God created us the way we are outside of sin. In other words, God did not make you a man with a hundred talents. God made you the way you are, with the talents that you have. Now one man might be able to sing and to be a musician, and to speak eloquently, and be a math whiz, and be able to run the hundred yard dash in ten seconds flat, and he can just do everything well. Okay. God made him that way.

But another man, about all that he can do real well is that he's an excellent janitor, let's say. Or he's a fine bricklayer. Or he does a fairly good job as a carpenter, or whatever. Or maybe another man, his main claim to fame is that he's just a good husband for his wife. But insofar as success in business, he doesn't have it. Insofar as success in something else, he doesn't have it.

The two things you've got to get through your mind are this. Number one, that God made you the way you are. And you should not aspire to be like somebody else. The second thing you've got to realize is that in yourself, because of the fact that you're a human being sold under sin, you are under the wrath of God; you are a sinner. The only way that anything is going to come of your life is if God will do it for you.

CALLER: I ask God, I say, "Get me through this day." I'm not the worst man in the world.

HC: Why do you say that, that you're not the worst man in the world?

CALLER: Because I do drink, you see. I know I've got two sins against me. I smoke and I drink.

HC: But you see, when we come to the Lord, we don't come trying to prove any worthiness of any kind. A lot of people look to God, but that doesn't mean that they're going to be saved. Effectively, what you're saying (and maybe you haven't realized this), "Look God, basically I'm a fairly good Joe. I'm a fairly good person. Now I have a couple of sins. I drink and I smoke. But outside of that I'm a pretty good Joe."

All right. Now God is never going to listen to you, because God didn't come for the righteous. As long as you come to God that way, it's a closed door, because when God looks at you, He says, "Look. You not only drink and smoke, but in your whole life you are a sinner. Your whole motivation in life is sinful. Your whole attitude toward God is sinful. Everything about you is sinful." This is what the Bible says about every person.

And so when you go to God, you can't go, "Oh, Lord, look at me. I'm basically pretty good, but I have a couple of sins." We have to go to the Lord with a broken and a contrite heart. We have to realize the awful truth about ourselves, that we're sinners, that we're under the wrath of God, and we justly deserve to go to hell. We come spiritually bankrupt to God.

This is the beginning point of a solution, when we realize the awful truth about ourselves, that we've messed it up. Now your sin happens to be drinking. Somebody else's sin is something else. And maybe some other unsaved man's problem is something nobody else knows about. And he may think he's a pretty good person also. But Jesus didn't come to call the righteous. He came to call sinners to repentance.

And so you, first of all, have to realize that your alcoholism is only a symptom

of the fact that in your nature you are finding your answers everywhere except in Christ. You're finding your answers everywhere. And one of the places you're trying to find answers is by drinking. Through drinking you find that you can face life for a little while longer, even though you know it's destroying your family, and it's destroying your job, and it's destroying you personally.

But wonderfully, wonderfully, God came for sinners just like you are, sinners, who are alcoholics, who are adulterers, who are fornicators, who are thieves, who are robbers, who are murderers. I don't care how wicked a person is. These are the kind that Christ is interested in. Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost.

And remember the publican of old. He came into the temple. And he dared not look up. He stood afar off. He felt so tainted, so polluted, he wouldn't dare come into the temple, the holy temple, and dared not look up to God because he was so ashamed. He was so burdened by his sin. And he smote his breast, the act of some who is just beside himself in shame and sorrow because of what a terrible sinner he is.

And what does he cry out? "Lord, have mercy on me. I'm a sinner. I'm a sinner." He didn't come and say, "Lord, have mercy on me. I'm basically a very good man, but I've got a couple of sins in my life." God would never have heard him. God would never have heard him. You have to come to Him realizing that you're a no-good, rotten sinner. And no human being wants to hear that. Our self-respect is violated. Our ego is humiliated. But that's what the Bible tells us, that we're spiritually bankrupt, that we're under the wrath of God, and we're subject to hell. And until we look at ourselves honestly, we're not going to get any victory. We're not going to get help from God.

We've got to look at ourselves exactly the way the Bible does, and that is that we're in deep and terrible trouble because of our sins. And so there's nothing you can do to extricate yourself, except to throw yourself on the mercies of Christ, to cry out to Him for mercy. "Oh, Lord, here I thought that I was a pretty good person, but now I realize I am nothing but a proud, egotistical person. I thought my only sin was alcoholism and smoking. Now I realize that my sin is pride. My sin is everything else. And so, Lord, forgive me. Oh, Lord, forgive me. I don't want to sin anymore."

CALLER: I do. I lay down at night, and I say, "Lord, forgive me." I say, "Have mercy upon me." And I say, "Either take my life or the one who did wrong."

HC: You see, here is the problem. With your mouth you are praying the Lord to have mercy on you. But in your heart, in your heart you feel that basically you're a pretty good person.

CALLER: I don't see what I've done wrong to people.

HC: All right. Now that's where the problem lies. Because the Bible says that basically you are not a good person. The Bible says that basically you are a wicked person, and I would say this to any person who is unsaved. I'm not judging you personally. I'm only using the Biblical language.

The Bible says that the heart of man is desperately wicked. And when you are speaking to God, "Oh, Lord, have mercy on me," you are paying lip service to what you ought to say. You are paying lip service. Your mouth is saying something that is not from your heart.

If you were being honest with God, you would be praying this way.

CALLER: I'm trying to be honest.

HC: But I'm only trying to show you that if you're really going to find salvation, it has to begin in your heart, that you know that you're not basically a good person, you're not basically a worthy person, you're not basically a fine individual

with just a couple of sins in your life.

But basically you're a sinner. Basically, you're in rebellion against God. You want your own way. And that's one of the reasons you drink, because you want to do your own thing. You're basically in rebellion against God, and now you go to God and you pray, "Oh, God, I realize that I'm really in rebellion. I'm a sinner. I'm a sinner. Oh, Lord, have mercy on me. I'm a sinner. I don't want to sin anymore. Have mercy on me. I don't want to live such a rebellious life any longer. Oh, Lord, have mercy on me and forgive my sins."

CALLER: I think I understand a little bit about it. Yes, you told the truth there. I mean, I'm supposed to be a pretty good guy. Yet I drink, and I pray to God. I do. I pray on the road. And God must help me some way, because He takes me to Redding and back.

HC: God, in His mercy, has kept you alive.

CALLER: He must be doing something.

HC: But the question you have to face is, What if I would die tonight? Where would I spend eternity? And you don't know when it's going to be God's time to take you. And yet tonight you still can make your relationship with Christ what it ought to be, if you will just abandon yourself to Christ and claim the truth about yourself, that you're a sinner, that you're in terrible trouble with God, and that you cry out to Him for mercy.

And the minute you begin to think in your heart, "But after all, I do have my self-respect, after all, I am a pretty good guy in some ways." Forget it, forget it! In God's sight every action of yours is "as filthy rags," the Bible says. In God's sight every time you move you're just adding to your guilt before God because, fundamentally, in your life, you are in rebellion against God.

And once you get hold of that awful truth, and then you begin to talk to God about that, "Oh, God, have mercy on me. I suddenly realize what a horrible sinner I really am. Oh, God, have mercy on me. No wonder I drink, and I have such a rebellious nature, when I really want my own way, and I'm going to try to find my own solution. Oh, Lord, forgive me for thinking that you're going to deal kindly with me because I'm some kind of a worthy person. Oh, Lord, just have mercy on me. I'm a sinner. I'm a sinner. I'm a sinner. Oh, Lord, I'm a sinner, and I just want to be saved. I just want to be saved. I want to know that Christ has paid for all of my sins. I don't want to sin anymore. I don't want to be in this kind of rebellion against You."

CALLER: Mr. Camping, you speak the truth to me. I'll remember what you said.

HC: But let me say this, Only Christ will save you. And the path to salvation is repentance, is a recognition of the awful condition of sin that you're in when you're unsaved, and acknowledging this before God, confessing this, and repenting, where we really find in our life an earnest desire: "I don't want to sin anymore."

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I go to church in Oakland, and I went in front of the pastor, and I accepted Christ.

HC: You see, you accepted Christ, but you were not saved. A lot of people accept Christ, but they don't understand that that isn't salvation. Salvation has to do with a broken and a contrite heart. It has to do with entrusting our life to Christ.

Now the fact that a man drinks indicates that he has not entrusted his life to Christ. He is still trusting in his alcohol to get him through a rough situation. That is clear evidence that he has not placed his trust in Christ. And this is what salvation is all about, that I've entrusted my life to Christ.

You'll begin to find the way, if you start with the dismal truth about yourself, the awful truth about yourself, that you are

not basically a good person with a couple of sins, but that fundamentally you are a sinner, under the wrath of God. And if you want a commentary about yourself, if you want to read the Bible about what your condition is, read Romans 3. Romans 3 outlines in stark language how God looks upon you, or any other person who is unsaved. And this language is not nice language.

It says in verse 10: "None is righteous, no not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God." The fact that you say, "Lord, forgive me, because I've got a sin in my life," and yet basically you think you're a worthy person, indicates that you're not really seeking for God. It simply means that you are trying to find a God who will take you on your own terms rather than on God's terms.

Now it goes on in verse 12: "All have turned aside. Together they have gone wrong. No one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive." Remember what Jesus said about the Pharisees, "You're white-walled sepulchres, full of dead men's bones." He was using the same language that we find in verse 13. "Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive."

They deceive themselves, about their self-respect and personal pride, and what have you, and their own self-worthiness. And they deceive others, making them think they're pretty good people. "The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. In their paths are ruin and misery. And the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Now that's a horrible statement. That's a terrible statement. But that's the way God looks at an unsaved person. And so if you have any doubts in your mind as to what your sin condition is, read Romans 3 a few times.

And then, with that fresh in your mind, go to the Lord and beg for mercy. "Oh, God! That's the way it is. I thought I was a good person with a couple of sins. And now I discover that I'm hopelessly lost. I discover that I'm a terrible person in Your eyes, and I deserve to go to hell. Oh, God, have mercy on me. Oh, Lord, save me."

That's the beginning of salvation. Okay? And many of us will be praying for you.

CALLER: Thank you for your time.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Breaking the Cigarette Habit (207B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question, and I'll take the answer on the air. What about a person who has been walking with the Lord, for about four years or less, and has been delivered from drugs and drinking and everything, but still has the cigarette habit? And he's prayed and prayed, and still can't give them up. And he really wants to, but there's something in me (I'm talking about myself) that just wants to keep smoking. And I wondered if you could answer that.

HC: Our caller tells us that since she's become a born again believer she has been delivered from some very ugly sins, sins of drug habits, and other things. But now she is struggling and struggling with a habit in her life that she believes it be sinful. Otherwise she wouldn't be struggling with it. And that is the habit of smoking.

And she wonders, "Now why can't I get victory over that?" Well, I might offer one reason for this. There are some sins that are especially notorious, that are especially ugly. And we don't have to be convinced that they're awful, that they're terrible. Secondly, there are some sins that are so obviously hurtful and

destructive to us that we don't have to be encouraged very much to give them up. If we see that our life is really on the edge of destruction at any moment, because we're taking LSD, or because we're on some other kind of a drug habit, or if we are living in open adultery, or if we are living as a thief, all of these things are such obvious and terrible sins and so self-destructive, that as a born again believers these sins go very quickly. Immediately we know that we've got to turn away from this. These sins can be no part of us.

But now comes the job of getting at the sins that we didn't really understand to be sins. I'm convinced that all kinds of people who had taken on a smoking habit for a long while in their life may not have realized at all that possibly that might be a sin. I'm sure I'm talking to people tonight who even smoke today, and up until tonight you would have been absolutely in shock that someone would suggest that smoking is a sin. Why, all kinds of people in your church smoke. Or your whole cultural background is that people smoke. And incidentally, smoking is just one sin that we're going to pick on. But there are lots of other things that we'll find in our life that are besetting sins, but we're not really convinced that they're sins, at first anyway. And gradually we take on this awareness that maybe it is sin, and then we start going to work on it. And we find that they're really tough to get rid of, really tough to get rid of, as compared with those real ugly, gross, terrible things that went right at the very beginning, when we were born again.

Now the reason for this is that, first of all, we don't have that complete conviction that that smaller sin, of smoking or whatever, is really nearly as bad. We fail to realize what the Bible teaches, that if we've broken one commandment, we stand guilty of the whole law of God. In the case of smoking, we may not even be convinced that it is sin. And so as we start finding in the Bible that it says that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, as we start finding that we're to live holy lives, and that we're not to do anything to destroy this temple, and when we tie that together with the information all around us that smoking is, after all, very detrimental to our health, you come up with the idea that this is sin.

And even if you kind of sense that it is sin, you're not really sure that it's really a big sin. It's really kind of a small sin, after all. But once we can realize that just as the drug habit was ugly, terrible, rebellious sin against God, just as the living in adultery was dirty, rotten, rebellious sin against God, so a little sin of smoking, or gossiping, or telling white lies, or being impatient, or flying off the handle, because your temper is right on the edge, is also dirty, ugly, rotten sin against God. That's the first profound truth that has to begin to hone in on us, if I we're going to get victory over these sins.

Secondly, we have to face the fact that we like these little sins. Now the big sin, we like that too. But that was outweighed by the fact that it was so destructive, it ran such risks, for example, of being caught by the law, or caught by other members of the family (if it was an adulterous kind of thing), that we really didn't like it that much. It was too risky a business.

But these little sins, everybody does them. And we're never going to be caught by society. We're never going to be reprimanded by our fellow man. This is par for the course. We can do these things, and there's nothing, at least from the outward appearance, that has to be paid for concerning these sins. We're not getting demerits from anybody. And so we like these sins, and we'd rather not let them go.

But yet we've come to the conclusion that it is sin. And so we've begun to pray,

"Oh Lord, forgive me. Oh Lord forgive me." But even as we're praying, "Oh Lord forgive me," we know that tomorrow, when the occasion arises, we're going to commit the sin all over again. If we only will come to recognize that God does not take away that sin, when we're not looking. God expects us to repent of that sin.

When we got victory over the sin of drugs, over the sin of adultery, over the sin of being a thief, or whatever, what did we do? We repented. We turned away from it. It was an ugly, dirty business, and it was too risky. We didn't want to do it anymore. It was too big a flaunting, an act of rebellion against God. It had to go. And so we repented of it. We turned away from it. We cut our strings with it. We didn't want to be fastened to that kind of sin anymore.

Well, this is what we've got to do with the little sins. We've got to repent. We've got to turn away from it. OK. Smoking. I've learned now that it's a dirty, ugly sin. Any sin is dirty, ugly. It's open rebellion against my Savior. It's spitting in His eye, if you will. It's an act of self-indulgence. It's a situation in which I'm really effectively saying, "Lord, I love You. I love You dearly, but I love my gossiping more." What nonsense!

"Lord I love You. Oh, I love so dearly! But I've got to fly off the handle once in awhile. My temper has just to go. There is a certain enjoyment in it. And I'm sorry. I love that more." What sheer nonsense! Of course you don't love that more, but this is effectively what we've been doing.

And so we come to the Lord, and we say, "Oh Father, forgive me. Forgive me I've tolerated this sin. I've nourished it. I've coddled it. I've enjoyed it so much. And oh Father, this sin has got to go. I'm repenting of it. The cigarettes are all in the garbage can. I'm not going to buy any more. Oh Father strengthen me. My friend called me this afternoon and began to gossip. And I told her, 'Please. We can't talk this way anymore, if we're going to remain friends.' And she slammed the receiver down because she thought I affronted her. But oh Father, I repented. I can't go on. I can't talk this way anymore. And if I have to lose a friend in doing it, I lose a friend in doing it. But I cannot live in sin anymore." That's repentance.

And this is when we're going to begin to get victory. Again let me emphasize, sin begins in the mind, most frequently. Either the great sin or the little sin, it begins in our minds. And in our thinking we begin to think, when we're lying in bed and we can't sleep, or we're driving a car and are musing about different things, or we're taking a walk, or whatever we're doing, about how nice it would be to have a cigarette. Or we begin to think how nice it would be to call our friend and see if she's got a little tidbit-bit. It's been a little while since she's passed along a little dirt about someone else.

Or we have a friend or a loved one against whom we're always angry. And so we begin to think in our minds some negative thought toward this person. Whatever the sin may be, we begin to nourish it. We begin to play with it. We begin to enjoy it in our minds. And pretty soon it's not enough to be in our mind. We're ready to commit it. This thing is too big for me, and so I dash out to buy another pack of cigarettes. Nothing can stop me. It's too big for me. Or I rush to the phone to make the phone call, to learn what I can. Or the one comes home from work that I'm always losing my temper with, and I've been thinking these nasty thoughts all afternoon, and now I'm really ready to let him have it. There's going to be a temper tantrum, when he opens his mouth, that he hasn't heard for a long while.

This is the path of sin. But the place to stop it is at the moment that it got into

our minds, the moment you catch yourself beginning to think the wrong thoughts: how good that smoke would be, how nice that little tidbit-bit of information about someone else would be, that nasty thought about your husband or your wife, or your son or your daughter, or whatever. Cry out to God, "Oh, Father, forgive me. Forgive me. I'm starting to go on that path of sin again. Forgive me. I don't want to go that way. Oh, Father, strengthen me now."

And get your Bible. And start feeding on the Word. "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." If you can't think of a better excuse to read the Bible, then read the Bible when you're being tempted. And make a decision, "Every time I feel this temptation, I'm going to spend thirty minutes in the Word. And I'm going to sit down and I'm going to read the Word. I'm going to let God talk to me for awhile. And I'm going to begin to discover anew the will of God."

Now if we begin to do this, we're going to find that it's a lifelong task to get victory over these little sins. You get victory over one, and then you go to work on the next. And you get victory over the next, and you go to work on the next one. And this is a lifelong path, because we have a body that still lusts after sin. And the moment we take our eyes off of Christ for a little bit, then our body is there ready to encourage us back into some kind of sin.

But if we really mean business with the Lord on these things, we're going to discover that this sin no longer is troubling like it used to. That sin is no longer as much as problem as it used to be. This doesn't mean that it'll never flare up again. But if it ever would, you know exactly what to do with it, before it ever gets started.

And so you are growing in sanctification. So I am finding that my life is more and more conformed to the will of God.

Well, thank you so much for that good question.

Gaining Victory over Smoking (210E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, I'm a Christian. And I became a Christian about two or three years ago. But my problem is, I still can't give up smoking. And I was wondering, does that mean that I'll go to hell for doing that?

HC: That's a very good question, and I'm glad that you raised it. Not because we want to pick on smoking. We could have any kind of a sin in our life that we're troubled by. But you see, if we're a born again believer, and we have a besetting sin of some kind that we don't get victory over, pretty soon those doubts come into our mind, don't they? "Am I really saved? How can I live this way if I still like this sin so much?"

And so we begin to wonder, "Well, why can't I get victory over it?" I would wager that you have prayed many many times, "Oh Lord, forgive me." And you really wish that you didn't smoke any longer. Now the problem is that we like our sin very much. And so while we know that it's bad, we know that it's got to go, and we feel very remorseful every time we commit that sin again, yet we don't want to give up that sin.

And so what we're really doing is praying God that He'll kind of quietly remove that sin when we're not looking. We don't want to repent. We don't want to turn from it. But God doesn't work that way. God works through repentance. God says we must repent. We must turn away.

Now if you really mean business with the Lord, and really recognize that that is a sin, then you want to show your repentance by turning away from it.

There's nothing in the world that can keep you, right now, from going through your house and taking every pack of cigarettes and throwing them in the garbage can, is there? There isn't at all.

And if you don't do that, and you pray tonight, "Oh Father, I don't want to smoke any longer," and yet you haven't repented, you haven't taken those cigarettes and thrown them into the garbage can, you're kidding yourself and you're kidding God. You're not leveling with God.

Now the same thing is true tomorrow. You throw the cigarettes into the garbage can tonight. Nobody can keep you from doing this. And since you've come to that point where you're wondering if you're even saved, I wouldn't hesitate for a moment. I'd want to get victory over that sin. I've had it. I don't want to sin any longer.

And then tomorrow, when you begin to think about how good a smoke would be, there's nobody that's going to make you go down to the grocery store and buy another pack. Nobody is going to make you do it. You'll do it of your own volition. Now you'll do it if you coddle that sin. Sin begins most frequently in our minds.

And if you wake up tomorrow morning, and you're drinking your first cup of coffee, or whatever, or whenever you ordinarily smoke your first cigarette, and right then and there, it's going to hit you, "My, a cigarette would really taste good right now! But I don't want to smoke. But boy! It would taste good." And you begin to savor that in your mind, and you begin to play with it and to fondle it, and lick your chops, mentally speaking, for that cigarette, pretty soon this will become such a big thing that nothing is going to keep you from rushing out to buy a pack, or to find someone who will lend you one, because you've let it grow in your mind.

Now the place to stop it is right at the beginning. The moment the thought comes into your mind, "My, it sure would be good to have a cigarette right now," you cry out "Oh, Father! Oh, Father, have mercy on me. I'm walking the wrong path again. I don't want to go that way. Turn me away from that. Give me a hatred for that sin. I don't want to sin anymore." And start doing something altogether different. Preferably, start reading your Bible, so that you are strengthened by the Word of God itself.

Or run around the block, or take a cold shower. Do anything at all to break the mental process that's developing in your mind. You don't want to continue that kind of thinking.

Now repentance involves drastic action. You can't feel sorry for yourself. This is what gets us into sin. We feel sorry for ourselves. We think we're entitled to this relapse from service to God. We think we're entitled to this little concession to our senses, our sensual nature. And so because we feel sorry for ourselves, we accommodate ourselves and fall into sin.

Now repentance involves dealing very ruthlessly with our self-pity. Nonsense! I don't have to feel sorry for myself. I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. He's my Savior and Lord. I don't have to live with sin. Why do I want to be troubled in my conscience any more with this sin? Why do I have to doubt my salvation? God has saved me, and I've got victory over sin, and I'm not going to smoke anymore. As God strengthens me, I will be able to continue to turn away from it.

And this is the way it will work in your life. The next thing you'll find, if you mean business with the Lord, is that the desire has been taken away. But you must repent. You must repent.

I hope this will help you.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Gaining Victory Over Masturbation (265B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: My question has to do with masturbation. In Matthew 5:30, when Jesus talks about, "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off," is He referring to masturbation? And is that what you were talking about, that God had provided to an unmarried person, that he may have a fulfilled life? And is masturbation for an individual a sin?

HC: The problem is raised concerning the act of masturbation, and whether that is a sin. You see, ordinarily, in this kind of an act, in order to obtain any enjoyment from it, it requires that the person doing it is thinking lustful thoughts. Now the Bible teaches that if a man lusts after a woman, he has already committed adultery. And therefore that kind of an act is very sinful. It is just as much a sinful act as the act of adultery, because it requires sinful thoughts in order to be accomplished.

Now when the Bible talks about blessings for the single person, God is completely aware, of course, that we have these desires in our bodies, that we're designed the way we are. But God also is aware that we can live without expressing those desires, or catering to those desires. And that is where the Bible and the secular world part company, because the secular world pretty much has decided, beginning with Freud and others, that the sexual act is one of the cornerstones of our life, that it is one of the things that must have expression in order to enjoy any kind of a happy life.

But God certainly doesn't intimate that that is so. That is not true. Man can enjoy happy and fruitful and joyful life without exercising any sexual prerogatives, that is, by living a life in which the sexual desires are completely subjugated.

Now the true blessing that comes to the person who is living singly is not in this area at all. We read in verse 32 of 1 Corinthians 7: "The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord." This is where he gets his happiness, you see, living to God's glory, not how to cater to his own lustful desires, but how to please the Lord. "But the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife." So his interests are divided. "And the unmarried woman is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband." So you see, the blessing comes in an entirely different area than sexual desires.

CALLER: I see. Well, occasionally it seems that I do gain victory over my sexual desires, by diverting my attention to working with my hands, washing the dishes or something. But then at the time that I weaken, and I succumb to my desire, then I feel that I have sinned, and I kind of want to blame it on Christ Jesus for allowing it, if it's wrong, or feel that He sanctioned it, if I go ahead and do it. But I never have the peace about doing it next time, that it's the right thing to do. And I find this with a lot of things in my life. And I'm not sure that I'm not saying that what is wrong is right, and what is right is wrong.

HC: You're being very candid. You're starting to be very honest with yourself, and that's very helpful. You see, you will find that this sin, as with many sins, begins in your mind. It doesn't just suddenly become full blown desire, does it? It begins in your mind. You begin to think about sexual desire of some kind. And then you begin to let it develop in your mind, and you begin to play with it in your mind. And so pretty soon the action begins.

If you've decided you aren't going to smoke cigarettes for a while, you'll find

that you'll be drinking your cup of coffee, or whatever you normally do when you reach for a cigarette, and you'll begin to think how good a smoke will be. And because you're trying to repent of it, you'll first resist it. But then you'll keep playing with it in your mind. You'll coddle it in your mind, and fondle it in your mind. And the next thing you think is, "It's just too big for me. I've got to go out and get a cigarette, even though I've got to drive ten miles to get a pack."

You've allowed it to become a very big force in your mind. This is characteristic of all kinds of sin. Now the place to stop it is right there where it began, in your mind. First of all, you've got to come to truth with yourself that this is sin, whatever it may be. "This is an act of rebellion against God. Now I believe that I'm a child of God. Therefore the Bible teaches I'm not in bondage to sin. I'm not under the power of Satan in any way. And if I'm going to succumb to this sin, it's my action. I can't blame anybody else. I have decided for the moment that to serve Christ as Lord is too big for me. I'm going to spit in His eye. I'm going to do my own thing, because I like this sin that much."

Now we've got to look at this sin this way. Now recognizing that it is an act of open rebellion of course horrifies us. "How can I do this? How can I live this way if Christ is my Savior?"

And so the moment the desire comes into our mind, we've got to begin to cry out, "Oh Father, have mercy on me. I don't want to sin anymore. I don't want to go in that direction anymore." And we start reading the Bible, or as you say, start doing the dishes, or start running around the block, or get busy with anything, preferably getting into the Word, so that that sin cannot continue in your mind. But if you let it fester there, and if you keep coming back to it, pretty soon it's going to get so big that you'll fall again. And then you'll have all the frustration and the trauma, the feeling of uneasiness, the feeling of defeat, that always follows.

CALLER: Does the scripture that says, "God's strength is made perfect in weakness" have anything to do with my situation?

HC: No, because the context of that verse is speaking about something altogether different. You see, the context of that verse is II Corinthians 12, where Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is talking about the "thorn in the flesh," a messenger of Satan to buffet him.

Well, what is that thorn in the flesh? It cannot be a physical weakness, or a sin problem in his flesh, because he is not under the power of Satan. He is a child of God. You are not under the power of Satan, either, if you're a born again believer. You're a child of God. Your flesh will strive to sin, because your body is still not saved. But you're not under the power of Satan.

But the "thorn in the flesh," we know from Numbers 33:55, is the pressures from the outside, from those who are unsaved, who harass Paul, and seek to make life difficult for him. In Numbers 33:55 we read, where God is talking to Israel: "But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides. And they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell." And this is exactly what happened. The Philistines that were left alive harassed them constantly, and made life miserable for them.

Now here is Paul, who is harassed by the Judaizers. They follow him everywhere, making life bitter for him, as he preached the Gospel. And he prays three times that this might leave him, that he might be free to preach the Gospel without this harassment. And God says, "No. My grace is sufficient for you. My

power is made perfect in weakness."

I really believe that this is what is being talked about, that Paul in himself cannot stand this harassment. But in Christ, coming under the authority of Christ, and the power of Christ, he can continue. He can continue to bring the Gospel, even though he's got to be beaten a few more times.

CALLER: All right. Thank you very much for what you have said.

HC: Yes. And let me encourage you this way. First of all, it is a real hope that you are concerned and that you're beginning to face yourself honestly. Secondly, take one of these sins in your life. You mentioned a couple of them. And be very deliberate about this. Look at yourself honestly: "Okay, I've coddled myself. I've sympathized with myself. I've had pity on myself. I've prayed again and again, 'Oh Lord, forgive me.' But every time I've prayed, 'Lord, forgive me' after I'd done those things, I knew that when the temptation arose the next time I'd do it all over again. And so I really wasn't repenting." And this is the big word, repentance.

And now look at yourself very deliberately and say, "Now just a minute. I'm a child of God. I'm a son of the King. I'm of royal blood. And I don't have to live with these sins. They don't have control over me, and I've had it. I'm not going to live with them anymore. And as God strengthens me, I'm going to turn my back on them, and I'm through, I'm through. I'm not going to go through that experience anymore. I want my life to tell for Jesus. I don't want to serve Him only part way. I want to serve Him all the way.

Let me give one other suggestion. One of the deterrents in your life to taking this course of action is that deeply ingrained within you (and this is true of every born again believer), there is still self-pity. And you have experienced a certain amount of pleasure from these sins. Sin is pleasurable. We may as well face the sad truth that this is so. There is pleasure connected with it.

Now when you face the question that these sins have got to go, deep in your soul you're analyzing it this way, "But if they finally go, then I'm going to be depriving myself of something that is very pleasurable. They say that there's joy in obedience to Christ, but that certainly cannot be equal to the pleasure that I have been receiving from my sins." That is the deceitful nature of sin, you see, that makes us think that way.

But let me assure you that when you get victory over those sins because honestly you've repented of them and decided that they've got to go, that you want to serve Christ, Christ will strengthen you, when you get honest with yourself and begin to repent. You will find that indeed the joy of obedience, the joy of a clear conscience, the joy of not having that after-bite after the sin, is far far superior to any sinful joy you've received in these sins.

Now what you want to do is face yourself squarely, and take action, and repent. The reason we hesitate to repent is because we are hoping that God will sneak up on us and take that sin away, without us looking. And then it's out of our control. But God doesn't work that way. He wants us to deliberately will that that sin has got to go. And He works through our wills. This is what repentance is.

And so you've got to turn your back on it, and deliberately decide that this sin has got to go, "I have had it."

CALLER: Thank you.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Is it Sinful to Drink Alcohol? (282C)

CALLER: Is it a sin to drink alcohol, but not get drunk? Can a person have

wine for dinner, or an occasional beer – not to get drunk, but just to have an occasional drink?

HC: The question is raised concerning alcohol. Is it Biblical for a believer to drink alcohol in moderation?

Now I must admit that for many years in my life I believed that the Bible taught this, that as long as we did not get drunk, that wine was a blessing. The Bible does say that. And therefore, it is my Christian liberty to drink alcohol in moderation.

But the more I have studied the Bible, the more I have become convinced that this so-called Christian liberty is nothing more than Christian license. Now I say this from two vantage points. First of all, the Bible teaches that we are not to be a stumbling block. And on today's scene, with millions, literally millions, of men and women and children being alcoholics, under no circumstance do we want to encourage anyone in the slightest degree to walk this dread path.

Now if I thought it was my Christian liberty to drink alcohol, and so I have beer in my refrigerator, or Scotch in my closet, and maybe I only drink that Scotch once a year for a New Year's celebration, or maybe I only drink that beer twice a year on a real hot summer afternoon, or I drink that wine only once a month for a very special dinner time, yet anyone else who looks at me is going to say, "You see? He's supposed to be a leader in the Christian church, and look at him. He drinks. And if he drinks, then I can drink."

And so my so-called Christian liberty has become a stumbling block to someone else. They're not going to think it through that I only take that beer twice a year, or thereabouts, or that I drink that wine only on the most special occasion. All they know is that I drink alcohol, and that's plenty excuse for someone who is very weak to drink. And in his drinking he may indeed become a drunkard, because the potential to become a drunkard is very very great.

From that vantage point alone I want to be a teetotaler. I want no part with alcoholic beverages.

Secondly, the Bible does teach that God has given wine and strong drink for the unsaved of the world. In Proverbs 31:6 God says, "Give wine to those who are perishing and strong drink to those who are about to die." For them wine and strong drink are a blessing. They refuse to go to God. They refuse to find an answer in Him, and so in order to help them to face life just a little bit, they take their glass of wine. And this makes life a little bit more rosy. Everything looks a little better.

Unfortunately, in too many cases they won't stop with that first glass, and that which began as some kind of a blessing in their life ended up as a curse, when they became a drunkard. But this is why God has created wine. And it is a blessing to unsaved man. But it's not a blessing that leads to salvation. It's a blessing that simply helps them to exist in their sins, as long as they're on this earth.

But in the case of saved people God has something different to say. In the fourth verse of Proverbs 31, He says, "It is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink." Now believers are kings. We are of royal blood. We reign with Christ. We are seated with Him in heavenly places. And our task, of course, is to represent Christ on this sin-cursed earth, as His ambassadors.

Now we are not to drink wine or strong drink. While this may be a blessing to the unsaved of the world, it's not a blessing to us. We have everything that we need in the Lord Jesus Christ. When things go bad with us, when it's difficult for us, we don't have to reach for that bottle. We don't need that glass of wine for dinner, to make it an attractive dinner. We don't have to have that bottle

of beer in order to take the edge off of life. We can trust in the Lord. We can pray to Him, come boldly to the throne of grace, come to Him with a broken heart, beseeching Him for help in time of need, and so on. We have everything we need in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we are to walk differently.

I know there are churches and denominations that do teach that it's the Christian's prerogative and liberty to use alcohol in moderation. And I know the verses that can be used to try to prove this. But I really believe, the more I study the Bible, and read these verses in the light of everything the Bible teaches, that this is not God's program for the believer.

True, we can use wine for medicine, as Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, prescribed for Timothy's stomach's sake. We can use wine, perhaps, as a sacrament in the Communion service. That's a different matter altogether. But insofar as drinking that glass of wine, or that bottle of beer, or that highball, in order to help us face life just a little bit (that's the purpose of it in the life of the unsaved), no, no, no! You have the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is everything; He is all that is necessary.

Why live like the world, when you can live like Christ? Why live like the world when you can live like Christ? Did Christ drink? "Oh, yes. He was called a drunkard and a wine-bibber." No, He did not drink. Jesus did not drink. He was called a drunkard and a wine-bibber by the Pharisees, because this was a figure of speech taken from the Old Testament, to indicate someone who was under the curse of God, a son of a father who was under the curse of God, and who was taken by the elders of the city to be stoned. He was called by his father, "My son is a glutton and a wine-bibber," which is the language that was used.

It was as if to say, he is subject to eternal damnation. And they called Jesus that because they were convinced that He was of Satan. But Jesus did not drink wine because He came as the King. And the King would not violate His own rules: "It is not for kings to drink wine or desire strong drink." Jesus would not drink wine or strong drink because He was the high priest. And in the Old Testament, when the High Priest went about his priestly duties, he was admonished by God not to drink any wine or strong drink of any kind. There's no possibility that Jesus drank wine or strong drink.

Look, if you're saved, you're a priest. You're a king. Why do you think it's your Christian liberty to drink alcoholic beverages? Nonsense. Don't live like the world. Live like Christ. Don't be mistaken as being with the world. Make sure that in this area of your life, too, they can see the fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't be a stumbling block to someone else that is weak and going to be tempted into something because of your so-called Christian liberty. Live a life so that in every aspect there's not the slightest appearance of evil.

Is it Sinful to Desire Wealth? (316B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question. If somebody has the desire for material wealth, is it sin?

HC: The question is, Is the desire for material wealth sin? The Bible says in 1 Timothy 6, "The love of money is the root of all evil."

Let's put it this way. Natural man, outside of Christ, wants money because money buys security. Money buys that which pleases the eye. Money buys that which is most marvelous in his sight, because you see, he is worshipping the creation. His hope, his future, his security, is in things, in land, in

buildings, and new automobiles, and this and that, and the other thing. That's all he's got to live for.

And so of course he desires to be wealthy, because money will provide more things. Money will provide more security, more of a hope for his life.

Now the child of God is a stranger and a pilgrim here on this earth. The child of God is just passing through. He's living as an ambassador of Christ, representing the Kingdom of Heaven. His focal point, however, is not on this earth. He fully realizes, or should fully realize, if he studies the Bible, that this earth is doomed. This earth is going to be destroyed by fire on the last day.

CALLER: Let me interject here. Would you call the desire for material riches a temptation that one has to overcome? Would you say it was from the devil?

HC: Well, this is not necessarily Satan that's causing him to do this. This can be simply the lust of his own heart. Even a child of God has a body that is still unsaved, that lusts after sin. And therefore we want more and more of this world's goods.

But the Bible says you cannot serve God and Mammon. You can't serve both. You've got to make a decision. Now if you're going to try to get a better job, to earn more money, so that your life might more effectively tell for Jesus, you'll have more funds to give to mission causes, you will be able to support the sending forth of the Gospel to a higher degree, that's a high and pure motive.

But if the motive for the better job is simply to live in a bigger house and own a newer car, that motive is a sinful motive. It's an indication that you're still serving this creation.

I think we have a tremendous example in Abraham. I'm always amazed at this Abraham. You know, he lived 4000 years ago, at the time when they had very little of the Gospel. He had very little of the Bible. And yet he knew far more about salvation than many theologians do today, who have studied the whole Bible for a long time.

Now Abraham was a wealthy man, in the sense that he owned lots of herds, and so on. But he was a shepherd. And he had every ability to buy land, to build a city, to make a name for himself, and call that city Abraham, or whatever else he wished to call it. He had every ability to do this.

But Abraham dwelt as a pilgrim. He never owned any land. The fact is, when Sarah his wife died, in old age he had to finally buy a piece of land to have a burial place for her. But outside of that, he never owned any land.

Now we have a very striking illustration of how he looked at the things of this earth. Lot, his nephew, also was with him. And Lot had a number of shepherds and quite a number of sheep, even as Abraham did. And these shepherds began to quarrel with each other, because there wasn't enough water, there wasn't enough grazing land for both of them to be together.

Now Abraham was the senior. Abraham was the patriarch. And by all rights we would expect him to say, "Now look, Lot, my nephew, God called me to this land. He promised me that He would give me the land of Canaan as an inheritance." All this would have been absolutely true to say, because God indeed did declare these very words to Abraham. And he could have said, "Now, Lot, I want you to dwell in the hill country. It's not quite as good land, but I'll dwell here in the more rich areas, because after all, I am the patriarch. And God has given me the land. And it's my right to choose the richest area." Abraham could have done this.

But we're amazed to see that when this rivalry, this quarreling between the shepherds occurred, Abraham called Lot over and said, "Look, Lot, you take your

choice. I'll let you make the choice. You can live in the hills here, where the grass is not nearly as verdant, where you're dependent altogether on the rain, where there can't be any irrigation of any kind, there are not nearly as many springs. Or you can take your flocks and dwell down along the Jordan River, where there's ample water, there are palm trees, and a couple of beautiful cities. You make your choice. Where would you like to go? But we've got to separate."

Now Lot of course chose the valley, where the rich pasture land was, and where the Jordan River flowed through, and where the rich cities were, because he was looking at this world to a much higher degree than Abraham. Now why could Abraham look at the situation this way? Because things and this world didn't mean anything to Abraham. They did not mean anything to Abraham. He was looking for a heavenly city.

You take two people who are unsaved. And unfortunately, this could also be the case of two people who are Christians, very frequently. And there's a quarrel over money. Whose is this \$100 or \$1000, or whatever it is. And my, the fight can be very very bitter. And we can all be guilty of this to some degree.

As Christians money doesn't really have that kind of importance. "Okay. If you're going to make a big deal of it, you take the money. I'm not going to quarrel about it. It's not that important to me. I'm just a stranger here. If I have a little less, fine. The Lord takes care of me. He'll care for me right to the end." This ought to be the posture of the Christian in this world.

What the Bible Says About Alcohol (373B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. I really appreciate your show. I was wondering if you could tonight give some Biblical guidelines for drinking alcoholic beverages.

HC: The question is raised concerning Biblical guidelines related to alcoholic beverages. Yes, I think I can do that.

First of all, the Bible of course has some good things to say about wine. It indicates that in a real sense it is a blessing of God. The Bible also has a lot of bad things to say about wine and strong drink. It says, for example, "Don't look upon wine when it's red." "Wine is a mocker and strong drink is raging." The Bible warns against drunkenness: "A drunkard shall not inherit the Kingdom of God."

Some people read the word wine in the Bible, and because they read that Jesus turned the water into wine at the wedding of Cana of Galilee, they conclude that the wine in some cases in the Bible was just grape juice. But actually, when we study the Bible very carefully and very candidly, when it says wine, it's wine. It's an alcoholic beverage.

I have found that the whole question of a Christian's relationship to wine and strong drink is stated best in Proverbs 31. After looking at everything in the Bible that relates to wine and strong drink, I find that this really cuts away all of the difficulties and lays it right on the line. It indicates why it is a blessing in certain instances, and it also indicates what a Christian's relationship ought to be.

Now in verse 6 of Proverbs 31 it says, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish and wine unto those that be of heavy heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty and remember his misery no more." In other words, God is indicating here that He has designed the grape so that wine can flow from this, and this would act as somewhat of a tranquilizer for unsaved man. He refuses to come to Christ, he refuses to find his rest in God, he goes his own rebellious way. But God,

in His divine mercy on this creation, has provided alcoholic beverages so that man can take a highball when he comes home from work, or he can have a glass of wine with his dinner, and this takes the edge off of life. It tends to make life slightly unreal, so that he is able to get through life with a little more ease.

Now of course unsaved man will constantly and very frequently abuse this blessing, and it will become a curse, because he drinks too much, he becomes an alcoholic, he becomes a drunkard, and it begins to destroy his life. But that is typical of unsaved mankind. Any blessing that God provides very frequently becomes a curse, because it is abused.

But for believers God has a different statement to make. In Proverbs 31:4 we read, "It is not for kings to drink wine." Well, now we have to decide who are kings. Is this talking about King David, about King Solomon? Are they the ones that could not drink wine? Yes, they were kings, of course. But actually, the Bible indicates that every believer is a king. We are of royal blood. We are seated with God in heavenly places, reigning with Him, as we read in Ephesians 2:6. We reign on earth, we read in Revelation 5. We reign in life, we read in Romans 6:15, or thereabouts. We are kings because we are identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Now, "it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink, lest they drink and forget the law and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." You see, we who are born again do not need a glass of wine to take the rough edge off of life. Why not? We have open access to God Himself, have we not? We can go to Him, and we can pour all of our troubles out to Him, and He will strengthen us. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." "We can always keep our senses, our minds clear, absolutely clear. We don't have to have them slightly discolored by wine or strong drink.

The fact is, it warns here, "lest they drink and forget the law." Now the law is the Word of God. We would begin to put our trust in that wine rather than in the Word of God. We would begin to put our trust in the joy or the release or the security or the confidence, or whatever, we may derive from that wine, rather than in the Word of God.

Now I know many Christians who insist that it is their liberty to drink wine. It is their liberty to drink wine or occasionally have strong drink. And I must say I was brought up that way. For many years in my life I thought that that was what the Bible taught. But when I really search the scriptures, I find that no, that is not so. The world, the unsaved, God has given them the wine and the strong drink. We don't need it. We have something infinitely more wonderful, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

I hope this will help a little.

CALLER: It certainly has, and I certainly thank you.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

How Rich is Rich? (411B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I have a few questions. One of them is, how rich does the Bible consider rich?

HC: How rich does the Bible consider rich? First of all, the Bible does not consider physical riches as being rich, necessarily. A man can be physically rich, and if he has not salvation, he is of all men most miserable. He is doomed to hell, and is to be pitied.

To be really rich is to be born again, to be a child of God, because then we are heirs of all the promises that are given in the Bible. We are heirs of the New Heaven and the New Earth. We become

sons of God. We will reign in this New Heaven and New Earth eternally as kings. There is no one richer than a born again believer.

Now we can't see these riches with our naked eye today. Now we live on this earth in sackcloth, as it were, to use the figure shown in Revelation 11. We live humbly. We live patiently, bringing the Gospel. We are the physically poor of the world to a very high degree, frequently. But we are the heirs. We are the sons of the King. And once we've spent a few years here on this earth, we go home to our homeland which is Heaven. And from then on everything gets better and better. We are the rich of the world, really.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you. And I have another question. In Isaiah 30:15 it says, "For thus sayeth the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel. In returning and rest shall ye be saved. In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. And ye will not." Does that mean you won't be able to be in quietness and confidence, or what?

HC: The question is raised concerning Isaiah 30:15, where God is using this language. First of all, let's get the context. The context of Isaiah 30 is that God is warning Israel that they are subject to judgment and hell, that God is going to destroy them because of their wickedness, their apostasy. And in verse 14 He uses the language of Judgment Day of the last day: "He shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces. He shall not spare, so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a shard to take fire from the hearth or to take water withal out of the pit." God is speaking here of final judgment.

Now in verse 15 He is saying that it doesn't have to be this way. He says, "For thus sayeth the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel. In returning and rest shall ye be saved." You could be saved if you would rest in the Lord, if you would rest in Christ as your Messiah, if you would quit trying to get into Heaven on your strength, on your good works, on your deeds that you think ought to be looked upon as worthy by God, if you would quit trying to satisfy your own personal pride and take credit for what you are doing, if you would only recognize the dismal truth about yourself, that you're sinners and you're under the wrath of God. And the answer to it is to admit this and rest in the salvation that God is going to provide. Rest quietly, and confidently in this.

"But ye would not. But ye said, No. For we will flee upon horses. Therefore shall ye flee. And we will ride upon the swift. Therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one. At the rebuke of five shall ye flee." In other words, they're saying, "We will put our confidence in the things that we own, in our horses, in our physical strength, in Egypt," in whatever they could find their strength in. And God says, "You're going to be destroyed. You're going to be so weak that one could destroy a thousand of you."

And this of course is speaking very pertinently to us today. There are all kinds of people who are placing their confidence in their good works, in their worthy lives, in their righteous deeds, in their desires to please God along this line. They really believe that God will look with favor upon them because look how hard they're trying to please God. And God will say, "No. No."

Or they've placed their trust in their money, or in the lands they own, or in their physical strength, or the guns they have in the house, or whatever else it may be, or in their nation, whatever it may be. And God says, "No. None of those things have any strength whatsoever, because you're still under the wrath of God. You're still subject to Judgment Day and hell unless you have

placed your confidence only in the Lord Jesus Christ. You realize that you're a sinner and that you're spiritually bankrupt, and you're in deep and terrible trouble with God. And therefore you cry out to God for mercy. You rest in Christ. You trust only in His Word as being sufficient to save you.

CALLER: Okay. I've heard you talk a few times about healers, you know, those who heal people. And a friend of mine was listening to one of these preachers. And he said that people there actually went in wheel chairs and walked out, and things like that. And I was wondering why you say that there's no healing going on today.

HC: The question is raised, in view of the fact that you can go to healing meetings today, and see people who come in wheel chairs walk out as if they are healed, doesn't this make a lie of the idea that God is not miraculously healing today?

Well, we first of all cannot trust an experience that we see. We do not build doctrine or truth by experience. That's a pragmatic way of doing it, and this is the way, for example, the scientific community does it. They run experiments, and based on the experiments they form a postulate or an axiom. They arrive at some kind of a law. When you drop an apple and it falls, and then you drop a silver dollar and it falls, and then you drop a feather and it falls, pretty soon you begin to sense that there's a law. And finally they call it the law of gravity. It's based on experiment, that there is a law of gravity, and so on.

But when we get to spiritual truth, we do not find out what the rules are by experience, because experience can be very deceiving. We have to find out what the rules are by the Bible. The Bible is the only trustworthy guide.

One of the laws, for example, that is being promulgated today by those who believe in miraculous healing is that Christ went to the cross to give us whole bodies, to heal our physical diseases. And they can quote a couple of passages in the Bible, a couple verses of the Bible, that appear to indicate this. But when we read the whole Bible, and compare all the scriptures, we find that that absolutely is not so. The Bible indicates that even though we're saved, even though in our spirit we go to be with Christ at death, our bodies will go into the grave. Our bodies will waste away. This is God's program, for saved people as well as unsaved people.

So therefore under no circumstance is Christ indicating, or the Bible indicating that Christ went to the cross to give us physical healing. Secondly, the Bible indicates that we're to walk by faith, not by sight. The Bible indicates that an evil and an adulterous generation seeketh for a miracle, or seeketh for a sign and so on and so on.

Well then, once we understand the Biblical statement, then we wonder, "Well then, what's happening out there?" Well, if I go to see a magician, for example, I don't know how he pulled a rabbit out of a hat. I don't know how he did all the things that he did. I saw it with my eyes, certainly. I saw lots of things. But I know they were impossible things. I know that somehow he didn't really do that.

But my mind is very easily deceived. My mind is very tricky. I went to see this magician knowing that he would deceive me this way, and knowing that my own mind would deceive me. This is the basis of many of the circus side shows, and so on. Our mind is very tricky. We see what we want to see very frequently.

And so if people go to a place where there is reputed to be miraculous healing, then they're going to see miraculous healing. Their minds are conditioned to see this. Now true, there is some healing that is taking place. A tremendous amount of illness, and it's real illness,

is psychosomatic in nature. Ulcers, hardening of the arteries, arthritis, migraine headaches, skin disorders, paralysis, are just a few of the diseases that frequently owe their basis to body tension, to anxiety that's within a person. And if that person will put his trust in anything at all, then the tension is removed, whether that trust is in the evangelist, in the healer, or in the Bible, or in whatever it is. If there is a real positive trust there, then the symptoms will also go away. There will apparently be healing. And it will be real healing. But it's not the miraculous healing that we read about in the Bible at all. It's simply that the tension has been removed.

Secondly, there is a certain amount of chicanery. I don't know how much, and I wouldn't even care to know how much or how little. But I know there is some, where there is just outright deception, in an effort to convince people that there is this kind of healing.

The important thing, however, is that if you go to a healing service, and you look at those on hospital beds, who are very obviously in need of a healing, or could stand a healing very nicely, as you look at their twisted limbs or their emaciated bodies, ridden by disease, whatever it may be, these kind always go out the way they came in, where there is very obvious disease. And these are the kind that Jesus healed, and the apostles healed. When James and John stood outside the temple gate, and the man was there with the withered limbs, who had never walked in his whole life, you can imagine what pencil thin legs, twisted little bone structure he had from his waist down. And yet instantaneously he stood up and jumped and ran, and so on. Now that kind of healing is not going on today.

CALLER: Okay. I heard about this girl in Oakland who bleeds every Easter, from her hands and her feet, where Jesus was nailed to the cross. And the doctors haven't found any explanation for it. I was wondering, is this another sign that Jesus is coming soon?

HC: It's not a sign from God, if indeed this is happening, and I don't believe everything I read, or that people tell me, because there's tremendous exaggeration today. I just don't believe everything that I read about. But assuming that it were true, it certainly is not a miracle done by God. God does not come with those kinds of signs and wonders today. God comes with the Word of God. It is the place where we're going to find divine truth. If you want some kind of an indication that we're near the end of time, read the Bible. It is the trustworthy account.

CALLER: Okay. And I've just got one more quick question. Who wrote the Book of John?

HC: The Gospel of John was written by the apostle John.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you.

HC: Thank you so much for calling. Good night.

Can We Smoke, Drink, etc., in Moderation? (412C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I have a couple of questions tonight. Now I have read in the Bible that we are to take all things in moderation. Now I hear that it's sinful to smoke, and I also hear that it's sinful to drink. Now I question that, because the Bible says to take all things in moderation. Now it's not what we take in that defiles our body, but it's what comes out of the body that defiles us. So therefore smoking conservatively, as a calmer to the nerves, and maybe a glass of beer or a can of beer once in awhile doesn't bother me. What I'm wondering is, taken in moderation, is that considered sinful? And if so, why,

because in the Bible we are told that we are to take all things in moderation, and also that it's not what we take in that defiles the body but that which comes out? And I'll take my answer over the air.

HC: This is a good practical question. Is smoking really a sin? The Bible doesn't say anywhere, "Thou shalt not smoke." The Bible however does indicate that "If any man defile the temple of God or destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy, because the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

Now there was a day when there was a question as to whether smoking was really destructive to our bodies. Although I can remember more than forty years ago, when I was in grammar school, that even at that time we were taught that smoking was very detrimental to our health. They didn't have a lot of evidence at that time, but they were on the right track. Subsequently, of course, doctors have proven beyond the shadow of a doubt that smoking is very injurious to our health. Even smoking in moderation, on the average, will shorten our life span by a few years. It will make us far more susceptible to lung cancer and to some of these other diseases that come from this.

In other words, this body that God has given us is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are to regard it as a holy vessel. Now this doesn't mean we have to become health faddists, but it does mean that we ought to live clean lives. If we know that taking a little bit of strychnine every day is going to make us run the risk of being poisoned, then we ought not to take strychnine. And if we know that even smoking in moderation is going to on the average shorten our life span, then we ought not to smoke. Then it becomes sinful.

The real problem is that a lot of times we have a sin in our life that we like. And in an effort to justify that sin, we rationalize. We try to think of ways around it. I find that the best way to live in life is to live as close to Christ as possible. Let me give a little illustration. Maybe I've used it many times before, but let me use it anyway.

Have you ever been up in the mountains in the days when we didn't have these nice big freeways? You know, the road was just kind of carved out of the side of the mountain and was maybe only ten or twelve feet wide at the most. And on one side the mountain rose sharply up, and on the other side it went sharply down. And when you drove on these kinds of roads, what was your natural inclination? To drive just as close to the edge of the precipice as possible? "Hey, look, I'm right on the edge and I'm not falling off, am I?" Is that the way you went? Not me, not me. It was just the opposite. How close to the other side could I drive? How far away from the precipice could I drive? I want to be as safe as possible.

You see, that's the way a lot of people live who believe they are Christians. They say, "Well, you know, these things are in the world," I'm not sure where this verse is, "Do all things in moderation." I know that that's taught, and maybe there is a verse that somehow alludes to that, although I don't know what that verse really is at this point in time. But certainly we don't sin in moderation. There's nothing in the Bible that says that we sin in moderation. Sin is sin. A little bit of sin is as bad as a lot of sin. We just are to stop sinning.

The goal of the believer is not to live as close to the world as possible, but as close to Christ as possible. He's to live as far away from the world as possible. This is his joy, this is his safety. This is what he really wants. And so if you have something in your life that you're struggling with and you really don't know what to do, well, do it God's way. If you're in doubt, then the chances are it's something that is sinful and you should turn away from it.

But to turn away from sin means I've got to deny myself. It means that I've got to hurt myself. I can't have that particular luxury. I can't have that particular joy or fun, or whatever it may be. But that's what Jesus talks about, doesn't He? Except you deny yourself you cannot follow Him. The Bible says what profit is it for a man to gain the whole world if he lose his own soul? We are to leave all and follow Him. Our focal point has got to be on the Lord Jesus Christ. And then we'll have the strength, the spiritual strength, to turn away from these sins.

Now in connection with wine also, you can say, "Well, I drink a glass of beer now and then and it doesn't hurt me. And it's kind of nice to have that can of beer on a warm afternoon, a warm summer afternoon." Let me ask you, why do you need the can of beer? Would you be just as happy without it? The world thinks that it's important to have the can of beer. My, oh my, they love that can of beer. Why do they like the can of beer? Because there's alcohol in it. It helps life to become just a little bit more rosy. It takes the sharp edge off of life. And God has given that beer to unsaved man. He's given that wine and those high balls to unsaved man, in order that they might be able to face life.

But God says in Proverbs 31:4, "It is not for kings to drink wine or strong drink." Now very humbly we as born again believers can say we are of royal blood. We're a child of the King. We're reigning with Him. We don't need wine or beer or booze any longer. We don't have to take the sharp edge of life away with this. We don't have to find our joy in this. We don't have to be like the world. Our celebrations can be altogether different.

The first thing the world does when they're going to celebrate is open up a bottle of champagne, don't they? Or break out the bottle of wine, or start serving booze around. This is invariably the way the world celebrates, isn't it? And we shouldn't be surprised at it. This is the world. This is what God has given to the world as a blessing. Now they'll abuse it again and again, and then they'll be faced with drunkenness and all the terrible things that go with it. But nevertheless God has designed the grapes and designed the hops, and so on, that beer and wine and so on could be made from it.

But for believers God says, "It is not for kings to drink wine or desire strong drink." And so the next time you have a celebration or the next time it's a hot summer afternoon and everyone else is breaking out the beer or offering the drinks, say to yourself, but I am a child of the King. I belong to a different kingdom than the rest of the people of this world who are unsaved. They are under the dominion of Satan. I by God's grace, I by God's mercy am a different kingdom altogether. And that ought to be seen in my life. And this is one place where it ought to be seen. Not that I'm going to walk around "holier than thou." But because I want to be as obedient as possible to the Word of God, that is my desire.

Coping with an Alcoholic Husband (458A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. Tonight is the night of the final decision. I meet with this grocery man who destroyed my husband's and my marriage, and we're about to lose our home because he made my husband a chronic alcoholic. When my husband got out of the hospital last year, his conservator warned this man, who has a liquor license, not to sell my husband alcohol, or it would be the ruination of him. And he did not heed the warning. I warned him not to sell it to him. And as a result my husband was getting worse and worse, deeper into booze, until he walked back and forth

four times a day, bought the liquor, drank it on the way home, then went back for more.

It got so bad that he has to be hospitalized, and if he isn't in a locked facility he's going to destroy himself or me. Last week he attacked me because I tried to stop him from burning the house down. He was frying something on a plastic plate, and it was going up in flames. And I tried to stop him. Ant he had a spoon in his hand, and if God hadn't protected me, if he had had a knife in his hand, I wouldn't be talking to you now. But he attacked me with this spoon, and he stabbed me so badly ant threw me against the stove that I had to go to the hospital.

Now I feel that this grocery man is responsible for ruining our lives. I haven't got the money to pay for his hospitalization, ant I would like to take him to court and make him pay the expenses for my husband's hospital. He cannot save my marriage anymore because my husband has suffered so much brain damage that he can't live in a normal environment anymore. He must be in a locked faculty. I will have to borrow money on my house and sell it in order to pay expenses. And I feel that it's only fair that this man should be faced with the responsibility of what he did and pay for my husband's hospital.

HC: You see, one of the problems that we face is that when we have a loved one who gets involved in a sin problem, and of course alcohol is a sin problem, if your husband had been a born again believer, obviously he would not have gone into this sin. Every individual has a sin nature, ant it's going to reveal itself in one way or another. Now in your husband's case it happened to be that he had a weakness for alcohol. And this is of course typical of many people in the world.

Ant when a man is destroying himself, there is an inclination on our part to put the blame somewhere. We want to put the blame somewhere, if we possibly can. But ultimately the blame is in the fact that we are sinners. If this grocer had not sold alcohol to your husband, I'm sure that your husband probably would have figured out another way to obtain his alcohol, in one way or another. If he had learned to put his trust in alcohol, and that's typical of an alcoholic. He finds that by drinking alcohol he can escape the realities of the world. He has found that in alcohol he has some kind of a security. Even though he knows it's destroying his life, he still thinks that there is some security there.

I really believe that what you can do is pray for your husband. It's only the Lord who can change things. And personally, of course, I can't tell you what you should do or should not do. But to sue the grocer, it's pretty hard to sue someone else for our own sins. True, the world around us contributes to our sins. The man, for example, who is troubled by evil desire goes to the corner grocery store, and he may pick up some pornographic literature, which helps to inflame his evil desires. And so he might go out and rape. Well, you could say, Well then, I'll sue the store on the corner that sells pornographic literature, because this was used to inflame my loved one's sensual desire. In other words, we want to put the blame somewhere.

Now God warns us and encourages us by saying, "Vengeance is mine. I will repay." When people do us bad things, or we really think that someone has done us a bad turn, we leave them in the hand of the Lord. Whatever they have done, God will take care of that. Of course we have an idea for instant justice, and we'd like to see it happen as soon as possible. But God has His own time plan. But on the last day every unbeliever has to give an account of his sins, and God will balance the scales of justice.

My recommendation would be (whether you're looking for it or not, I don't know) that to sue is only going to get you tense. It's only going to develop bitterness. It's only going to escape a larger problem. And that is that your husband is an unsaved man, obviously. But you can pray for him, that the Lord in His graciousness might still open his spiritual heart.

Now the account of your husband is not at all unusual. Millions of men, and women, too, are alcoholics, because this is one of the grievous sins that is part of the heritage of mankind.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, there is a law that bars are not allowed to sell to people who come in drunk. And this grocery man saw him come in staggering drunk. And even though he was warned by the authorities, he still sold him the liquor. Now he's the only one around here. And I really believe that my husband wouldn't have been so chronic, and we might have been able to save him, if this man hadn't done this.

HC: Well, it would be impossible, obviously, for me to adjudicate a case like this. I know little about the details. That's not my role to be a judge of any kind in this kind of a matter. I do, however, want to encourage you to remember that God is the one who, and if laws have been broken and if you legally can do this and do that, that of course is your privilege so to do. But ultimately God is the one who is in control of all things. And if a man is an unsaved man, the potential for wrongdoing, the potential for sin, is very great. And the whole world is an environment in which wrongdoing can be done.

I know of drunkards, for example, who always seem to find their Liquor. And they'll hide it here or there in their house or in their farm or in their garage, so that they can nip as often as they want. The heart of a man is very perverse, and they will find their way in one way or another if they possibly can.

CALLER: Is the Bible against separating from a man like that, who, when it comes down to it, has put my very life at stake now. I'm thinking of separation.

HC: Well, here we come to a point where we really come at the crossroads of trusting the Lord. Now common sense ant all the world around us would say, "Well, obviously, if your life is at stake, you ought to separate." But according to the Bible, first of all, the Bible indicates that you ought to be more loving, you ought to be completely loving and obedient to your husband. Even though he's an unsaved man, and even though frequently he is a drunkard, in anything lawful you are to be obedient. And you really want to be a loving wife to him, so that he can see the fragrance of Christ in your life.

And if in a violent temper he would injure you in some way, well, read I Peter 2. The Bible there says that if we have been beaten while doing well, and we take it patiently, we have God's approval, "for to this we have been called."

CALLER: I think God saved me when he put that spook in his hand instead of a knife.

HC: Yes. Certainly God was caring for you. Certainly God was caring for you. And God can care for you in any kind of a predicament if you put your trust in Him. That's the way we all want to live, just patiently trusting in God.

CALLER: Well, thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. And may God give you much wisdom ant much patience. And many will be praying that the Lord might deal kindly and graciously with your husband, that hopefully his spiritual eyes might be opened.

The Problem of Lust (544A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Brother Camping. I have a question tonight, and I would like to take my answer on the air if I could. If a married person (man or woman) has a problem with lust, whether or not that problem has materialized, I believe that the strength to overcome that problem must come from God and that it's not within us, that there's nothing within us that I believe can do any good, or anything righteous, apart from Christ. And any light that you could shed on that would surely be appreciated.

HC: This is a very practical question. What do I do if I am tempted by sin? And in this particular case the issue was that of lust, or evil desire. And our caller very rightly put his finger on the answer, to some degree, when he said it is not within us to gain victory, it is not within us to have strength to have victory over that sin. It is God who has to strengthen us.

But we read in I Corinthians 6:18 a statement that addresses itself to this very question. God says there, "Flee fornication." Now fornication is any kind of sexual immorality, any kind of sexual lust, whether in the mind or in the action. And God says, "Flee fornication." Now how do you flee fornication?

Well, obviously, when you're trying to flee something or run away from something, you want to get as far away from it as possible. We of course are living in a very sinful world. We're living in a world where the TV programs are designed to aggravate the temptation of fornication. There are all kinds of suggestive statements and actions that are on display when we watch many TV programs. This is characteristic of novels that have been written. Hardly any today that are best sellers that do not contain at least one or two or more incidents that clearly display fornication. This is true of the newspaper, this is true of most magazines today. It's hard to find that which does not encourage fornication. This is true of many of the stories and jokes that are told. They find as their environment, or as their matrix, fornication.

Wherever we turn—the soap operas, for example—wherever we turn, we see an encouragement toward fornication. Now the Bible says, "Flee fornication." So this means that I have to be very selective in what I read and what I listen to. If someone begins to tell a joke and we begin to sense that it's moving in a lustful direction, we have to turn off our hearing aid, so to speak. We have to walk out of the room, or mentally turn off the speaker so that we will not listen to what is being said.

When we are watching a TV program and we begin to sense that this is beginning to happen, we should forthrightly turn it off, and it may even be necessary that we pull the plug and never use that TV set again, if we find that this is increasingly in front of us, and of course it is, as we watch many programs today. It means that most novels we cannot begin to read, because we know what we're going to run into. It means that we have to be exceedingly selective as to what magazines we're going to open up. We have to do everything possible to remove ourselves from the arena where fornication is on display.

Now this is something that we must do. This is what repentance is, to turn away from it. We realize that this is a weakness in our flesh, this is something that can easily tempt us, and therefore we don't want to come near it. We want to stay as far from it as possible, all the time praying, "Oh Lord, give me strength. Oh Lord, strengthen me that I will continue to turn away from this." And if we really mean business about this, then God Himself will also

strengthen us and increase our distaste for this. We will have the dynamic of God Himself strengthening us as we flee fornication.

Playing Cards (643B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Brother Camping. I have two questions please. The first is, what is meant by "slain in the Spirit," like when a person falls backwards, seemingly unconscious, when hands are laid on him in healing? Is this referenced in the Bible, and where?

HC: What does it mean to be "slain in the Spirit"? This is a phenomenon that is increasingly popular in many denominations and congregations. Actually, it is something that relates to something in the Bible, but if it has any relationship to anything in the Bible it is very ominous. It is a very terrible thing that is happening.

In the Bible there are only four references to falling backwards, and each one has to do with the judgment of God. Each one has to do with those who are under the judgment of God, who are subject to eternal damnation. And indeed they are slain, but it's a picture of eternal damnation that has come upon them. And so while this thing is happening today, I really believe that it is not of God. I believe that it is something that is a sign that, I really think that it is, in the Bible to fall backwards is the equivalent of calling down fire from heaven, and it could very well be the phenomenon that is spoken of in Revelation 13, where it talks about Satan even making fire come down from heaven, in verse 13 of Revelation 13.

In other words, it is something that is not at all a blessing. It is not something that I would look upon as being desirable. I believe it is something that if it relates to the Bible at all relates in a terrible way.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you on that one. The other question is, if you're playing cards not for money, but just for the fun of it, like playing Pinochle or Cribbage, is this a sin? And if so, where does it say so in the Bible?

HC: The question is, is it wrong to play cards just for points rather than for money? Is that a sin? Of course the Bible doesn't say you are not to play Poker, that you are not to play Cribbage, you are not to play Canasta, and so on. The Bible just doesn't put it that way. The more I study the Bible, however, I find that in the Bible casting the lot was a very sacred event. Now casting the lot means to pull straws to see who gets the shortest straw, or it means to throw dice to see if a certain number would come up, or to spin an arrow. All of these things were casting the lot. We have no control over what is going to come up. And in the Bible casting the lot was a sacred event that, when employed rightly, was to determine what God's will was in the matter.

For example, when the nation of Israel was being divided in the land of Israel, we read in the Book of Joshua that the lot was cast. By casting the lot God's will was determined. When a replacement was required for Judas, after he had committed suicide, two men were found that were qualified and the lot was cast to discover God's will, which one would God pick out? Now that's a very sacred and rightful use of casting the lot.

However, when we cast the lot to decide who is going to be the cup of coffee (we flip a coin), or when we cast the lot in games, even games like Rook and these other seemingly innocent games, I really believe that we are going contrary to the will of God. Now I know many will say, "Wow, that's really getting pretty picky." But as we go along in life, and we want to live more and more close to the Lord, we want to do it God's way more and more, and we must remember that

games, most of the games were not designed by Christians who earnestly love the Lord and who had thoroughly studied the Bible. They are designed by the world. And even the so called Christian games, like "Going to Jerusalem" and so on were patterned after the games of the world.

Now there are games that are simply games of skill, that have nothing to do with casting the lot (chess or checkers, or Chinese checkers, or some of these games), and they would be perfectly valid as long as we do not spend so much time with them that we waste our time.

CALLER: Then in your opinion, and according to the Bible, we shouldn't play cards?

HC: In my opinion we should not play cards. Now there's one other factor that may be a little more substantive for many. And that is, the Bible says, "Do not give any appearance of evil." And of course the normal deck of cards that is used for Poker or for Blackjack, or gambling games, has that very heavy association. And so again I think the less we know about cards the better it is for us. We don't even want to be misunderstood as we use those kind of cards.

CALLER: Okay. Well, thank you, Brother Camping.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

The Bible on Homosexuality (762A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Brother Camping. I wanted to ask you about some scriptures about homosexuality. What does the Bible say about that?

HC: Insofar as homosexuality is concerned, the Bible has very ugly things to say, as it also has ugly things to say about many sins. It doesn't single out homosexuality. It normally lists it along with other sins.

In I Corinthians 6:9 we read, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" And of course the opposite of inheriting the kingdom of God is to be subject to eternal damnation. But then the Bible goes on, "Be not deceived. Neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor effeminate nor abusers of themselves with mankind [that would be a homosexual], nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Now in Leviticus 18 God speaks very directly to the sin of homosexuality. In verse 22 we read, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind. It is abomination." And here God lists this as one sin amongst many other sins. A third reference to homosexuality, which in a surprising way relates to what is happening today, when we have such an increase in homosexuality, is in Romans 1:18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them, For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so they are without excuse."

Now so far what God is saying is that God's wrath is going to be visited on this earth and is already seen, because mankind, who ought to know that there is a Creator God and begin to cry out for His mercy, instead will not worship Him. They go their own way. They worship the creation. They believe in things like evolution, and so on. They refuse to worship God.

We read in verse 21, "Because that when they knew God they glorified Him not as

God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened." Verse 23: "and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things." Now that's the sin, that they refuse to acknowledge God. And that speaks of the world today. The common situation in the world is that God will not be recognized, and man does everything he can to deny the fact that there is a Creator God.

Now this is the result that we see in this time, and it's very ominous. And of course it's only a prelude or a transition to Judgment Day itself, when they will be faced with eternal damnation. Verse 24: "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves." Now that's pointing right to sexual immorality.

And now in verse 26 and 27 God speaks directly to this matter of homosexuality: "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections, for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature, and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust, one toward another, men with men, working that which is unseemly." Now that's homosexuality. And God is saying that the vast increase of homosexuality that we see in our day is a result of the fact that God has taken His hand of restraint from off mankind, because they refuse to acknowledge Him as God. They refuse to turn to Him as their Savior and recognize that He is the Creator of this universe.

Now that's the first thing that happens. They burn in their lust, one for another, that is, men with men. And notice the next phrase, which seems so pertinent in the light of some of the news stories that are coming out, where there are not only the typical venereal diseases that are rampant everywhere, but also there are new diseases that doctors do not know how to cure, and they are particularly found with this kind of activity. And there the Bible speaks about this, in verse 27, "And receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet." Now that of course could also be speaking of eternal damnation, which will finally come upon them. But at least there's a strong suggestion that even as they are engaging in these kind of activities, God's wrath will already be visited upon them. And I'll tell you, when I read some of the stories that are coming out now about these diseases for which there is no-cure, if I were a homosexual, I would be living in fear and trembling, wondering when I was going to get that disease. And many are dying from these unknown diseases that are seriously troubling the homosexual community.

And of course far worse than that (and this is true of anyone who engages in sin, whatever the sin may be), there is the wrath of God that is infinitely worse than any disease.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much, Brother Camping.

Can a Homosexual be Saved? (852C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I have a question I would like to ask you. I've asked several other ministers, and I happen to be a minister myself. But the question that I have is found in Romans 1:28. The question is this, if a person has been a homosexual, and he wishes to change, and God is beginning to move in his life, and he begins to wonder about salvation, can that person be saved?

HC: The question is, in the light of Romans 1:27-28, where God is talking about God giving up men to homosexuality, and God giving them over to a reprobate mind, to do those

things which are not convenient, that is, which are not right, can such a person become saved? And the answer is, absolutely yes. In I Corinthians 6 we read in verse 9, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind [that would be a homosexual], nor thieves, nor covetous, nor covetous, nor revilers nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Now that's very emphatic: they shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And yet verse 11, the next verse, offers the grace of God: "And such were some of you. But you are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

In other words, as long as the Gospel goes into the world, and it's God's plan to save people – and that will continue until the last of the elect are saved – anyone, regardless of how deep in sin they may be, regardless of how terrible their situation is, if they cry out to God for mercy, God guarantees that He will save them.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you, Brother Camping. Keep up the good work

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Drinking Wine and Christ's First Miracle (853A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Is drinking wine a sin?

HC: Is drinking wine a sin? Actually, in the Old Testament God used many physical ideas as He laid out the Gospel message, letting them be types and figures of the Gospel. In the Old Testament, for example, God made a big point about the ownership of land, particularly in the land of Canaan. God made a big point about having plenty of bread to eat, and crops that would be very plentiful. God made a big point of the fact that the wine vats would be full, and that wine could be a blessing, even though intermingled with this are His warnings, "Don't look upon wine when it is red," and so on.

Now all of these physical blessings were pictures of spiritual ideas. The land was pointing to the kingdom of God, that is eternal in character. The plentiful grain fields, the plentiful harvest, was pointing to the plentitude of the bread, which is the Lord Jesus Christ, that the Gospel would be sufficient for every need. The wine was pointing to the blood of Christ, that it was more sufficient for all of our needs.

But in the New Testament God disassociated Himself with anything of that kind. He says, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink." And in fact, when we study the New Testament, we only find a couple of verses that relate to the matter of wine. We find that it says, "Don't be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit," in Ephesians 5. And we read in I Timothy that the deacon is not to be given to much wine. And we read in I Timothy 5 that God really defines what "not much wine" is by saying that you can take a little wine for your stomach's sake, and your many infirmities. In other words, it can be used for medicinal purposes.

On the other hand, God laid down a lot of rules in the New Testament as to the conduct of the believer. For example, He indicates that we are to crucify the world. And the world is to be crucified to us. He has indicated that to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy with God. Now when we look at wine in the world today, we find that it is the hallmark, it is, you almost could say, the foundation stone of the happiness of the world. You watch this on the TV programs as, when people are showing hospitality, they go to the liquor bar, and offer a drink. Or we

find this at the office parties. The center of attraction is the punch bowl that has been spiked with alcohol. Alcohol is the first source of happiness for the world. Now the Bible says we are to be an enemy of the world. We are to crucify the world, and the world is to be crucified to us.

Therefore God sets up entirely different standards for the believer. Instead of looking for our happiness in booze, the Bible says that "Don't be anxious about anything, but with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to the Lord, and the peace of God that passeth understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." In other words, we're an entirely different kingdom than the world. And therefore wine and strong drink have no place for the believer. You can use it for medicinal purposes, certainly, and perhaps in the Lord's Supper, as a ceremonial, a sip of wine. Beyond that the Christian wants to stay as far away as possible from it, because he realizes that this is the cornerstone of the world's happiness.

CALLER: Didn't Jesus, at His first miracle, make those people stumble?

HC: The question is, did Jesus in His first miracle make the people stumble? Number one, we must remember that Jesus turned the water into wine on the Old Testament side of the cross. It was still at a time when wine was a picture of the plentitude of the blood of Christ. As a matter of fact, in that marvelous miracle, the first miracle that Jesus did, He showed Himself to be the Creator, as He turned the water into wine in six stone jars, reminding us very heavily of the six days of creation. And He also showed Himself as the Redeemer. That water was water of purification, anticipating the shed blood of Christ. And by turning it into wine He focuses on the shed blood of Christ. The wedding feast is a picture of the believers, who are married to Christ, and ultimately, spiritually speaking, will sit down at the wedding feast with Christ. The fact that they drank wine was in accord with God's provision in the Old Testament, where God was using wine as a figure or picture of spiritual things. But it gives us no encouragement at all, none whatsoever, that now it is the Christian's privilege, or the Christian's liberty, to drink wine. The fact is, I always shudder when I hear people talk about Christian liberty. Normally what this ends up as is simply Christian license to live as close to the world as possible and yet still call themselves Christians.

CALLER: That means, you're saying, if you crucify the world, that means that you shouldn't go to baseball games, and you shouldn't enjoy yourself, and so on. That's what you're really saying.

HC: Well, the question is, how far do we go in crucifying the world, and letting the world be crucified to us? There are many things that we may have to give up. If we find, for example, that we become obsessed with baseball games, and find that we just, once we get involved with them, can't leave them alone, and we can't stay from the TV or radio when a baseball game is on, and we spend more time than we should going to games, and so on, yes, then we have to deny ourselves. If it is not an incidental part of our life, then we have to realize that it has become a problem to us, because our focal point has to be on far more important things than this.

Now there isn't anything in itself wrong with a baseball game. And certainly the Bible does not teach that believers cannot observe a game or engage in a game, as long as the game itself is not sinful. But in the case of alcohol, the purpose of alcohol is to deaden the conscience just a little bit. The rigors of this life are very severe. By taking that glass of wine for dinner, or the high ball before dinner, or the glass of beer, or whatever it is, that little bit of alcohol

will make life look a little more pleasing, make it a little more livable. But the believer does not want that path. The believer goes to the Lord Jesus Christ to make life more livable. God has given us the wonderful privilege of being able to pray to God, and having the Peace that passes understanding, a peace that no glass of wine can ever give to a person.

CALLER: What is vainglory?

HC: Vainglory is pride. The word vain really means empty or futile. And the only glory that God wants us to focus on is on the Lord Jesus Christ. If we try to glorify ourselves, what our conquests have been, or how great we have become, or whatever, it is vainglory. It is futile, empty glory. It is an altogether sinful kind of glory.

CALLER: Well, how would you know that you got somewhere, but you appreciate God putting you there.

HC: The question is, suppose that you were at the top of the class. Let's say you're going to school. And you worked real hard, and you got all A's, and so you ended up at the top of the class. Am I to glorify myself now because I am there? Am I to parade that around? Am I to let as many people know as possible that this is where I am? The answer is, no. The Bible says we are to walk very humbly. If someone else wants to pay attention to it, that we are at the top of the class, well, fine; let them say it. But it's not very important. We realize that the only reason that I was able to be at the top of the class is that God designed me with a good mind, and qualified me with an attitude where I would study hard, and so on. So God has to get all the glory. And so it's not a big deal. The Bible says, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, do all to the glory of God. So in this, too, as I studied, or whatever the achievement may be, God is the one who receives the glory.

CALLER: You can use your full potential, just as long as you have your priorities right.

HC: You can use your full potentials, but you have to keep your priorities right. And living in a world as we do, that is very secular, very secular, we can very easily be tempted down a path that is contrary to the Word of God.

CALLER: Okay, thanks a lot.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

How to be "Wise as Serpents" (100C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Would you explain what it means in the Bible when it says, "Be wise as serpents"?

HC: Yes. In the Bible the serpent is a figure of Satan, and the serpent in the Garden of Eden is spoken of as being the most prudent of the animals. He was the wisest of the animals before the fall of man. And it is this animal that is used here. In other words, we have to be as wise as Satan himself. We have to be as wise as anything in this creation is wise, and yet we have to be as innocent as a dove. The dove represents the Holy Spirit Himself. We have to be holy in our wisdom. We may not be wise as serpents in the sense of having deceit, or having a conniving mind of some kind. Our wisdom has to be straight prudence, straight wisdom.

CALLER: When you're being wise, do you have to study about Satan, or do you just study about Christ?

HC: Under no circumstances would the Bible teach us that we are to study Satan in order to emulate him. The Bible says in another place, "Be babes in evil." The less we know about wickedness, the better it is. We can know about serpents, however, if we go back to Genesis 1 or

Genesis 3, where it speaks about the fall of Adam, that the serpent was the most wise, the most prudent, which is actually the word that is used there, of all of the animals. We are to be exemplary in our wisdom, in other words.

It also comes to mind this statement of Luke 16, where we have the parable of the dishonest steward. And the dishonest steward in this parable is a very sinful man, and yet he is a very wise man in his own generation, that is, in his generation of evil. And the conclusion of Jesus is, in verse 8: "The master commended the dishonest steward for his prudence. For the sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations."

In other words, God here is using an example of someone who is wicked, and who has a deep concern for the future, and makes provision for the future, and likewise He wants believers to have concern for the future.

On Feeling Distant from the Lord (200B)

CALLER: Brother Camping, you were saying that Satan's power is curtailed now?

HC: Yes.

CALLER: I'm just thankful for all things, how the Lord has been working. I just thank Him for everything. And I don't pray for things over and over, like I used to, knowing that it's foolishness, because the Lord knows once, and He hears. You know?

HC: Although it's not really foolishness. You know, the Bible says, in Philippians 4:6, "Don't be anxious about anything. But with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests made known to God." And so when we become anxious about anything, and we can become anxious a thousand times, each time God says, "Come to Me, and talk to Me about it."

And so we mustn't feel that we're being faithless, or that we're being less a Christian just because we pray about the same thing for the hundredth time. We have a Savior who says, "Pray without ceasing." And so don't feel at all embarrassed or bashful to go to the Lord with your concerns and your praises, and so on, again and again and again and again.

CALLER: I see. That's good. That's clear, Brother Camping. But what is really bothering me is, I know that the old serpent, the devil, his power is broken by the cross, the blood of Christ. But still it seems like the closer I get in my walk with the Lord, truly deeply spiritual, it seems like I feel sometimes that I'm just completely "blanked out" from God, you know? I mean, that's the way I feel. And sometimes it seems like the Lord says to me, "You're the Christian. You are to rebuke Satan in the Name of Jesus. And nothing on this earth will hurt you." Then just claim the blood, and . . .

HC: Where do you read that in the Bible, that we're to rebuke Satan?

CALLER: Oh. Well, let's see . . .

HC: The Bible says that we are to resist him, but the Bible doesn't say that we are to rebuke Satan in the Name of Christ.

CALLER: Wait a minute. I got that mixed up. Mark 16:15.

HC: In Mark 16:15 He said simply, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation."

CALLER: Right. And then He says, "casting out demons in Jesus' Name."

HC: Well, but He's not talking about rebuking Satan here.

CALLER: Wait a minute. Maybe I read that wrong.

HC: I'll tell you. It isn't our task to

rebuke Satan. That's God's task. He'll take care of Satan. Our task is to live close to Christ.

Now when we feel spiritually dry, what happens if you would, on a real hot day, or any other day, not drink any water for a while? Pretty soon you'd start feeling pretty awful. You'd get more and more thirsty. Your body would start dehydrating. Things would not be going well at all.

Now what is the solution to that? Well, you'd make a dash for water, if there were any around. And this would begin to straighten out things. Now what is the Water of Life? It is the Word of God. And if we live without drinking from the Word of God on a consistent basis, then we're going to be spiritually dry.

Now when you look at your life (and any one of us can examine our life), ask yourself, during the last week, particularly in a dry period like this, but we can ask ourselves this at any time, "During the last week or the last month, how much time did I spend reading the Bible, really searching the Word of God, recognizing it is God's holy Word, He is speaking to me, and I'm going to derive spiritual blessing from it?" How much time do we spend?

Compare, for example, in your life (and all of us can do this) how much time you spend watching TV, let's say, as compared with what you spend reading the Bible. How much time do you spend reading the newspaper, as compared with reading the Bible? How much time do you spend reading novels, if you like to do that, as compared with reading the Bible?

And you'll find that the Bible always comes out fifth or sixth or seventh best. Now it's no wonder then that you're going to be spiritually dry. Actually, the Bible, in the life of the born again believer, ought to be pressing for number one position. We ought to spend more and more time. But we, you know, read the Bible, a chapter a day, and we feel pretty heroic about it. Praise the Lord, we read a chapter today. We've really done our Bible reading.

Well, my. During that same day we spent an hour watching TV, or maybe four hours watching TV. Now when we watched TV, we weren't fed with anything particularly. When we read the newspaper, we didn't learn anything, really, of great significance, that really helped us in our life with Christ. But yet we can easily spend a half hour in the newspaper every day. No struggle at all, reading everything from cover to cover. And yet when we're all done, we have to say, "Well now, what did we learn? How did that benefit me spiritually?"

Really, what we ought to do is spend an hour a day reading the Bible, spend the whole evening, a few nights a week, reading the Bible, just feeding on the Word, and identifying with the scriptures insofar as we are able to understand it. And as we read it with a view to being obedient to it, we would find that our life is beginning to sharpen up spiritually.

You see where the problem lies?

CALLER: Oh, yes. I see that exactly, because that's exactly, well, I can see how that works out.

HC: Now you want to grow spiritually. But you can't grow unless you're reading the Word.

CALLER: Right. I have to get that Word first.

HC: Well, may you be much encouraged in the Word.

CALLER: Now here's the thing. I can see where He's working. He says He will supply all our riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Well, every prayer of mine has been answered. I was like the Prodigal Son, but He brought me closer together with my Dad. Now praise the Lord there for answered prayer. It's wonderful to know that Jesus hears and answers prayer.

HC: Well, thank you so much for sharing.

The Tempered Joy of a Believer (238C)

CALLER: I'd like for you to comment on something I experience. I don't know if it's all that common or not. But I call it an emotional bubble. Since I found myself living in God, I have a tendency to be excited about everything. And I feel like crying a lot, not sad but joyful crying. I'll take my answer on the air. Thank you.

HC: Our caller mentioned an emotional bubble that you lived on after you are born again, after you are saved. First of all, there is this fact in the life of the born again believer, in the true child of God. He lives in the constant realization that his sins have been forgiven, that he is no longer threatened by hell, that he is no longer a slave of Satan, that instead he has become a child of God. He has been given the promise that God would never leave him nor forsake him. He knows that already he has eternal life and that at death he will immediately be able to go into God's holy presence, and to continue forever in the presence of God.

He knows that he is an inheritor of the New Heaven and the New Earth, which will come into existence after Judgment Day, when God destroys this whole universe by fire. In other words, he has all kinds of promises and blessings to rest upon – all good, all wonderful blessings. And this ought to bring a great joy, a great happiness within this person's life. And this can certainly affect him emotionally.

Now of course he is still a human being. He still has an old nature, and he's still affected by the "blues" on a gray day, and so on. But through it all, there is always this joy. In spite of the fact that it's a gray day, in spite of the fact that things did not go well in so many ways today, I know that I belong to Christ.

And this will carry him through the most difficult kind of an experience. Now it doesn't mean that he's going to be living giddily, or in some kind of a hilarious joy being expressed in his life, because it is tempered by two things essentially. First of all, it is tempered by his sadness when he sees sin in his own life. Every time we see sin in our own life, we realize that we have not measured up to God's standard of holiness. We have not really shown our love to God the way we ought to. And this will bring unhappiness into our life, even though we know that sin has been covered by the Lord Jesus Christ.

An even greater source of sadness in the life of the believer is that as we bring the Gospel, we will see that again and again it is repudiated. It is rejected by those whom we earnestly desire that they might become saved. And this will bring great sadness to us, because we empathize, as fellow human beings, with other human beings. And we know that as long as a person rejects the Gospel, they're under the wrath of God and they're subject to hell. And so the Bible speaks about believers as sowing with weeping. The Bible spoke of Jesus, who wept over Jerusalem, when He recognized that they constantly rejected the Gospel.

And so the joy of the believer, which is real and certain and marvelous, is tempered by the fact that he's living in a sin-cursed world. And that sin affects his own life as well as terribly affecting the lives of those who remain unsaved. And I believe that this is really the life of the believer.

Now if we are having other emotional experiences, they can be reflection of these particular essential conditions that exist in the life of the believer, or they can also be a part of the fact that we're just human beings, and that we relate to other things emotionally that do not necessarily relate to our salvation, per se.

Well, thank you for sharing that.

Can A Saved Person Go Insane? (243C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I was wondering, can a saved person go insane?

HC: Can a saved person become insane? Well, if insanity comes because here is a chemical defect, or a structural defect in our body, so that there is something structurally wrong with our body, a Christian could go insane. But ordinarily, if we are saved, as we face life we know that we have a Savior to go to. We can come to Christ with all of our troubles and cares. We don't have to become anxious.

You see, much insanity that exists in the world is a way of escaping the pressures of life, or a way of escaping the deep-rooted fears that get into person's life, because a person can't face life. He can do a number of things. He can begin to take alcohol. That's one way of being able to face a world that one cannot cope with otherwise. One can begin to take tranquilizers. And a third way is to become insane. Insanity very frequently is just a way of avoiding the responsibility of trying to cope with life.

Or insanity very frequently is a result of fear that gnaws at a person's heart, and grows and grows. And this fear becomes so great that it eventually ends in insanity. And again, there insanity is probably an escape. That's the only way that they can live with their fears, by simply abandoning responsibility toward life.

Now it could be possible for a Christian, if he took his eyes off Christ, if he looked at the troubled waters of life all around him, it could be possible. Certainly a Christian could have a nervous breakdown. He can have this kind of oppression upon him.

But if we are living a healthy Christian life, if we are focusing our eyes on Christ, if we are trusting in Him as the one who has taken our sins, and remembering that He is Sovereign God, and nothing happens to us except by His divine guidance, then the likelihood of insanity is very very remote.

I hope this will help you just a little bit.

CALLER: That's a big help. Thank you very much.

HC: Yes. Don't fear. You see, the Bible teaches that the perfect love of Christ casts our fear. Just think of Philippians 4:6 and 7. There God really puts it all. He says, "Don't be anxious." Now anxiety is the thing that grips a person. You can be anxious, "Will I ever go insane? I've got a parent who had trouble with this, or a grandparent, or whatever." And so this gnaws at your soul: "Could this happen to me?" That's anxiety, and in our anxiety, what do we do?

The first thing we do is we worry about what might happen to me tonight. And then, on top of that, we begin to wonder, "How can I live through the week?" And so we add to our burden of anxiety tonight also the anxiety of a whole week.

And then we, in our fear, in our anxiety, begin to wonder, "Oh, how can I keep going this way, month after month?" And, "What's going to happen next year and the following year?" And so we get more and more weighed down. We just build a bigger and bigger load on our back as we worry about tonight, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year. And it's such a heavy load, that finally it just breaks us.

Now the Bible says, first of all, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Don't worry about tomorrow. We read in Lamentations a very very beautiful statement. It's a statement that we all ought to know is there, because of its context. The context of Lamentations is that of a time when Judah is suffering

grievously because of their sins, and the hand of God is against them. And the statement of the writer is in verse 19 of Lamentations 3: "Remember my affliction and my bitterness, the wormwood and the gall. My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me."

But then, in that sad context, He comes through with this beautiful statement: "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul. Therefore I will hope in Him. The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."

Now you see, here God teaches that every morning His mercies are renewed. So in our anxiety, when we start worrying about tomorrow, and the next day, and next week, the first thing we have to do is cry out to God, "Oh Father, forgive me for looking ahead, for being disobedient to Your command that we're not to be anxious about tomorrow, because You have promised that every day Your mercies are renewed."

Now secondly, in Philippians 4:6 we read, "Don't be anxious about anything. But with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to the Lord." In other words, we can go to the Lord with everything that would tend to make us anxious. And we can go to Him again and again and again and again and again. "Pray without ceasing," the Bible says. And we can tell Him all about it. We can pour it out to Him. We can beseech Him. We can beg of Him, "Oh Father, strengthen me in this."

Now we are told to come "with thanksgiving." Now this is a very healthful reminder, because think of it. He has cared for me up until this time. He cared for me during the last ten minutes. And if He's done that, perhaps He'll care for me another ten minutes. And He has made this open door available to me, so that I can go to the Lord in my anxiety. That's certainly something to be grateful to God for.

You see, as we begin to thank God, our focus is shifted from our own problems to Christ, to God, because He is the one who is the giver of all good things that we can thank Him for.

Now, "Don't be anxious about anything, but with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to the Lord." And then what will happen? And here is the promise that virtually guarantees that we're not going to go insane, at least as a result of anxiety or fear. Because what is the next promise?: "And the peace of God, that passeth understanding, will keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus." And once you're at that stage, you're secure, aren't you? You're absolutely secure, once the peace of God overflows your life. As you turn it all over to Christ, as you tell Him all about it, and just relax in Him. He is Almighty God. He is the Almighty Sovereign One.

What am I worried about? What am I troubled about? God is in control. He'll never leave me nor forsake me. And then the pressures that move a person toward a nervous breakdown, the pressures that move a person toward insanity of some kind, are completely negated. They're completely relieved.

This is the way the Bible guides us, you see.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Discouragement and the Christian (321B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Mr. Camping. I'd like to

ask you a question about discouragement. I'm a new Christian. And I feel the Spirit sometimes, and then other times I feel kind of discouraged. I wonder if you have experienced that, or if born again Christians do experience discouragement.

HC: The question is a very practical question. Sometimes this caller feels very discouraged. He doesn't feel the presence of the Lord in his life the way he feels it ought to be. He wonders if this is typical of the Christian life. And I suppose the question might also be added, what can we do about this?

Yes, that's not untypical at all, that we feel discouraged. We take our eyes off Christ, we look at the circumstances around us. And it's very easy to become discouraged. A classic illustration is offered to us in the Bible. Peter is in the boat, and the sea is very stormy. And then Jesus comes walking to them on the waves. And Peter, in his great desire to be close to Christ, says, "Can I come to you?" And Jesus says, "Come." And Peter gets out of the boat and starts walking on the waves to Jesus.

Well, then he takes his eyes off of Christ, and he looks at the waves. Of course you know what happens. He begins to sink. He's looking at the circumstances. He's looking at the frustrations, as it were, at the storm of life all around him. He's got his eyes off of Christ, and he begins to sink, and he cries out to Christ, "I perish." And then the Lord holds out His hand to him and rescues him. Now that's an excellent illustration of the way our life is.

As long as we keep our eyes on Christ, then all goes well. But then we don't read and study the Word the way we ought to, we're not praying as regularly as we should, or as certainly and intensely to the Lord as we should. We're disappointed in this, or we're disappointed in that. And it's a vicious circle. We begin to really go down, and we get a sense of depression.

Now the solution to this problem is to start feeding on the Word. Go to the Bible, and start reading the Bible. Let God speak to our hearts again. Let God guide us into putting our eyes back on the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we begin to read the Word, we're going to begin to identify with the word, and the strength will come again. We'll begin to call upon the Lord in prayer, "Oh Lord, forgive me for taking my eyes off Thee. Forgive me for my anxieties and my frustrations."

Philippians 4:6 puts it so very well: "Don't be anxious about anything. But in everything with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to the Lord. And the peace of God which passeth understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." "Prayer and supplication" has to do with going to God in prayer, pouring out to Him.

This is the path out of this kind of depression.

CALLER: So in other words, when we are at that level, as long as we keep trying, or as long as we keep praying, we'll bring ourselves above that level?

HC: As long as we keep feeding on the Word and communicating with God through prayer. If you are physically suffering from malnutrition, everything is going to look bad. Every little rebuff that you have is going to seem very terrible, if you're really suffering from physical hunger and thirst. Now what is the cure for physical malnutrition? It's to start eating food, isn't it? So you build back your strength.

Christians will do the very same thing. They'll begin to suffer from spiritual malnutrition. And it's a vicious circle. You aren't reading the Bible the way you should. And so the disappointments magnify. And because you aren't feeding on the Word you therefore react in the flesh over against these disappointments,

so that you become even more disappointed and more depressed. And then, because you're not feeding on the Word, you continue to react in the flesh this way, so that you become more depressed. It's a vicious circle. And it draws you down.

Now the way to break it is to start feeding on the Word. Many a time in my own personal life, when I have found that life just doesn't look quite the way it ought to, when it seems so futile, I have found that one of the most wonderful things to do is to just say to myself, "Tonight I'm going to spend all evening, hours and hours, just reading the Word, going to the Psalms, or going anywhere in the Word. And it isn't long until things get back in their proper relationship.

CALLER: Sometimes I lose concentration, or I feel frustrated at reading the Bible because in many areas it is very complicated, and such a lot of it is allegory. And I really can't comprehend the Word. I hope that I can, but . . .

HC: Yes, but while there is the allegorical, deep spiritual truth that flows through the Bible, you still have the historical example, the historical record that flows all the way through also. Secondly, if you persist, and if you read the Bible with a pen or a pencil in your hand, so that you underline a verse now and then that really speaks to your heart, you will find that it will begin to have new meaning.

And if you will read the Bible prayerfully, you're going to find a lot more verses that begin to pop out. One of the greatest hindrances to reading the Word is not the Word itself, but the fact that we really don't want to hear what it says. If we're living in sin, if we have a sin that we're not confessing to the Lord, we don't really want to read the Bible, because we feel troubled by the Word, and we don't want to be troubled. And it may be that there is a sin in our life that we have to confess and get straight with the Lord about before anything else.

But if you persist in reading the Word, and really praying the Lord that He will give you a real obedience to the Word, then even if there is sin that ought to be confessed in our life, it's going to come in sharp focus. We're going to have to do something about that sin.

CALLER: Thank you, Mr. Camping.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Is it Normal for a Christian to Feel Frustrated? (324A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I have a couple of questions. The first one is, is it normal for a Christian to be frustrated at times?

HC: Is it normal for Christians to be frustrated at times? Yes, it really is. The reason that it's normal is that we still do not have our perfect bodies. An outstanding example of frustration is found in Romans 7, where we read in verse 19 that the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is declaring, "For the good that I would I do not. But the evil which I would not, that I do." Then he goes on to say in verse 22, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

And so he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He is frustrated by the fact that he cannot live perfectly holy before God. In his resurrected soul he wants desperately to live for Christ, but because his body is not yet saved, he has not yet received his resurrected body, therefore every time he takes his eyes off Christ a little bit, he begins to be troubled by sin. And so this is a great frustration in his life.

Or again, in II Corinthians 12, he is frustrated by a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. And from the Biblical language, we can probably suggest that this was the fact that the Judaizers, those from the denomination he used to belong to before he was saved, continually harassed him, and went after him and wanted to atone him, and so on, and made his job of bringing the Gospel very difficult.

And so three times he prayed, "Oh God, is it possible that this might be changed?" And God said, "No. My grace is sufficient. I'll bring victory through your weakness," or the grace of God will be seen through your weakness. And so God left him in that situation, even as God leaves us in sinful bodies.

CALLER: Now another question I have is, is this going to happen throughout our lifetime, until our bodies are resurrected?

HC: Yes. And this is one of the reasons that we long for our resurrected bodies.

CALLER: Because that's what I'm going through. It's like I really honestly want to live for God and obey His Word. But then at times I find myself falling into sin, and I just feel so awful and frustrated. And it's like a battle back and forth.

HC: One of the wisest things to do, however, in growing in grace, is to get victory over sin. If you find that it's always the same sin that's getting in the way, then you've got to do some repenting. It means that you are not repenting yet.

A lot of times we'll have that sin that most easily besets us. Maybe it's the sin of gossiping or the sin of evil desire or the sin of anger, or the sin of, whatever it may be. And we find again and again that it's there. And every time we pray, "Oh God, forgive me," and we wish that it were gone. But because we have a liking for that sin (it's always so nice to get on the phone and hear all these choice tidbits of gossip, it's always so nice to just blow our stock once in a while [if that happens to be our sin weakness] and just let it fly), later on we're troubled by it, but at the moment there's a certain pleasure in this. Sin is that way.

What we're really hoping for is that God will take away that sin without us repenting. We're afraid that if that sin is altogether gone, we're going to deprive ourselves of something very choice, something that is very desirable, even though we know it's contrary to the will of God.

Now the way to get victory is to repent, turn away from that sin, to recognize that's dirty, rotten sin and it's got to go. As a believer I can't countenance this any longer. "Oh God, strengthen me as I turn away from it." It may mean I've got to lose a friendship, it may mean I've got to change the pattern of my life somewhat. But whatever it takes, that sin has got to go.

Now when we get victory over that sin, and we will, if we mean business if we'll look at that sin square in the eye, that it's rebellion against my Savior, it's got to go, I'm going to turn away from it, I'm going to not pity myself, I'm not going to feel sorry for myself because I can't have that sin any longer, I've had it, I don't want this sin around anymore. When that sin is gone, and it will go, then we can go to work on the next sin. And this is the story of the Christian life.

But as we get victory over this sin and then the next sin, we will also begin to know more and more the joy of salvation, the victory of the cross. Obedience to Christ is such a blessing. It is such a wonderful, wonderful way to live, to live obediently to Christ. I have seen sins in my own life that I had to struggle with and struggle with, and I hated to see them go. And yet, after they went, because I repented of them, and

they were replaced by obedience, the joy of obedience is so much more wonderful than any sinful pleasure that came from the sin. There's no comparison at all. The joy of obedience is so much more wonderful.

But my, oh may, because we have an old body that lusts after sin, it's hard for us to see this at the time that we're struggling with that sin.

CALLER: Okay. And one more question. Is compromising a sin? See, I've been in a job for quite a while. And I've had a problem that's bothered me for a long time there, and I've had a desire to leave there. I've been in the same job since I've been a Christian. And sometimes I'm asked to do things that I feel are wrong, that I feel are contrary to the way I believe. And it has bothered me.

HC: I would suggest two things. When you are living a life where you are asked by your superiors—and this could be the wife by her husband (the husband being the head of the house) or the employee by the employer—when you are asked to do something that is sinful, that you believe is contrary to the Word of God, the first thing to do is ask, very and tenderly and very kindly, those who have asked you to do this if there could be another way. Just level with them and say, "You know, I'm a Christian. And I would be much happier if I would not be required to do this, because I really believe with all my heart that this is contrary to the Word of God." At least in the employer/employee relationship, the odds are that they will honor you. They will realize that they are compromising your feelings toward God, they are binding you spiritually, and they will not ask you to do it.

Now on the other hand, if they said, "We're sorry. You work here, and if you don't like what we ask you to do, then you can leave," then you have no alternative but to leave. You have to choose then. You want to stay free. You don't want to be bound in sin. And you are free to leave that employ. Now in the case of the wife over against her husband, if the husband asks her to live in sin, then she will have to disobey and she might be punished for it by her husband. She might be beaten. She might experience a lot of unpleasantness. But she can't divorce. The marriage relationship goes on until death parts.

It's much like if our government asked us to do something that was sinful. If we disobeyed our government, we might be thrown into jail because we disobey. But that would be far preferable than to live walking contrary to the Word of God.

CALLER: So we always have to go back to the Word of God

HC: We always have to go back to the Word of God. Now you think of the martyrs. They were asked to deny Christ, maybe very simply to deny Him. If they did not deny Him, the alternative was to be thrown to the lions, or to be burned at the stake. They really had to make a big decision, didn't they? And so the decision of maybe seeking another job is a very tiny decision compared with these martyrs of old.

But there's a dynamic, you know, in being obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ. It may look on the surface like "boy, this is a dumb thing. If I just compromise a little bit . . . I've got a good job, it pays well. Ant if I just compromise a little bit, I can get along over here." But if we obey God, if we really believe that we want to live in accordance with His will, we may have to give up that job. Our next job may not pay as well. But there is a dynamic. There will be blessings that will come into our life, spiritual blessings, blessings of a new dependence upon Christ that we never experienced before, blessings of being a better witness because we've stood for Christ. I can't name all the blessings that might come, but they will come. There is a

dynamic. God is our Lord and our Savior, and He is aware of all that we do.

CALLER: Okay. Well, you've been very helpful.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Feeling Distant from the Lord (345C)

CALLER: Why is it that you feel close to the Lord one day and far away from Him the next?

HC: A question was raised concerning the problem of feeling very close to the Lord one day, and maybe the next day even wondering, "Am I really born again?" How can we have this great a change in our sensitivity toward what God has done in our life?

The Christian walk is not a walk of feelings and emotions. When the sun is bright, it's a beautiful day, all has been going well, you wake up in the morning, you had a good night's rest, you bounce out of bed, and my, isn't it glorious to be a Christian! God is on the throne, all is well.

But then, the next day you received a letter, and there was tragic news in it. And then you went to work and you lost your job. And more than that, the next morning when you wake up, it's raining. It's a dark, dismal day. You hardly slept through the night because of all of the anxieties that have begun to come over you. And so you wake up in the morning and you wonder, "Is God really on the throne? Am I really related to Him? How could it be that things are going the way they are?" And so you begin to question the whole thing, the whole business of salvation, your own personal relationship. You wonder where truth is.

This is what happens when we live by an emotional response to God. Actually, we should be living not by our emotions, because our emotions can change overnight, depending on the vicissitudes, the experiences of life. But we should be living by the Word of God. The Word of God stands true all the time. We know we are saved because of what the Bible declares, not because of the way we feel. We know we are saved because God has told us what salvation is, and we can identify with what we find in the Bible. And thus we have an anchor upon which to hang our soul.

God was not playing idly around when He penned the words of Psalm 23: "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Now it's one thing to go by green pastures and quiet pools, that earlier this Psalm talks about. "That's great — I feel great — God is on the throne — I'm saved — Praise the Lord." But when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, when at any moment I might lose my life, when terror stalks my door and I don't know, humanly speaking, what the future holds at all, is God still on the throne? Yes, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

God is faithful. He always remains faithful. We are the ones that are not always faithful. If you make a practice in your life to spend time in the Word, if you make a practice in your life to spend time communicating with God through prayer, so that when you begin to feel uneasy, so that when you begin to feel like things are not going well, you have learned to abandon yourself afresh to the Lord Jesus Christ, you have learned to again cast all your cares on Him, to pour it out to Him and rest in Him, then you will find that you're not going to go from a low to a high and back to a low again, emotionally speaking. There'll be a constancy about your life, where you know, "I am saved. I am saved because I know that Christ is my Redeemer. I know that I want to serve Him with my life. I know that He is on the throne. No

matter how gloomy the day may be, know that it is well with my soul." This is the walk of the mature Christian. This is what I would desire for each one of us.

On Trying Too Hard to be "Christ-Like" (371A)

CALLER: I have one small question. Wherever I am, I want people to see Jesus Christ, wherever I am, whatever I'm doing. I really want people to see Him, and not me. And when I'm doing my homework, I sometimes have such a hard time doing homework. And I sometimes figure that God is kind of pitying me because I'm not doing so well in my homework, or whatever it is. And this just came to me yesterday. But Sunday I was really getting depressed about this, and I just look into myself and see all these bad things about me, and I dwell on them. And I was just wondering if you could give a few words about it, maybe why I do that, or why I don't have to do it.

HC: Let me make a suggestion to you. One of the major sins that we have to strive with, even after we're saved, is the sin of pride. And I'm not judging you, I'm just trying to evaluate what you're saying, so you can look at yourself. You have to make your own application.

But when we say, "I want others to see Christ in me," that could be said from an ego position. In other words, "I want to be recognized as a very fine, upstanding child of God, that others will want to emulate me, that it can really be seen that God's work of grace has come into my life. See what a wonderful person I am." Now that is strictly an ego trip, if that should be, in any sense, the reason that I want Christ to be seen in me. And as believers we can really go on these ego trips.

And then when we sin, or when we don't measure up to the fact that Christ can be seen in our life, or if we sense that our friends aren't quite as excited about our Christian life as we thought they ought to be, then we feel offended. Then we feel frustrated. Then we feel, "Hmmm, it's not very good." And all that's happening is that our pride is suffering. It's not their problem; it's our problem. We're living in sin.

Maybe this is the reason, when you do homework, then you don't have anybody looking at you. You're all alone. And there's isn't any path to glory this way. It's just a matter of patiently grinding it out, with nobody seeing you except you and your God. And so that isn't a very happy business. There's no glory there.

Okay. Now every one of us is troubled by this pride to some degree. Now the Biblical rule is contained in the language of John the Baptist: "He [that is, Christ] must increase, I must decrease." If we find that we are looking for compliments from others, if we find that we are saddened, or troubled, or frustrated, because someone is not looking with glow in their eyes because they see what a wonderful person we are, then we know that we're walking on an ego trip. The biblical rule is that we are to walk humbly. We are not to look for compliments. We are not to be men-pleasers. The only one to be to please is God. We are to live to His glory.

Whether someone compliments us, or whether someone shines up to us, indicating that they are grateful for the life we live, or not, is beside the question. It has nothing to do with it at all.

The fact is, if you are really living for Christ, if you really are being obedient to the Word of God, the odds are that many of your friends will disdain you. They will begin to turn away from you, because they're troubled by the fact that you're taking such a narrow position on so many issues in the Bible. Jesus

Himself warned, "Beware if all men speak well of you."

You see, when God speaks about us being the fragrance of Christ, or that others might see Christ in us, it doesn't mean that others all over the place are going to be grateful and happy and joyful because of what they see. Most of the people who looked at Christ were not happy at what they saw, were they? When He really began to describe the kind of Savior He was, in John 6, we read that most of the people fell away. Most of the people fell away. He was repudiated by mankind. He was a reproach to them. And to a very high degree, our lives will be a reproach to others, if we are living God's way.

Now fellow believers, those who are born again, or those who are being attracted to the Gospel by the wooing, by the drawing of the Father, those who are, in other words, on the path toward salvation, will be attracted to us, because they see Christ in our lives. But you can depend upon it. They're only a tiny minority of all that we are surrounded with. They are only the remnant chosen by grace.

So you're going to find, on the average, that more people will become increasingly offended as you live very carefully the way God wants you to live than you will find that they will be grateful to you for your life.

Can you see the problem?

CALLER: Sure. I can. I'd like to ask, if I do have this problem with ego, it can be unconscious, can't it?

HC: Well, of course it is. Sin can be unconscious, or subconscious.

CALLER: Okay. Is the only cure for that prayer?

HC: The cure for that is repentance. The cure for any sin is repentance. Now that you suspect that maybe you're having this sin problem, and which Christian does not have that sin problem to some degree? It means that the next time you feel empty in your soul, because of whatever, you look at yourself very objectively and say, "Look, brother, are you on an ego trip? Are you unhappy because somebody didn't compliment you? Are you unhappy because no one is recognizing what a great and wonderful Christian you are? Perish the thought I'd better go to the Lord and ask His forgiveness. Oh Father, forgive me for my pride. Forgive me for looking for attention. Forgive me for wanting to be in the limelight. Oh Father, I want only Christ to be all glorious. I don't want anyone to see me. I want them to see Christ." You see?

CALLER: Yes, okay. Thank you very much.

HC: I hope this helps a little. Thank you for calling. Good night.

Panic at the Thought of the Lord's Return (375D)

CALLER: I have been a Christian for quite a few years, and yet I cannot explain why I panic when I think of the Lord coming back. I've given up everything that I can think of that might be offensive to the Lord. I haven't gone to a movie in twenty-five years, and I don't drink or smoke. I mean, I don't do anything that I think would be offensive to Him. And yet I can't find anything in my life that would make me afraid of His coming. And yet I am. And I'm afraid I'm going to be left.

HC: Let's analyze that a moment. Are you going to go into Heaven because you have begun to live a good life?

CALLER: No, no. I could never earn my way to Heaven.

HC: All right. In other words, you definitely know that you're saved by God's grace, and that except for God's grace you would go to hell. Do you know that?

CALLER: Yes, because we can't go to Heaven by works.

HC: We can't go to Heaven by works.

CALLER: No.

HC: All right. Now when we become saved, it means that we are hanging our whole life on the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the Bible declares that if we confess our sins, and to confess our sins means that we acknowledge our sins before God, we turn away from our sins. And it says, "If we confess our sins, He [that is, God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Now if you really believe that you're a sinner, and that Christ has covered all of your sins, if you really believe that He has paid for your sins, and yet you feel like you might go to hell, then the question has to be asked, "Are you really trusting Christ?" Or do you just think that you're trusting Him? Do you really take God at His Word? Do you really believe exactly what the Bible says?

CALLER: I believe every word of it.

HC: Well, then, when this panic comes upon you when you think about the Lord Jesus Christ coming, ask yourself this question: Why am I frightened? Am I afraid that I might go to hell? On what basis could I go to hell? Do I really trust that Christ has paid for my sins? If He's paid for my sins, then I have no fear of hell any longer His love will cast out this kind of fear.

CALLER: Do you think it could possibly be the devil that just makes me think of these things?

HC: No. If you're a child of God, the devil has nothing on you. It has to do with an area of unbelief in your own heart. The Bible declares, and of course our faith is not a perfected faith. We believe, and we cry out to the Lord, "Oh Lord, help Thou my unbelief." It means that you haven't learned yet to cast yourself altogether upon the Lord Jesus Christ. You haven't come to that point yet where you have abandoned yourself to Him altogether, recognizing that because of what He has done for you, recognizing that because He has saved you therefore there is no condemnation.

CALLER: It's easy for me to believe that about other people, but I can't understand why He should love me enough to do that.

HC: He certainly didn't love you this way because you were worthy.

CALLER: No, I know that.

HC: At this point you have to recognize God's sovereign grace. God, in His sovereign grace, decides whom He is going to save. If He decided to save you, that's His business. I don't understand why I'm saved, either.

CALLER: I guess it's just hard for me to understand that kind of love, because I've never had that kind of love in my whole life.

HC: But that's what the Bible talks about. This is the love of God, that He does reach down into the pit of hell and save some. He does rescue us from the miry clay of hell and make us His child.

We may not understand this. We may not fathom how God could do this marvelous thing for us. But because the Bible says so, that is all that we need to have. We trust what the Bible says implicitly. It declares it to be so, and therefore we praise God for His grace.

CALLER: I see. I do believe all of that. Will I finally come to the point where I fully accept it? I do accept it, I can't explain what I'm trying to say.

HC: Let me ask you this. Is there anything in your life, way back when, and maybe it's so deep in your soul that you've even forgotten it, or you wanted to forget it, is there anything that you ever did in your life (don't tell me what it is if you can think of anything - but just think about it in your own thoughts) that you have a question, "Could God have

forgiven that sin, too?"

CALLER: Well, yes there is. I know God has forgiven me, but I can't forgive myself.

HC: Ahhh, I see. In other words, you did something in your life at some point, and you are not secure in relationship to that sin, are you? Intellectually you know that God has forgiven that sin, but yet in yourself you feel what a stupid person, what a foolish person you were in committing that sin, and you have never forgiven yourself.

CALLER: Yes.

HC: All right. Now we're beginning to strike a little bit of pay dirt. You see, this kind of thinking, and I'm not saying this unkindly, of course I'm only saying this to help you analyze yourself, because I see that you're seeking for an answer. This kind of thinking is a result of pride. Before we can be saved, before we can have that assurance of knowing that we are a child of God, we have to humble ourselves. We have to recognize that we're a rotten, no good sinner.

Now if we look at a sin in our life and we can't forgive ourselves, effectively we're saying, "You know, fundamentally I'm a pretty good person." Now we don't put it in this crass language, but it really runs something like this, subconsciously, in our soul. "Fundamentally I'm a pretty good person. I have lived a fairly decent life, and therefore I certainly ought to be saved by God. But I did do a certain sin that I'm very ashamed of. And oh, how stupid I was, and foolish I was in committing that sin. And that should never have happened. Now I know God forgives that sin, but my oh my, how did I ever get into that sin?" And so we say, "I don't forgive myself."

Now really, what we're on is an ego trip. Really, what we're saying is, "God, fundamentally I'm pretty good. I'm sorry that I committed that especially bad sin, and I'm glad you forgive that. But fundamentally, I'm a pretty good person."

CALLER: I really don't believe that I am.

HC: Well, but the fact that you can't forgive yourself means that deep in your subconscious, you still are taking on some claims of personal goodness in yourself. It means that you have not abandoned yourself. You haven't come to that point yet in your life like the publican of old, who dared not look up to Heaven, and smote his breast, and didn't come near into the temple. He stood afar off. And he cried out, "Lord, have mercy on me. I'm a sinner."

And so you look at that sin in your life that you can't forgive yourself for, and you say, "Well, that's one of them, but when I look at the rest of my life, as I measure my life by the standard of God's holiness, there are lots and lots and lots of sins. Any one of them ought to send me to hell. Oh God, have mercy on me."

That's what we have to come to, where we can look at the worst sin of our life and say, "But that's only typical of the kind of a person I am, except for God's grace. That is typical. It happened to be a sin that in my human judgment made me a little more ashamed. But really, from God's vantage point, I know that that is typical of what I am by nature, I'm a sinner, and I cry out to God for His mercy. And I shouldn't have been surprised that I committed that sin. That is typical of the kind of a person I am outside of Christ."

And only when we can come to that valuation of ourselves, where we have been broken before God, so that we really see how spiritually bankrupt we really are, and will admit it honestly to ourselves, getting rid of all of these airs of pride, and sometimes we cover up pride by calling it self-respect. Well, that's another word for pride. We have to come to that point where we recognize that every best thing we've ever done stands filthy before God. We're dead

before God. We're a corpse, a stinking corpse, before God. And it's only God's grace that can raise us up out of this miry clay.

CALLER: Does this one thing mean that I'm not saved?

HC: Well, I don't know whether you're saved or not. But I know this. You have no assurance of salvation. And I know you won't have an assurance of salvation until you come to that point. And it may be that God is indicating to you that you are not saved. Don't despair, however. It is a thousand times, a million times, a billion times more wonderful to discover I'm not saved now than to wait and take my chances with eternity, to die and then find out, when I stand before the judgment throne, that I'm unsaved.

CALLER: That's the part that scares me.

HC: Okay. The very fact that you are scared of Judgment Day indicates that there's a strong possibility that you are not saved. But then, if you recognize you're not saved, you've taken the first giant step towards salvation. The next thing you have to do is, look at yourself as God looks at you. And God looks at you as a hopelessly lost sinner, as someone who rightly ought to come under the wrath of God, who ought to spend eternity in hell, not only for this sin that you're ashamed of, but for a thousand other sins that your life has experienced. In other words, our best works are as filthy rags in God's sight. We're by nature sinners.

And once you come to that point, where you cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me. I admit I am a sinner. I thought that sin was especially one to be ashamed of, but basically I thought I was a pretty good person. But now I discover, by God's Word, that there is none righteous, no not one. There's not any that do good. And that means me, too. That means that all these ideas I had about self-worthiness were just nonsense. I'm under your wrath, and I'm subject to hell. And oh God, I don't want to go to hell. Help me to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Help me to cast my cares altogether on Him."

You see, Jesus came for the sinners, not for the righteous. He came for sinners.

CALLER: The fact that it did bother me was a sign to me that I was saved. And if I wasn't saved, it wouldn't bother me.

HC: When you come to salvation, when you are really born again, sin will bother you. Not because you are threatened by hell, but because there is an ongoing, earnest desire in your life to do it God's way. And when you come to the end of the day, or whenever you pray to God, "Oh God, forgive me for the sins of this day," you don't live with remorse from your sins any longer. There is no problem of forgiving yourself. You know that those sins, too, have been covered by the blood of Christ. You have entrusted your life altogether to Him.

When you live with a lack of forgiveness of a past sin, it means that you still haven't faced the fact that you are a sinner altogether. Altogether you're a sinner. You haven't faced the fact yet that you have to acknowledge this to yourself and to God, and that once you do, then you're going to be on the path of salvation.

Pride in our lives will go nowhere except down toward hell. God declares that He will resist proud, but give grace to the humble. It's a broken and a contrite heart that God will not despise. Now the world operates with pride. Your peers talk about self-respect, and the fact that we have a lot to be proud of. This is the way the world operates. But if we're going to come to salvation, pride has to go. We have nothing, nothing, nothing at all to be proud of. We're sinners. We've violated God's rules again and again and again. And even those things that we thought we were pretty good about, actually, if we view them in the light of

God's Word, we find that they were tainted by sin. We were self-serving. We were doing it for our own credit rather than to glorify God.

And so we stand spiritually bankrupt. And once we get to that point, then we're on the threshold of salvation. I have a very dear friend who was saved in the last several years, and there was a time in her life when she was just terribly offended when I said to her, "Before you're saved you are a rotten, no good sinner." This offended her drastically. But once she became saved, she understood what this meant, that in myself there is no good whatsoever.

CALLER: I admit that. I mean, I believe that.

HC: All right. Then look at that sin that you can't forgive yourself for, and say, "So what else is new? That was par for the course for a sinner. That's par for the course. This is no ego trip. Why should I not forgive myself? This is the way I was by nature. I was a sinner. This was typical of what a sinner does."

CALLER: But this happened after I was saved.

HC: If you have been saved, and then you committed a sin, then go to Christ and seek His forgiveness. You see, what have you been saved from? What is salvation? What have you been saved from? You've been saved from the wrath of God. And so if you committed a sin after you were saved, then recognize that it too is forgiven by God. And you still have to walk humbly. If it's an ego trip, in your pride you're saying, "Now I'm saved, and now I ought to always live the good life. And I can't forgive myself because I fell into sin." In that case we're not walking humbly before the Lord. We're walking with pride.

And pride has no place in the life of the believer. Pride is the thing that separates us from God. Pride in itself is a sin.

CALLER: I never looked at it that way before.

HC: So maybe if you would go to the Lord and cry out, "Oh Lord, have mercy on me and take this pride out of my life, that I think I'm really a pretty good person now, in myself I'm not a good person. It's only by God's grace that I have a desire to live for you. And oh Father, it is possible that I can fall, but I'm grateful that you do forgive."

CALLER: I see. Thank you so very much.

HC: I hope this helps a little bit.

CALLER: You have. Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Being Comforted + HC's Personal Testimony (414B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Could you give a testimony as to how you found the Lord? And also, as your sister in Christ, would you comfort me? And I'll take your answer over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. Good night. The way we can comfort one another is by the Word of God. Now words of comfort can have a very hollow ring if it were not for the Bible; if it were not for the fact that God is real, that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Savior.

A lot of times, you know, we go through life, and we become concerned about our problems. We begin to sense a futility in our life. We look at our friends, and they seem to be doing a lot better than we are. We look at our neighbors, and they don't have nearly the troubles that we have. We have desire that certain advances be made in our condition, either financially or whatever it may be, and these things are not happening. And life begins to get very empty. It begins to get very futile. We begin to wonder, what is the meaning of it all?

Now I find in my life that the best antidote to futility and to fear, to uneasiness, is to focus anew on the Lord Jesus Christ, to remember again that the Lord Jesus Christ is my Savior. He is my Lord. He is Eternal God. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. I know that I am born again, and therefore I know that I am His child. The Bible tells me so. The Bible tells me that I am an heir of all the promises that God has given me. The Bible tells me that in this life I will have affliction, in this life there will be those who will harass me, in this life there will be those who are going to trouble. There will be setbacks, there will be things that do not look well. In this life there is sorrow, in this life there's a sense of incompleteness, and all of these things.

But this is just a passing moment in the eternity of my lifespan. This is just incidental insofar as the total picture is concerned. If I can only keep my eye on Christ, if I can only remember I'm a child of God, I'm a citizen of His eternal Kingdom, I am of royal blood, I already have eternal life, no matter what happens, I have the faithful promise of God that He will never leave me nor forsake me. I have the promise that all things work together for good for those who are called of Him. I have that marvelous thrill, that marvelous joy of knowing that my sins have been forgiven, and I'm never going to have to answer to God for any of my sins in my life. They have all been covered by the precious blood of Christ. And I have the joy of knowing that when my lifetime has ended, whenever that may be, whether it's tonight or tomorrow night or next month or next year, or fifteen or twenty or twenty-five years down the way, it's really immaterial. I know that at that point I'm going to be eternally in the glorious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'll never, never, never be away from His glorious presence again, and I'm going to spend eternity in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Whatever has happened in the past has happened. God has cared for me step by step, and He's cared for each one of us moment by moment, through the vicissitudes of life, through the difficulties, through the trials that have passed. And each time He has cared for us, hasn't He? Each morning has been a new morning when God's blessings have been renewed.

But each day that passes is bringing me one great day closer to the Lord Jesus Christ's personal presence, when I go to be with Him. Each day I can mark it off on the calendar, and I'm one great step closer to being eternally with Him.

Now the more I read the Bible, the more I search the scriptures, the more my eye will be on the Lord Jesus Christ. The more I pray, the more I talk with my Father in Heaven, I'm going to be focusing on Him and the glorious relationship that I might have through the Lord Jesus Christ with God.

But on the other hand, the more I look at my troubles, like Peter of old as he walked on the water and he saw the waves all around him, the more I look at the waves of the difficulties of life, the more I fuss in my mind and worry and am anxious about this and that and the other thing, the more depressed I'm going to be, and the more it's going to seem like I can't go on another day, even another hour.

The antidote is to get back our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ. And then the things of this earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

Now I've been asked for a personal testimony, and I don't hesitate to give this at all, although I don't really like to talk about me. This is not a real joy to me, to talk about me. I like to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ. I like to talk about the Bible.

I happen to be a person who was reared in a home where my mother was saved,

and my father was not saved until after I became an adult. But he was legally related to the church. He was concerned that we did go to church. And so I was reared as a Christian. It happens in my case that I never have known a day when I was not saved. Even as a youngster I can recall that I had a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. I wanted to live for Him.

Actually, I never really faced the question seriously and objectively until I was about eleven or twelve years old. I've given this testimony before, but let me just repeat it very quickly. It happened in the Depression. I was selling popcorn in Glendale, California. My father was trying to make a living through the Depression, with five sons. He put a basket over each of our arms, and we went around peddling popcorn and candy through the summer months. And in this way he made a living through these months.

And I remember walking into a paint store. The proprietor bought a bag of peanuts, or popcorn, or something, from me. And then he said, "Sonny, are you saved? Is Jesus Christ your Savior?" I had never been asked that question quite as pointedly as that ever before. And so I still remember very vividly that I kind of stuttered and said, "Yes, yes, I know that Jesus is my Savior." And his reply was, "Well, make sure that He is, because this is what's really important in life."

Well, I do remember that through the next week I really faced that question: "Am I a child of God?" And a little youngster of eleven or twelve can readily think this matter through. "Am I really a child of God? Is Jesus my Savior?" And at the conclusion of a week of real soul-searching, I came to an unequivocal conclusion in my heart: Yes, Jesus is my Savior; I am saved; I know that I am a child of God; I know that my sins are forgiven.

And never again, from that point on, would I ever hesitate if anyone asked me, "Are you saved?" I had thought it through very carefully, I had prayed about it, and I knew I was saved.

Now that was not the time of my conversion. I am certain of this. I believe that the Lord saved me when I was just a very young child. But there it is. Now that doesn't mean I've always lived a God-glorifying life. When I look back on my life and see the sins in my life, then I can only praise God that His blood covers all of our sins. I praise God that I can know that because I am a child of God, and anyone that is a child of God, we can know that we'll never have to give an account, because God has paid for all of our sins.

The New Life of a Believer (592A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi. Could you tell me what somebody does when he becomes a Christian? What should some of his new purposes in life be?

HC: What are the new purposes in life of an individual who has become a child of God?

Before we are saved, our basic motivation in life is to please me. I want what I want. I want to make all the money I can, or I want to seek for all the fame I can find. I want to get all the pleasure out of life I can receive. Fundamentally, I want what is good for me. My whole purpose is selfish. It is self-directed. And I couldn't really care less about God or about anyone else. Oh yes, I do associate with others, and I can even say I love this one or that one. But it is ultimately so that my life will be fulfilled in some way. Ultimately all of these others are just to be used by me, to satisfy my selfish desires and pleasures.

Now when we become born again, however, we come under another authority altogether. We begin to serve Christ as our Lord. He becomes number

one. Where before we were saved we were number one, now Christ is number one. And so our new motivation is that we want first of all what Christ wants, not what we want. We want always to check our will to make sure that it is subservient to Christ.

Now in order that we might know what Christ wants for us, we read the Bible. The Bible is the rule book of the Kingdom of God. And as we read the Bible, we discover what God has to say to us concerning our life. And because we love God now (that's the characteristic of a child of God), because we have made ourselves subject to Him, because He is Lord of our life, whenever we read something in the Bible that comes right against our life, we say, "Oh, that's the way I am to do then. That's the way I am to live."

And this of course is what living to God's glory is all about, to live obediently before Him. If we're really a child of God, we are going to want to be obedient to anything and everything we might read in the Bible, both in areas of practice of our life as well as in areas of the doctrines that we hold concerning Christ or the return of Christ, or any other aspect of the Gospel story.

Now when we study the Bible carefully, we'll find that the chief mandate God has given to the born again believer as he lives out his life to the glory of God is to be a witness, to be an ambassador of Christ, representing Christ in this sin-cursed world, to that through us the Gospel might go out to others. Christ has given us the ministry of reconciliation. So while we have to earn a living, while we have to care for our family, while we have to do these necessary things, nevertheless we have an ongoing desire, really a burning desire, that as many of the people of the world as possible might hear the Gospel, so that they too might be saved.

Therefore we lay our lives on the altar of service, "I beseech you, brethren," Romans 12:1 says, "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." And we make as much of our wherewithal, as much of our time and energy and talents, and whatever else we have, available so that the Gospel can go forth. That is the prime direction that our life will go in when we are truly a child of God. We may still run our business, we may still work as a craftsman, to earn a living, or be a housewife, or whatever it is. But nevertheless, through it all, we're going to be thinking of ways that we can be more of a testimony than ever before to others, or that we might be able to provide so that others can go forth as witnesses.

CALLER: How much should a Christian be concerned about gaining material things?

HC: How much should a Christian be concerned about gaining material things? The Bible teaches that we are strangers and pilgrims here. We're just passing through. And material things really are very unimportant.

Now unfortunately, we live in a world where material things are it. They are all important, because unsaved man finds his security and his pleasure in material things, and we are in association with all of this. And so we also have these tendencies very strong in our lives. But the closer we live to Christ, the more we realize that these material things are really unimportant. Now God doesn't say that it's wrong to have nice house or a new car, or whatever. But under no circumstances must that new house or that new car, or whatever we have, stand between us and the responsibilities God has given us to be of maximum service to the Lord.

And if we find that when we are faced with a testing program, and it's the new house or standing true to Christ, or it's the new car or standing true to Christ, and we take the option of the new car or

the nice big house, then it shows there is something wrong with our relationship with Christ.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Worldly Entertainment and the Christian (147B)

CALLER: Brother Camping, is there anything wrong with going to an entertainment place where gambling is offered if you just go to see a show and don't go into the gambling establishment? I could use the example that even though you go to a grocery store where they sell liquor you don't have to buy the liquor. Is that the devil's way of telling me that it's all right to do it?

HC: The question is raised concerning going to an entertainment place where there is gambling in order to see a show. As long as I don't gamble, is this what a Christian ought to do?

Well, I think I might put that question in this kind of a context. What is the role of the believer? Do we live as close to the world as we possibly can, without sinning? Or do we live as close to Christ as possible? That's really the question, isn't it?

Now Nevada, a state in the United States that has wide open gambling, and therefore along with this are all of the shows, and so on, from the Hollywood stars, is the place where the world goes in order to find its entertainment, in order to find its joy, in order to get its kicks. The world has no joy in Christ. The world has no security. It has no hope. And so desperately the world goes here and goes there and does this and does the other thing, looking for something.

Now what would a born again believer want to be doing there? Why would he want to be watching one of those shows? Why would he want to be part of that kind of an environment? Could you really say that in this you are glorifying God? The Bible says, "Whether you eat or whether you drink, do everything to the glory of God." Can you really say now that that is a God-glorifying place to be? Gambling going on all around, people eating and drinking (and I'm not talking about just drinking water), and there you sit, because you want to see one of these shows.

I really don't think that's the place where a born again believer ought to be, unless you can really find out in your heart and from the Scriptures how you can call that a God-glorifying experience.

Keeping God's Law Versus Legalism (219B)

CALLER: I have one quick question, and I'll take my answer on the air. If, after you become a Christian, you very diligently try to obey God's law, is that legalism? I don't believe it is, but some people do.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. Good night

The question is raised, "If, after we have become saved, after we really believe that we're born again, we earnestly and diligently try to keep God's law, is that legalism?"

Well, it's going to depend on why we are keeping God's law. If we are keeping God's law to merit something, that is, to guarantee our salvation, or to receive some kind of commendation from God, to receive some reward in Heaven, if we are doing it in any sense in order to merit something, or to be paid for something, then yes, it is legalism.

It means that we are really trying to add to a salvation by grace by our works. Effectively we're saying, we're saved by grace, and works. We're saying that our works also are an important part, by which we achieve some area of our

salvation.

Actually, on the other hand, if we keep God's law, earnestly desire to keep God's law, because number one, this is the earnest desire of our heart, in view of the fact that we've been born again and in our soul we have this ongoing desire, because "that which is born of God cannot sin," it's not legalism. We're doing it because this is simply what comes naturally to us in the area of our life where we have experienced the resurrection from the dead.

Or if we are keeping God's law because of our love for God, that's not legalism. The Bible says, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." And so if there is not this earnest desire in our heart to keep His law, and only to do so because of our love for Him, then we have no love for God. We can talk about love for God all we want. But it's not really love unless it actually is translated into the fact that we have this earnest desire to do His will, to keep His commandments, which of course is what the Bible is. The Bible is the commandments of God.

Thank you for that question.

God's Expectation for Our Behavior (235D)

CALLER: What does the Lord expect of a Christian nowadays, as far as behavior goes? What does He want us to do?

HC: The question that was raised concerns the Biblical statement insofar as Christian behavior, once we are saved. First of all, if you believe you are a born again believer, you are a child of God, if you really believe, "Now I'd better work like crazy to live for God, I'd better live a holy life, because otherwise in some fashion I'll endanger my salvation," or "only by this way will I prove that I'm really worthy to be saved," or "If I work like crazy for the Lord, and really give my life on the altar of service, I'll gain some kind of reward," if this is our motivation, then we don't understand as yet what salvation is.

We do not work to be pleasing to God, when we are saved, because we are trying to merit anything at all. We are saved by grace and grace alone. It's undeserved favor. Like Ruth of old, we were under the curse of God. There wasn't the slightest way that we could ever become right with God. And yet God has wooed us, and God has made us His child, and He's paid for all of our sins. And He made us a new creature. He gave us a resurrected soul.

Now because He has given us a resurrected soul, we read in I John 3:9, "That which is born of God cannot sin." And that's the department of our life where we are born of God. And so we ought to find in our life an earnest, ongoing desire to live for God, to love God, and to do it His way.

Now it won't be untarnished. We still have a body that lusts after sin, and that mixes it up for us. But nevertheless cut through it all there is this earnest ongoing desire, not to merit something, not to prove something, not to add something to our salvation, but only because we have this love for God. We know that God is our Savior, and in response to His love we just wish that our whole life would be committed to Him altogether. And so we find in our life an abhorrence of sin.

Every time we sin we're troubled in our soul. Every time we sin we feel depressed, and we can't wait to ask for forgiveness from the Lord. We'd like to walk as perfectly as possible.

Now how can we know how to live? We're born again, and we earnestly love God, and we'd like to know how we are to be most pleasing to God because of our love for Him. We go to the Bible. The Bible is the rule book of the Kingdom. The Bible is the revelation of

God's will for us.

And so we earnestly read the Bible. We search the scriptures. And the more we read it, the more sensitive we become to the will of God. As we read the Bible, we begin to see things in our life that we never realized were sin at all. But now we begin to sense that we can't live that way any longer. We don't want to live that way any longer. And if we continue to live that way any longer, we're troubled, and we feel frustrated. And we are beginning to ask for forgiveness again and again. And finally we learn that we have to repent and turn away from that sin, too.

The Bible is the rule book of the Kingdom. And the more you feed on the Word of God, the more you read it and get nourished by it, the more you're going to find joy in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now let me underscore again, don't try to be obedient to God because you're trying to merit something, or you're trying to prove that you're worthy, or you're trying to guarantee your salvation, "If I don't live this way, I might lose my salvation." If that is your motivation, you don't understand what salvation is as yet.

The desire to live for God is there in your heart because you've become born from above. You have your resurrected soul, in which you are already enjoying eternal life. And every time you sin, you're feeling violated. You feel, "I can't go on this way." This is the life of the born again believer.

Now this is why God can tell us in I John 2:3, "And by this we may be sure that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." Now we're not keeping His commandments out of duress, or to prove something, but because this is the earnest desire of our hearts. And then he goes on in verse 4, "He who says, I know Him, but disobeys His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

If you say, "I trust God implicitly, I love Him with all my heart," and yet when you look at your life, it is hardly any different from your unsaved neighbor, if you find that you spend just as much time in the pursuit of pleasure and in the things of the world as he does, then you have to ask yourself the difficult question, "Am I really a child of God? Is there really that difference in my life that ought to be seen, to prove that I am a child of God?"

In I John 5:3 we read, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." If we say we love God, then it ought to be seen in our life by the fact that we have this ongoing earnest desire to keep His commandments. And His commandments are the whole Word of God. They're not just the Ten Commandments. It's the whole Word of God. Wherever we find God speaking to us (and that's the whole Bible), this is the commandment of God.

And so you can look at your life very quickly to discover whether you're a child of God. If your life is like that of your unsaved neighbor, then you're probably not a child of God. If you find an earnest ongoing desire to live for Christ, and when you do sin you are deeply troubled by your sin, then in all likelihood you are a child of God. You have been born again. You have this earnest desire deep within your heart.

What is a Carnal-Minded Christian? (251C)

HC: Good evening Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Could you tell me, what is a carnal-minded Christian? And another thing I would like to know, if a person says he is born again and he has recognizable sin in his life, does he have to repent of that sin and acknowledge it and try to forsake it as the Lord gives him strength? Could you explain that to me please?

HC: All right. Fine. The question is raised concerning a carnal-minded Christian. And what does a Christian do when he finds sin in his life? Is he supposed to forsake that sin and turn away from it.

Now the idea of a carnal-minded Christian really comes from 1 Corinthians 3. We read there in verse 1, "But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh [and in this passage here we're going to find the word flesh and carnal as being one and the same word – "but as men of the flesh" – that is, as carnal men], as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food. For you were not ready for it. And even yet you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh [that is, you are still carnal]. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh [that is, are you not carnal?] and behaving like ordinary men? For when one says, I belong to Paul" and so on.

Now actually, if we read this very carefully, God is not saying, or the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is not saying that these men are believers, that they are babes in Christ. He's saying that as a babe in Christ you have very little showing of spirituality, if you were a babe in Christ. But as the language goes on, he's indicating that they are in the flesh. They are really not of Christ.

Actually, it is very difficult, in fact, it's a contradiction of terms, to be a carnal-minded Christian. You see, the Bible says in 1 John 3:9: "That which is born of God cannot sin." Now if we have become a child of God, a real born again believer, then in our soul we have experienced the new birth. We have been born of God. And from now on we will not sin. We don't want to sin, because we are born of God.

Now it's true we still have a body that lusts after sin. And in our body we will think in terms of the flesh. We will be carnal. But what happens in our life if we are a child of God, if we're really a child of God? Let's first of all look at what happens if we're not a child of God. We're simply a Christian, but we've not become born again. We're not saved. We're a member of the congregation and we're looked upon as a Christian, but we're not saved.

Well, if we begin to live in the flesh, actually, both in body and in soul we like that sin, because we're not born of God. There's nothing in us that is saying, 'you can't live that way.' Oh, our conscience will bother a little bit. But it doesn't take long to sear our conscience. And as long as we can get away with that sin, as long as we can not come to grief because of that sin, we're going to continue in that sin because that agrees entirely with our old nature which is still present within us, both in our body and our soul.

Now the man in 1 Corinthians 5 who was living with his father's wife is typical of this. I've heard some say that he actually was saved. Well, that can't be. That can't be. Someone who would be living in this gross fornication in the church, so that it became a matter of public knowledge and the elders of the church undoubtedly were warning him about this, and yet he continued in this grievous sin, is giving evidence of someone who doesn't have any idea of what salvation is. He doesn't have any idea of what it really means to be born again. That man was carnal. He was carnal-minded. But he was not a Christian. He was a Christian only in the nominal sense. He was not a Christian in the born from above, the born again sense.

And unfortunately, our churches have many many people like this within them. They are those who believe they are Christians because they do what Christians do, because they have joined the church membership, and so on. And yet they have never become born again, born from above. And so in their

practices they live very much like the world. On Sunday they can be sweet and light and happy and wonderful believers. But during the week, in their normal living, you can hardly tell them from the world. They are carnal-minded Christians, but they're not born again. They're not really Christians. They are really carnal-minded.

Now on the other hand, if you become a born again believer, now you've received your resurrected soul, and now you commit a sin. You get into an activity moving toward adultery, let's say. Or you tell a lie, or whatever. Your conscience not only is troubling you, but in your soul you are being violated. And while you may struggle with that sin for a long time, nevertheless every time you become involved in that sin it's not a happy proposition at all. Even though not a soul knows about that sin, even though you can get away with that sin every time you commit it, it's a sore point in your life. Every time you commit it there's the after bite of remorse, the unhappiness, the distress in your soul because in your soul you've been violated. To live this way is antagonistic toward your new soul, your resurrected soul. And this is something you're going to be struggling with God about.

You can say, well, all right, at that time you're being carnal-minded. Well, okay. But it's an altogether different kind of a thing than in the life of the person who is essentially living like the world, and we call him a carnal-minded Christian. It's an altogether different kind of a thing. And this struggle will go on until finally the truth dawns on your mind, and God will chastise because He indwells that born again believer, and He has something to say about that. And finally the truth will dawn on this man. "I've got to repent I've got to turn away from this sin. I can't go on."

Now interestingly enough, if a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, someone who is born from above, is committing gross sin like the man in 1 Corinthians 5, you can rest assured that if the Pastor or an elder would approach that man and say, "Say, we understand that you've been living with your father's wife in a sexual relationship," the reaction to that declaration or that revelation would be absolutely predictable. It would not be like the reaction of the man in 1 Corinthians 5, who arrogantly continued with his sin. Rather it would be the reaction of David, when he was faced by Nathan the prophet, and Nathan said, "Thou art the man," after David had been guilty of adultery and murder.

And then the repentance would come pouring out, "Oh God, against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." And that would be the end of the question. This sin could not continue. That's what would happen in the life of the born again believer.

The born again believer cannot continue in sin. And when he does sin he is grievously troubled by his sin. And that is why his life is altogether different from the so called "carnal-minded Christian," who is one in name only but who is essentially living like the world. He is really not a Christian at all.

Well, I hope this will help.

Do Christians Have to Lead Godly Lives? (285C)

CALLER: I was with a group last night, and we were discussing being Christians, and there was a difference of opinion. So I'd like to know what your opinion is. One person said that he felt that by being a Christian it gave him an obligation to live a godly type of life. And the other person said that he felt that salvation was a gift, that he didn't feel an obligation to God. So I would like to have your opinion on that.

HC: Now the question raised is a very practical question. When we become a

born again believer, do we have an obligation to live for Christ, or is it true that inasmuch as salvation is a gift to us, we didn't ask for it, it was just given to us, therefore we are under no obligation to serve Christ?

Well, let's first of all, in answering this, analyze what salvation really is, because only if we understand salvation can we begin to answer this kind of a question. When we talk about salvation, we're not just talking about accepting a way of life, or of aligning ourselves with a cause. All kinds of people throughout history have aligned themselves with this cause or that cause. And then the question of obligation or lack of obligation resulted from this kind of a relationship.

But when we talk about salvation, we must remember that it's a very dynamic experience. It's not a matter of aligning oneself. It's a matter of becoming a brand new person.

Now you see, before we're saved, both in body and soul we lust after sin. We're dead to Christ, we're dead to God, we're in bondage to sin, and we're in bondage to Satan. We're slaves of Satan. That's the dismal place we are in before we are saved.

Now Christ, when He saves us, by virtue of the fact that He became sin on our behalf (He did this for everyone who is being saved), He took all of the guilt that we should have paid for, and He was found guilty before God, when He went to the cross for our sins. He was condemned and He bore our punishment. It wasn't just that He was physically crucified. That wasn't the punishment. That was just the outward aspect of it.

But as He hung on the cross and as He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and as He stood before Pilate, He was paying the equivalent of an eternity in hell for you and me who have become saved. It was a fantastic punishment that He endured. And only because He was God as well as man could God so intensify this punishment that it was paid during the space of three days and three nights.

Now as a gift of God's grace, He saves me. I didn't deserve it at all, I didn't want that salvation by nature. By nature I was in rebellion against God. This is true of every human being. But He drew me. I came to God as every other born again believer comes to God, because the Father drew me. I was elected by God from before the foundations of the earth, and in His own timetable – some people when they're just babies, others when they're older – He makes us born again.

Now when we become saved, a wonderful thing has occurred in our life. Before we were saved, both in body and in our soul, which is the inner essence of man, the spirit essence of man, just as real a part of man as his body, even as his body is just as real a part of man as his soul, we lust after sin and we're enslaved to sin. And we are in rebellion against God.

But to be saved means that in our soul we have experienced the resurrection. Ephesians 2:1: "You who were dead He has made alive." Verse 5: "By grace you have been saved, and you have been raised with Him," that is, with Christ. Christ experienced the resurrection from the grave, and we've been raised with Him. This did not occur in our body. It occurred in our soul.

We therefore have a brand new personality, in our soul. Now that part which is our soul, therefore, never will sin again, never wants to sin again. We read in 1 John 3:9: "That which is born of God cannot sin." It's in our soul that we actually have an eternal existence.

Now we'll never die, in our soul. Now our bodies will die. Our bodies are going to go into the grave and return to the dust, because they have not experienced the resurrection as yet. But in our soul we have experienced the resurrection.

We are a brand new personality. This, you can see, is entirely different from being aligned with a cause, or being on the bandwagon for Christ, or accepting Christ in some intellectual or emotional way.

This means we have become a new creature. That's exactly the language the Bible uses. We are a new creature. That's why the Bible says we're born again. In our soul it's as if we have died, and we're a brand new personality. On the Last Day, of course, we'll also receive the resurrection of our bodies. And then our new personality will be complete in every sense of the word.

Now, by virtue of the fact that we have soul now that loves God with all of our heart, we're going to find an ongoing, earnest desire to live for Christ. Not out of obligation, because we're not obliged to do anything; we're not paying for anything. But this will be the natural intent of our heart. This will be the new desire of our soul. We want to live for Him, because we have been made perfect in our soul. We have become aligned completely to God's purpose and plan. Sin is anathema to us. Sin is an offense to us.

Now only because we still have a body that has not been saved as yet, do we still tinker with sin, are we still troubled with sin. And if we take our eyes off Christ, then we let our body gain control, and we begin to fall into sin again. But we can't do it very long, because in our soul we're troubled. And we can't wait to get right with God. We can't wait to get this matter straightened out. As a born again believer, we don't want to sin. Sin is troublesome. Sin is a real pain. And any of us who have been born again know that after we have sinned, particularly an offensive sin, oh, the remorse and the "icky" feeling we have in our life, that we did this again.

We earnestly desire that we don't want to sin. Now the evidence, therefore, of a born again believer is that he wants to do God's will, not of obligation, not because we're trying to prove we're worthy, not because we're trying to gain any merit. The moment we do it for that reason, then we're back under the Law, and we're denying the salvation that God talks about in the Bible.

The moment we try to merit anything by our life, if you desperately are trying to make points with Christ, forget it. We're living then under the Law. We're under the curse of the Law. We're denying what salvation is all about. We obey God's commandments because this is the natural intent of our new soul.

Now we read in 1 John 5:2: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." Now in our new soul we desperately love God, because He loved us first. And He gave us this natural affinity to want to be right with God. And so we will keep His commandments.

We read in 1 John 2:4: "He who says, I know Him," Or let's read verse 3: "And by this we may be sure that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." Now if we're keeping His commandments to prove that we're worthy, then we're going beyond what this verse is saying. Then we're back under the Law, according to other verses in the Bible.

But if we keep His commandments because this is the result of our love for God, and the natural desire of our new soul, then it is evidence that we know Him, that we belong to Him. It goes on, "He who says I know Him, but disobey His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." And so there is no obligation to live for Christ. There is the natural desire to live for Him.

And as we search the Bible, we find that God says, "Crucify the flesh, and its desires." The Bible says, "Exercise

control over your body," and so on. And because God has commanded this, therefore we want to do it. God has said it, and His wish is our command, because Christ has given us this new soul.

More than that, God Himself lives within our hearts. The Holy Spirit indwells us. And therefore we are going to be motivated just because of the presence of God in our life.

Well, I hope this helps just a little bit.

The Expectation of Believers Concerning this World (361A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I listen to your program often, and I get a lot out of it. The other night you made a comment like, "Being a Christian isn't at all very exciting." And it disturbed me. And I was wondering what we can hope for as a Christian. Can we take seriously the verse in the Psalms that goes, "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart"? In other words, what can we expect in this life? Or do we have the right to expect anything from the Lord? And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: Our caller raised a very interesting question, and she put it in a very nice way, also. If the believer is called upon to live by faith, and because of this he cannot expect anything very exciting in his life, what can he expect, when the Bible declares that we can ask for the desires of our heart and He will grant them?

You see, we have to remember that as a born again believer, our citizenship is not in this earth. It's not on this earth. Now the secular world all around us, their big thing (to put it in the vernacular) is to make the most of this life, because that's all they are looking at. That's all they're looking for. So this finds its expression in the things money will buy, in a bigger or more beautiful home, in a new car, in fame, or in power of one kind or another. All of these things, the pursuit of pleasure, the exercise of sensual delight, all of these things are big for the secular world.

Now Satan gives an added dimension to the secular world, which is a very interesting dimension. And that is, he opens the occult world, the world of the supernatural. And so he comes through ESP, through ouija boards, through witchcraft, through fortune telling. He comes into the church through occult activity. And this all is very exciting. This all is something that has substance for right now.

But the born again believer, you see, is living, realizing that on this earth he is a stranger and a pilgrim. He's an alien, actually, because he's been taken out of the kingdom of this world, the kingdom of Satan, and he's been transferred into the Kingdom of Christ. And he's only a tiny, tiny minority of all the peoples of the world. And his homeland is not this sin-cursed earth. His future is not in this sin-cursed earth. His hope, his security, is not in the things that money will buy, or in the pleasures of this world, or the sensual desires, or occult activity. His whole future is in Christ.

Now Christ is in Heaven, and that's His homeland now. That's the believer's homeland. He is simply on this earth to operate as an ambassador of Christ, patiently bringing the Gospel, marshaling all of his energies, all of his efforts, that the Gospel, might go forth into this world, so that others, too, might be able to have this marvelous eternal life.

Now he lives in hope, not a hope that maybe someplace down the way God is going to give him a more glorious heritage, but it's a hope that is a fact. It's a hope, however, that does not exist right now. That is, he right now is not living in

the New Heaven and the New Earth. He's not living right now in the glorious personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is in Heaven. True, God the Father and the Son indwell him in the person of the Holy Spirit. But he can't see the Holy Spirit. He can't see Christ with his naked eye. Only when he goes to Heaven, when his work is finished, can he see Christ as He is. And only in the New Heaven and the New Earth will he receive his resurrected body, so that he'll live forever in the glorious presence of Christ. This is where all of the real action is going to take place for the born again believer.

Now this doesn't deny the fact that he's already born again. He's received his resurrected soul, but he can't look at a resurrected soul. You look at a believer walking down the street, who's truly born again. And he doesn't look any different than someone who's unsaved...not a bit different. You can't see a resurrected soul. Oh true, you can see the fruit of the Spirit, to some degree, in his life. But you also look at a lot of unsaved people who are decent moral citizens, and outwardly you can't really see any difference there all the time, either. It's only when you get right down to the Bible itself, and you begin to sense what that person is doing with the Bible itself, that you really begin to see a difference.

The fact that the born again believer always is concerned about the authority of the Bible, and he's constantly desiring to be pleasing to Christ, out of his love for Him. And under no circumstances is he doing it because he thinks he's going to get a reward, or some kind of pay for what he is doing. This is the life of the born again believer.

Now those who are unsaved who call themselves Christians, they are not content with this. This is all future. They'd like something that's like the world. They want something right now. They want something they can get hold of and look at, and feel. They want something that is going to satisfy the senses today. And that's of course what makes them vulnerable to the blandishments and the enticements of Satan, as he comes as an angel of light, because he will bring these things to pass.

Now when the Bible says that God will give us the desires of our heart, yes, that's true. But if we're a born again believer, the desires of our heart will be that God's will be done. And when we begin to think in terms of the pursuits that the world is so interested in, or that gospels which are contrary to the Word of God are interested in, the born again believer does not desire those things. He knows that that isn't part of God's program. And if he even is wondering if he's part of God's program, he very carefully will think out in his heart...that is, he will have this sensitivity about his appeals to God...and certainly from time to time he'll express it to God: "Oh Lord, your will be done, not mine. And if I've asked for something, or if I'm talking about something that I would want from you that happens to be contrary to your will, oh Father, take it away. Take it away. Don't ever let my will be superimposed upon your will. Your will is the one that has to be paramount. Your will is the one that has to override my will, because I don't really know what is best for me."

You know, some people have the idea that when God says that He will give you the desires of your heart, all you have to do is ask whatever seems to be attractive at the moment, and God will do this. But the born again believer knows better than this. He knows that he still has an old nature, and that in his old nature he might be asking for things that are quite contrary to God's will. And certainly there are many things that he can't know God's will about, and therefore, once he has expressed the desires of his heart, he also makes sure that God's will will win

out. And that is the ultimate desire of his heart. That is the overriding desire of his heart, that God's will might be done.

Now living this way, living in hope, that is, living with our eyes focused on a future, with our eyes focused on Heaven, realizing that we're aliens and strangers and pilgrims here and that this isn't where we're to find our big thing, but still having that ongoing joy and security and confidence that my sins have been forgiven, that I'm a child of God, and these are all tremendous blessings that come right now, nevertheless there is nothing to write home about. There's nothing that you can taste and feel and touch. And this is very very unglamorous. That's not a bit glamorous to the world. The world wants something that's right here and now.

And so there are many gospels that have been produced, and they're coming increasingly fast as we approach the end, that do bring an exciting gospel, an exciting relationship with Christ, apparently is evidence that Heaven has opened up and God has very definitely, in a dramatic way, laid his hand on this one or that one. And that's the kind of thing that people like, and they fall for. And Satan knows about this, too, of course. And so he capitalizes on this.

In Revelation 13 it speaks about him making an image, and giving life to that image. Now the image is really a figure of gospels invented by Satan. And to give life to them means that he brings his occult powers to bear in these gospels, so that they produce a gospel that is patterned after the true Gospel. It has many of the same evidences. That is, it talks about Christ, and about the blood of Christ, and the resurrection, and the atonement, and all of these things. But it comes with occult activity, so that it looks a thousand times more alive than the true Gospel.

The true Gospel is a walk of faith. "The just shall live by faith" even as Abraham walked by faith. He was looking for a Heavenly City. But he walked as a stranger and a pilgrim. Do you know that Abraham, who is called the father of all believers, both Gentiles and Jews, lived in the land of Canaan 100 years, and yet in all of that time we find that he only purchased only one piece of ground, and that was to provide a burial place for his wife Sarah, when she died. Except for that he walked as a stranger. He lived in a tent. He wasn't a poor man. He was a rich man. He could easily have built a city, like Cain did. He easily could have built a beautiful mansion. But he lived in a tent, herding sheep. He was a stranger and a pilgrim because his focal point was where every Christian's ought to be. It was on Heaven. He looked for a Heavenly City, whose builder and maker is the Lord, as we read in Hebrews 11.

Well, thank you so much for that good question.

Isn't it Better to Die Than to Live? (375B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like to ask you a question. If a Christian goes to be with the Lord as soon as he dies, then why is it that no one wants to die? Wouldn't it be better to die and be with the Lord in Heaven than to be on this earth?

HC: The question is: If it is so marvelous to know that when we die as a Christian we go to be with the Lord, then why are we so objecting to death? Why do we try so hard to sustain life to the last moment?

The reason is that our eyes are not sufficiently focused on Heaven. The reason is that we have driven our tent pins too deeply into this earth. We're too enamored by this earth.

But those who have become more and more spiritually involved with Christ, who really see the real relationship that a

believer has with Christ, begin to say other things. The apostle Paul, for example, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said, "I would rather be absent from the body and present with the Lord." This is really his desire, to be present with the Lord.

I have known elderly people, who have lived out their lives, and who pray that the Lord might take them, because they had come to the end of their life. I think that any child of God who really is growing in grace begins to sense more and more what a joy it would be if Christ would take him. Therefore, if we as born again believers would become acquainted with the fact that we have terminal cancer, or that our life span is going to be greatly foreshortened because of some physical disability, it really is not traumatic. It really is not. It really should be a source of really joy to this person.

Of course there is the fact that we have loved ones. There is the fact that we have these human relationships. But we must remember that our loved ones, too, are left in the hands of God. We simply are departing from them briefly, until we will see them when they come to be with Christ, also.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

The Question of Saving Our Money (414A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Mr. Camping. I'd like to ask you two questions, and I'll take my answer on the air. One of them is: what do you think a Christian's view should be toward retirement and savings accounts and life insurance, that whole package of saving for the future? And second of all, in John and a couple of other places there's a disciple referred to as the disciple "whom Jesus loved." And in a couple of places it uses the Greek word *agape*, and in a couple of other places it's the *phileo* type of love. Could you explain why he uses it in one place and not in the other? And does Jesus here mean that He though a little more highly of this particular disciple? Or was He a good close friend of his, or what?

HC: The question is raised, first of all, does the Bible have to say anything about retirement plans, life insurance, saving for the future, saving for a rainy day, or whatever? Isn't it sufficient for us to trust in the Lord day by day, knowing that God will take care of us?

Well, certainly if we put our trust, if we put our confidence, if we put our security in riches, in the things that money will buy, then we're going down the wrong track. On the other hand, the Bible does teach that anyone who does not care for his own relatives is worse than an infidel, or worse than an unbeliever. In other words, God indicates that we have a responsibility toward our family.

Knowing that God may spare us to a ripe old age, or anticipating that this might happen, I don't find anything in the Bible that would indicate we are not to plan. Well, let's be very simple about it. Let's start out simply, and then we'll expand it a little bit.

Certainly to have a few dollars in the teapot, or wherever we would keep our money, or in the bank or in our pocketbook, so that we'll have groceries for tomorrow, we automatically would sense that would not be wrong. We know that we have to live tomorrow as well as today. Certainly to take our paycheck and budget it out so that it will accommodate the groceries for the whole month is certainly in keeping with decent stewardship as we live our life. And of course we have to say all this in the framework that we are stewards of what God has given us, and we want to plan our life so that as much as possible of what we have will be available for the

Lord, as much as possible that can ultimately be used to His glory, to His service.

Now let's plan it beyond one month, and let's plan it until the day that we retire. Certainly to set aside some funds through life insurance or through a retirement program, so that we might have some funds to care for us during those years when we cannot work is God-glorifying. It would fall into the same pattern as budgeting our paycheck for the month.

If we, however, are budgeting our paycheck so that we'll have a lot of money for personal pursuit of pleasure, just to heap the goods of this world upon ourselves, then of course we're not seeking first the Kingdom of God, we're not seeking to use our lives in the service of Christ, to send forth the Gospel. We're using all that we can grasp in order that we might pamper ourselves.

By the same token, if we have large life insurance policies, and so on, so that we can live in the lap of luxury and have all and everything at our feet, it would be the same kind of a thing. But on the other hand, to budget a reasonable amount so that we would be able to care for ourselves through these years is certainly God-glorifying.

If it should be that God would take us out early, and we don't know when we will die, when we will go to our heavenly home, this can be cared for by a will, so that if God does take us out early, then we've already taken care of the disposition of our funds so that they will also be used to God's glory after our death.

Now the reference was made to the fact that there are numerous references in the Bible (or a number of references, at any rate, in the Gospel of John) to the disciple that Jesus loved. As near as we can tell from the context, the disciple that Jesus loved was the apostle John. He is the human author, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of the Gospel of John. This is the common practice by the writers of the Gospels, not to name their own names, if they are being talked about in the Gospel message. And as near as we can tell, it is talking about the Gospel of John.

Now where we find this phileo love is particularly in John 21, but it's not in relationship to the apostle John. I don't know if it's ever used in relationship to the apostle John. I've never searched this out, but I don't really think that it is used in connection with the apostle John. But particularly it was used in connection with a conversation between Jesus and Simon Peter.

In verse 15 of John 21 we find that Jesus is saying to Simon Peter, "Son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" And Christ uses the word agape, which is the love of God Himself. It is a love that embraces total obedience to God. It is a love that is a self-sacrificing love. It is a love where you want the very best for the other person.

Simon Peter has just gone through this terrible experience of having denied Jesus. He's not nearly the self-assured, certain person that he was before the time of the cross, where he was ready to declare, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," and "I will never betray Thee," and so on and so on. Now he says very tentatively, "I love Thee," and he uses the word phileo. That is, I am your friend, or it is the love that exists between father and son, or the love between mother and child. It doesn't have nearly the weight of agape love.

And then a second time Jesus said, "Lovest thou Me?" using the word agape. Do you have that love for me that is required of God when there is perfect obedience, when you really want to be altogether obedient to me? And again he answered with the word phileo... "I love Thee," indicating that Peter has learned a great lesson at the cross. He has been

broken. He is not nearly as self-assured as he was before the time of the cross.

And oh, how we need this sometimes! How often we can get into that snare where we really think we've got all the answers. And just because we've learned something about the Bible, we really think we know it now. And the Lord has to deal with us perhaps a long time before we realize that there is a lot that we don't know, there's lots that we have to learn, and we have to be much more humble than we ever were before.

And then a third time in verse 17 Jesus said, "Lovest thou Me?" And this time He used the word phileo. Are you my friend? Are you my friend? Do you love me in this way? And Peter answered, "I love Thee," and again he answered with the word phileo.

Then in verse 20 of John 21 we read about the disciple whom Jesus loved. "Then Peter turning about seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following, which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is He that betrayeth Thee?" And this, as near as we can tell from the context, is talking about the apostle John.

Joking About Godly Matters (375C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I was watching TV one night, a program which I no longer watch. But I wondered if there was something that we can do about this. It's called "All's Fair," I believe. And the man in the program was a joke writer, and he said that President Carter would use his jokes if he would accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. Now to me that was very offensive. I think it's a terrible thing to say about the Lord. Why do they have to put things like that on the program?

HC: Let me ask you this: Have you ever heard someone who claims to be a Christian make a joke about something in the Bible, or something about the church?

CALLER: Yes, I suppose I have.

HC: Yes. This happens very, very frequently. Even pastors will do this. I've done this in the past. Every time I ever do this, however, if I speak flippantly in any sense of the Bible, or of the church, or of this denomination or that denomination (and it's a real temptation to do that, because that's what you've become familiar with), I realize that this is a grievous sin before God, because these are holy things. The Bible is very holy, and in no way ought it to be the environment of a joke. We have the whole world to joke about. We can joke about cows or flowers or clouds, or whatever. But when we start talking about God, or start talking about anything in the Word of God, or about His body, the church, then that must not be joked about.

The reason I say this, or broaden this question, is that it's easy to look at the secular world and say, "Why do they joke about holy things?" because we become offended when we see this on a TV program, or wherever. But actually, we in the church very frequently are more guilty than they. And more than that, we ought to know better.

So I really think that the place to begin to correct this is right with me - that is, in our own life, make sure that never will we joke about holy things, and encourage those that we come in contact with also. That is a "No-No." And then I think that God will take care of the others.

What is "Friendship with the World"? (400C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. Would you speak a bit about what is

meant by friendship with the world? And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine.

The Bible declares that friendship with the world is enmity against Christ, or words to that effect. What is the world?

Let's look at this a little bit objectively. Let's try to get some kind of a perspective. God created this universe to be altogether loyal to Him. And He put as head, or ruler, over this universe, mankind. He gave everything into subjection to mankind.

Now mankind rebelled against God, beginning with Adam and Eve. And so they were cursed. They surrendered their will to Satan actually, who became the prince of this world. And the whole world under mankind was likewise cursed. So the world is really in rebellion against God, therefore.

Now intruding upon this world is the grace of God, the redemption that Christ has provided through His shed blood. So here we find, here and there, an individual who becomes born again, who has been ransomed from his sin and who is now a child of God.

At this point we begin to see that we have two kingdoms in existence. We have the Kingdom of Christ, represented by those who are born again believers, and we have the kingdom of this world, or the kingdom of Satan, which is made up of everyone else. Of course it is the preponderant kingdom. It is the larger of the two, by all odds, since there are only a remnant chosen by grace who actually become saved.

The kingdom of this world, that is, the unsaved, their desires and hopes and aspirations are focused on self, that is, on their own selves, and upon this world, upon the things that this earth can produce, because it is in this earth that they find their security, they find their hope, they find their confidence. The more money they have, the more buildings they own, the lands that they give their names to, these are finally what is important.

They also wish to satisfy their own sinful lusts, because they are only interested in themselves, so personal pleasure becomes a very dominant theme in their life. And sometimes this pleasure can take on very sinful overtones.

Now the believer is an alien here, in a real sense. The believer is a stranger, a pilgrim. The Bible speaks in Hebrews 11 of Abraham, that he walked as a stranger and as a pilgrim in this world. There is no abiding city here. His eye was on the Heavenly City, the city of which he had become a citizen when he became saved, the same city that we belong to when we are saved. As we read in Philippians 3, our commonwealth, our citizenship, is in Heaven.

This world is someplace we have to live in, after we're saved. But we are to have desires and goals and aspirations that are altogether different from the unsaved. Our goal, our focal point, that we pitch our wagon to, is Heaven, and the Lord Jesus Christ He is our King. He is the one whom we serve. And we recognize that the task that God has given us on this earth is to be His ambassador, to represent Christ on this earth in offering the Gospel to others. We really are stewards of the wherewithal God gives us, with the responsibility and the privilege of making all that God has given us as available as possible to share this precious Gospel with others. That's our role.

Therefore we do not want to be sidetracked. We don't want to get all excited about the things that money will buy. We don't want to pursue riches. We don't want to pursue pleasure. I often think of those who really work overtime to try to become a great skier, or a great baseball player, or a great this or a great that. Now this is fine for the world, because that is their only goal. At least

that's some kind of a goal.

But for the Christian that kind of a goal doesn't satisfy at all. This is not the goal for the believer, to exhaust himself in the pursuit of something that the world is concerned about. The goal of the Christian is to exhaust himself to live to the glory of God, to be as obedient as possible to the will of God, to the Word of God, to be as available as possible, in our time and our energy, in our finances, and whatever, that the Gospel might be sent forth. This is the goal of the believer. And anything less than this is friendship with the world.

A lot of times we simplify this whole question by simply thinking that friendship with the world has to do with friendship with that which is sinful. No, it's more complex than that. It's far wider than that. Actually, if our attitudes in life are such that we find a chief concern in our life to have the things that the world has, to pursue the same goals that the unsaved pursue, then we are engaging in friendship with the world rather than in friendship with Christ. As friends of Christ, as those who are ambassadors of Christ, our goals are heavenly. They're focused on the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's an old cliché which I might remark upon in this connection, which says that he was so heavenly-minded that he was no earthly good. Now that's a nonsensical cliché. There is no such thing as being so heavenly minded. That is the goal of every believer, that we would be exceedingly heavenly minded, because that is where the Lord Jesus Christ is. Christ is our Lord. Christ is our Savior. In Him we live and move and have our being. We are in Him, and He indwells us. Christ lives in us because we have become a child of God, and we have become born again. This immutable, this unchangeable, this ever constant relationship that exists between the believer and Christ, must be there if we are truly born again. And therefore our goal always ought to be Christ. This is friendship with God, you see. This is fellowship with Him.

Now to put feet under this whole discussion, we have to say therefore that if we are really a lover of God, and we are not a lover of the world, then we're going to be spending a lot of time in the Word of God, because it is the revelation of God's will for our life. We're going to spend a lot of time in prayer, because we've learned to trust implicitly in God, and through prayer we can also bring our praise to Him. We're going to spend a lot of time thinking about our life. How can I use it more effectively and more efficiently for the service of the Lord? We're not going to be content with the status quo. We're going to be thinking, "God has given me a good business,"

"God has given me a good medical practice." "God has given me this or that or the other thing." How can I use these means to the highest possible degree to praise God? And this will be on the mind and on the heart of the child of God, who is not interested in living in this world.

And as we pray for wisdom concerning these things, as we live more and more with these thoughts in view, we're also going to find that as we make decisions, regarding where we're going for our vacation, or how we're going to spend some money, or whatever, where we're going to live, or what profession or business or occupation we're going to be in, we're going to be seeking God's will more and more and more. This is the life of the child of God who does not want to be a friend to the world.

On the other side of the coin, those who are friends with the world will think, first of all, of their own personal pleasure and comfort. They will think first of all of security in the things that money will buy. They will think first of all of doing the very same things that the world does. And many of these things in themselves

are not sinful. But when they are carried out with the motivation that the world carries them out, they become sinful, because they're not being carried out to God's glory.

Worldly Philosophies and the Christian (507A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Could you tell me how a Christian should think about the different ideas or philosophies of the world, how you should relate to the way the world is set up, the world system?

HC: The question is, how should the born again believer, the Christian, who is a child of God, relate to the philosophies and the systems of the world? We learn from I Corinthians 1 and I Corinthians 2 that the wisdom of the world is foolishness to God. And likewise, the foolishness of preaching, the foolishness of the Gospel, is, at least the world looks upon the preaching of the Gospel as foolishness.

You see, there are two kingdoms in this world. There is the dominion of Satan on the one hand, composed of the majority of all the peoples of the world. And they desperately are trying to find answers, they're trying to find some kind of truth. They're trying to find Utopia, the more abundant life. And so they develop their philosophies. They think maybe through this means they'll find answers. They desperately work through science trying to find some answer to the riddles of the universe. They never go to God, of course. They never go to the Bible. They won't start there at all. They try to judge from what they can discover with their own finite minds. They try to find truth.

So that's what we have on the one hand. That's the wisdom of the world. And it's all going to perish. They'll never find truth. Occasionally they will uncover some beautiful evidence that will again resound to the praise of God as we learn more and more about the secrets of nature, and so on. But unsaved man will not praise God. The believers can stand on the sidelines and look at it and say, "Yes, isn't it marvelous that God's laws are so carefully developed and so unchangeable that man can rendezvous with the moon, and send rockets to Mars," and so on.

But the foolishness of preaching is that which has to do with the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. This has to do with people who know where truth is. They know how the world came into existence. They know how God created it. They know what is going to happen in the future? because they believe what the Bible says. They know why there is sin and suffering in the world. They know all kinds of things about this universe that are denied the unsaved who will not look upon the Bible as this kind of a guide at all.

And yet the world will regard them as being foolish. And so this is the kind of situation that exists. You go into any large library, like the University of California library, where there are just hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of volumes. And read them all, if you had time to do it. And through it, the thread that runs through it all is the pursuit of truth. And yet they'll never find truth there at all.

The one book that you have to turn to to find truth is the Bible.

CALLER: So you think the best way is just to disregard most of the concepts of the world that have been set up?

HC: You know, that's a very interesting question. I often talk to young people about education, whether they should go to college, or whatever. And I remember when I was a youngster that we had to learn certain things about Shakespeare, and we had to learn certain things about various writers of yore, of the past, secular writers. And this all comes under

the general heading of Humanities. On the one hand, of course, are the analytical subjects, like Math and Engineering, and so on. And on the other side of the coin were the Humanities, where you develop your cultural background. You learn more and more about the world that we have.

And the older I get and the more I think about this, I really think, all right, Now here is a man or a woman, and they will spend long long hours reading plays of Shakespeare, or whatever it might be, and trying to understand why it was written or what the sense of it was. And I often think, now suppose those exact same number of hours were devoted to the same kind of an intense study of the Bible, trying really to grapple with the Book of Isaiah, the Book of Jeremiah, and really sitting at the feet of God and learning from Him. I wonder which of the two students would come out on top. Which one would be most qualified to face the world?

Because after all, the purpose of an education in pursuit of truth is to enable a person to be developed so he can face the world, so that he can take his proper position amongst the peoples of the world to make his contribution, whatever that might be. And I am almost, yes, I am thoroughly convinced that the one who would spend the time in the scriptures would be far more qualified to face the issues of life and really take his place amongst the peoples of the world, to make a serious contribution, than the one who spent so much time in the secular Humanities.

Now I know that this sounds very appalling. This sounds like it's putting down all kinds of education. But nevertheless, I think this is very Biblical. Now it's true, of course, that we have to learn Math, so that we are able to engage in a reasonable amount of commerce and trade. We certainly have to learn to write and to read, because we have to communicate. And we can't even begin to understand the Bible until we first have these basic tools. So we have to take English; we have to learn about Subjects and Predicates, and Objects, and so on. These are basic tools that we first must have.

But once we have those tools, then I think as fast as we can, go to work in the scriptures themselves. I think that we could really turn out youngsters that were wonderfully equipped to face the world. I think of Christian high schools, for example, or even Christian grammar schools, with all the fact that they are Christian (and now I'm really going, but I might as well say it). With all the fact that they are Christian, they spend a lot of time in secular writings and in secular history, and so on. Now a little history of our country and so on, can be helpful, certainly. But I really believe that if our youngsters were really trained in the scriptures themselves, if these were analyzed instead of Macbeth, and lots and lots of time were put into them in memorization, and so on, I really think that we couldn't do our youngsters a better thing.

CALLER: Yes, I think that's pretty good. A lot of the literature down through the years has themes that are really not the greatest, when you get down to what it revolves around. It's sinful.

Well, it does come out of the mind of sinful man. And they're limited by that man's mind and his particular knowledge. And how can that hold a candle to what we read in the Bible, where the limitation is the infinite mind of God. There is no possibility that it can hold a candle to this.

There are those, for example, who make lifelong studies of the philosophies of Aristotle or Socrates, or Plato, or whoever it might be. But what have you got when you're all done? You simply are trying to understand his mind. But what

is his mind? It's very finite. It's exceedingly far from truth. It may have impinged upon truth a little here and there, and that may make it a little bit exciting. But spend that same time in the scriptures, really trying to understand what God is saying, comparing scripture with scripture. Then you not only are being obedient to the Lord, because you're feeding on His Word. Secondly, you are going to be spiritually strengthened by His Word. But thirdly, you're also going to be equipped to become a better ambassador of Christ, because you've got more of God's Word to share with others. You have better understanding of the whole salvation program. You have everything going for you.

I often think. You know, many people go years to school. And they get their doctors' degrees in this or that. But does that really help them to face the situation when the quarrels begin in their home, or when they're frustrated because of this or that, or when the bad news comes and they've lost a job, or they've lost a dear one? Do any of these things really help them to face the real issues of life? And as a matter of fact, they hardly do.

But on the other hand, if they had had a very deep schooling in the Word of God, so that they have learned again and again and again that there is a God in whom they can trust, and there is a way of life that can bring real joy and real peace and real contentment and real security, how much better would they not have been qualified for facing this world?

CALLER: Yes.

Pictures and Images of Jesus (556A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Brother Camping. I have a question tonight, and I would like to take it over the air. I wonder if you would talk about the pictures that see today of Christ. I've been told that they couldn't possibly be accurate. And if we have them in our homes - and also, nativity scenes, the little figurines - would that be in the same line as graven images?

HC: All right. The question is concerning pictures of Jesus. And I'm grateful for questions like this because this is a very practical question, and it deals with our relationship with God.

Now you may be in a church where historically, for years and years and years you have had pictures of Jesus. Maybe in your church hall you have a beautiful picture of Jesus, or maybe in your home you have two or three pictures of Jesus on the wall. And you've never really thought about it. You really have just been grateful that this reminder of your relationship with Christ was there.

But when we stop to think about it, and remember the Bible is our guidebook, we will discover very quickly that this is something that ought not to be at all. The Bible does say in Exodus 20 that we're not to make any image of God or to bow down and worship it. Now if someone attempted to make an image, a statue of God, if somebody did this (now you think about this), we would be appalled by the idea. We would say, "Oh my, that is dreadful. We're making an idol of some kind." Even if we just mounted that on an end table in our living room in a place of honor, not that we would worship it necessarily, when friends came over they would say, "What is this?" And we would say, "That is a representation of God over here." And you immediately sense that would be an abhorrent, abominable kind of an idea.

Now a picture really is exactly the same thing. It happens not to be three-dimensional. It's only two-dimensional. But nevertheless it's precisely the same thing. And when we have a painting that purports to be a

picture of Jesus on the wall, we're effectively saying that is God, because Jesus is God. And you can't argue, "But He had a human nature." Well, the fact is, when Jesus took on a human nature He was still God, and we're not to make an image of God. And even though we don't have a shrine and we aren't bowing down and worshipping that picture, nevertheless we have already gone one giant step in violation of God's Word. We have made an image of God Himself. And it's just as serious as if it were a three-dimensional idol of some kind.

More than that, we are absolutely ridiculing God. We are really playing God for a fool. Now that sounds like horrible language, but really I mean this. Because that picture is no more a picture of Jesus than it is of my Uncle Harry. No artist has ever seen Jesus. None of these artists who have drawn these pictures have the slightest idea of what Jesus really looked like. The Bible gives us absolutely no description. There is no description. And so an artist paints what he thinks looks like Jesus, and he says, "Now that's Jesus." Well, he might as well say, "Well, that's my Uncle Harry," because it no more is Jesus than anything else is Jesus. And so we're poking fun of God. We put that picture on the wall and we say, "That's Jesus." And we say that very reverently. And it's ridiculous.

I know I'm using strong words, but it's ridiculous. Let's put it right down into our realm where we can understand it. If you didn't have a picture of an uncle in another land, let's say, and you dearly wanted to have that picture, and yet he didn't send you a picture, and you wanted a picture on the wall, so you go to the photographer and you go through all the pictures he has and finally you find a nice young man there that just is so handsome, and you say, "Can I buy this?" And he says, "Surely, you can buy that." And you get a nice frame, and you put it on the wall, and now you say to your visiting friends and relatives, "Oh, look at the beautiful picture I have of Uncle Harry, who's over in the old country. Isn't he a handsome man?" You're lying to yourself, and you're lying to everybody else. That picture isn't your Uncle Harry. That's just a picture you picked up in this photographer's shop.

And this is exactly what we're doing with these pictures of Jesus. The whole business, all the way from Exodus 20, where we're not to have an image of God, to the kind of an image that is proposed, is contrary to the will of God. And we must not have this in our homes.

Now I know that this hurts some of you. Every time we talk about this I know there's somebody who is really appalled by this kind of conversation. But let's remember, God is God. And the Lord Jesus, while He emptied Himself in order to be our Savior, is still God. He is His Eternal Majesty, King of kings and Lord of lords. He is God, and God is spirit. And you can't make a picture of a spirit. Nobody could ever make a picture of a spirit. Our minds can't get hold of what a spirit is. And we'd better remember what God says: "They who worship Him worship Him in spirit and truth." We worship God by faith, not because we see a picture on the wall.

Now the very fact that when you walk over to that picture on the wall, and take it down, and take that picture of Jesus and crumple it up and throw it into the fireplace, that at that point there's going to be a hitch in your heart, and you're wondering, "Oh, what am I doing?" indicates that you have an attachment to that picture that should not be there, that should not be there at all. You looked upon that as a holy picture, as something that was more than just a picture of Jesus. It was something that was to be revered. And you find it very difficult to snatch that picture out of that frame and crumple it up and throw it into the fireplace. And that indicates that you've already gone farther than you should

with that. By all means, let's not play around with pictures of Jesus. Let's do it God's way.

Cremation: A Biblical Perspective (855B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Last evening a lady spoke on cremation. And what was the scripture you gave?

HC: Amos 2:1.

CALLER: And would you explain that again?

HC: Yes. There God takes issue with the King of Moab because he burned the bones of another king to lime; that is, he had him cremated. Or he takes issue with somebody. Yes, he had burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime. Also I gave Isaiah 33, where God is talking about the wicked of the world. And in Isaiah 33, we read in verse 12, "And the people shall be as the burnings of lime [that is, the unsaved, the wicked, shall be as those who have been cremated] as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire."

In Revelation 20, when God is using the figure of Judgment Day, He says fire came down from heaven and destroyed them. Now that means they were cremated, because to be burned up in fire means to be cremated. And fire, to destroy a person, is a picture of hell. It's a figure of hell.

CALLER: So it's displeasing to the Lord.

HC: Yes. According to Amos 2 it is displeasing: "For three transgressions of Moab and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime. And I shall send a fire upon Moab."

CALLER: Thank you.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Dealing with Sinfulness in Others (149E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I have a question about a girlfriend of mine. She says she's a Christian, and I've known her about four years. And her statement to me was that she had allowed Satan to get his way and she got drunk. And I said, "Well then, when did you go to God with your problem, to solve the problem that caused you to go ahead and get drunk?" And she said, "Well, Satan got his way, and that's how it was solved."

And so then we got together to talk about this idea. And we never ended up talking about Satan, but she said, as she was leaving our house, "Don't pray about Satan attacking me, but pray for my diet," which was one of her problem areas. And my question is: As a Christian believer, I really believe in Jesus Christ, but I'm uneasy about this girl allowing Satan to take over her life more than God taking over her life. And I'm wondering if I should really put myself even in her presence at this point, whether it's good for me, just what my position should be on that. I really found myself not wanting to even talk about it, because I felt uneasy.

HC: Why do you think that Satan is troubling her life?

CALLER: Well, she says that she's willed her life over to the Lord, and she's in a direction of going up. But every time I would talk about the Lord and what He's doing in my life, and so on, the conversation would change. And I guess that was part of my uneasiness. Every time that we would have a common ground, if we were one in

Christ, it was diverted. And I'm not sure why.

HC: You see, the question you're really raising is: How far can we know about satanic activity in the life of someone else? Now this lady that you're talking with is suggesting that it is Satan who is making her do this or that. Now actually, that's a cop-out. I don't say that facetiously, but this is the nature of man. You know, Eve, when she fell into sin, said, "The serpent made me do it." Mankind has always done this. They want to put the blame some other place.

Now actually, an unsaved person is a slave of Satan, is in bondage to him. But he also is by his very nature rebellious against God, and he doesn't have to point the finger at Satan. All he's got to do is look at his own heart. In his own heart he wants to do bad. He wants to do evil. And so when we blame Satan for it, we are simply avoiding the bigger question, "What's wrong with me?"

Secondly, when we as Christians are concerned about satanic activity in the lives of others, we are giving Satan adulation. We are taking note of him far beyond what he deserves. Now we know that there's an occult world. We know that Satan is very active. But if we're going to talk about any personalities, we might as well be talking about the Lord Jesus Christ and making Him Number One all the time.

And so when you talk now, if she is unsaved, just from her very heart, from her own nature, she doesn't really want to talk about sin. She doesn't really want to get to the heart of the Gospel, because that's very uncomfortable.

Any time anybody talks to an unsaved person it doesn't take at all long to get off the question when it starts getting uncomfortable, when you start talking about sin and the claims of the Gospel. This is just because of the rebellious nature of man.

And so when you visit with her, just simply bring the Gospel to her, and make no judgment about what's going on in her heart, or whatever. You try to bring the Gospel. If she listens, fine. If she doesn't listen, if she turns away, she may even mock or ridicule, then no, this is not the time or the place.

CALLER: It's more that, I mean, she's even written poetry about Christ, and the shedding of the blood and the forgiveness of our sins, and this sort of thing. So it's almost like I'll just have to accept that on faith. Okay, you know, she says she's there, but her actions do speak otherwise.

HC: Well, yes, but we're not to judge the other person. And you know, a person, we don't really know what struggle is going on in their life. Maybe they have a sin that's out near the surface, and they're really struggling with it. Actually, however, the full time job of judging is with me. I have to keep examining my life, to make sure that I am as faithful to the Word of God as possible.

CALLER: Okay. That really makes me at peace, and I thank you. Good night.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

How Do We Love Our Neighbor as Ourselves (175A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. You know the verse that says that we should love our neighbor as ourselves?

HC: Yes.

CALLER: What does it mean? How should we love ourselves?

HC: Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself," because within the heart of man God has put a self-love. Man intuitively wants to preserve his own life. He wants the very best for himself. Now he may be careless with his life, and he may do things that are destructive to his

life. But he's doing this because he has been deceived into thinking some sin of his is actually beneficial to him. Pleasure is superimposed over what is best for him. But still, the ultimate package is that he is doing what is best for him. Man by nature is designed this way.

Now God has declared that we are to love our neighbor with that same care with which we love ourselves. We want the very best for them also. And God actually told us how we can love our neighbor in I John 5:2: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments."

Now you see, if we love our neighbor then we would never, for example, want to commit adultery, just to use this as an illustration. Anyone at all who says, "Oh, we love each other so much that we can't help it that we live immorally together," well, that's utter nonsense. That's not love. That's lust. That's just selfish desire, because to live immorally with someone else is to incur the wrath of God against that person. So how can that be love for that person? That is simply selfish lust.

The same thing is true if we do anything against our neighbor. If we hate our neighbor, that's the equivalent of murder. If we covet what they have, so that we begin to get ideas as to how we might obtain that which doesn't belong to us, this is showing that we do not love our neighbor.

But if we are trying to live by God's rules in relationship to our neighbor, we won't covet, we won't kill, we won't commit adultery. We won't have these sins in our life, and this will really show that we love our neighbor.

CALLER: I don't want to have selfish love. But since you said God gave us love for ourselves, is it to preserve our life? Is that what you mean, that kind of love?

HC: Yes, to preserve our life. And actually, that love can be misguided altogether, so that it becomes selfish love. And we really think that we're on the throne of our life. We have to, if we truly love our life, look at ourselves very honestly in the light of God's rules, which comes back again to keeping His commandments. And in the Bible we read that we're sinners, that we're under the wrath of God and subject to hell, we begin to cry out to God for mercy. We don't deserve His mercy but we cry out to God for mercy. And we come to Him with a broken and contrite heart, and desire the salvation that He tells us about in His Word.

CALLER: I listen to Dr. Adams and to Dr. Narramore. And Dr. Narramore always seems to talk about what happened in our early childhood, that that's what probably caused our problems. But Dr. Adams doesn't seem to speak that way. He seems to say that we don't fulfill our responsibilities. He doesn't blame it on our childhood. Which is right? I know we're sinners, but . . .

HC: I personally believe that a lot of psychology today is seeking for a scapegoat, a reason for why we are, without really getting at the heart of the matter, which is that we are sinners, that we have a sinful nature. And so we alibi and say, "Well, my mother brought me up this way," or "My daddy did this to me, and therefore I am the way that I am." Well, they may have done those things, but we are the way we are because we're sinners. And wonderfully, the love of God is such, and the grace of God is such, that regardless of what the outward circumstances are that may have helped to form our character (and certainly outward circumstances, our environment, has made an impact upon our character), nevertheless, regardless of what those may be, once we turn our life over to Christ, once we are born again, then it's unimportant what finally formed our character, why we are the

way we are.

Really, to try to dig back, dig back, to what happened when you were a child, what's so big about that? All I know is, I'm a sinner. I'm under the wrath of God, and I'm in trouble with God, and "Oh Lord, have mercy on me." And once I'm a born again believer, then all of the sins of my childhood and the sins of my parents, as they may have related to me, are not at all.

CALLER: Thank you for your patience.

HC: Thank you so much for calling and sharing. Good night.

Handling Doctrinal Differences (220B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi. I'd like to address myself to the responsibilities of Christians who call in on your program. I think that it's a very unusual, unique program, and it's on a very good Christian radio station. But I think that people who call, especially Christians, should be aware that this isn't just a verbal boxing match for Christians who call in. And they should be aware that there is a possibility of non-Christians listening, or new Christians, who are still seeking to grow in the Lord, and can easily be confused by hassling back and forth among Christians.

I believe what I want to say is this. It is possible to deal strictly on a scriptural basis, using nothing but the scriptures, to prove your case in either direction. And this has been proven back and forth, through the centuries, by firmly devout born again Christians, arguing back and forth on several topics, and it's gotten to where they even have their own classifications now. One of these is eternal security, and another one is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and another one is the debate back and forth as to women's head covering worn in church, whether or not her hair constitutes the covering that God is talking about or if it's actually required that she wear an additional piece of material.

And since these questions have never really been resolved, and they have been argued back and forth by scholars who have studied a great deal more scripture than I have, and they have not been able to really convince the other side, I think that people who call in should offer their own opinions and their own viewpoints, to make sure that all sides of the question are heard. But I don't feel that anyone can assume that since he is basing his answer on the Bible, that he's got to be right and the other person has got to be wrong, because the Bible does say that there are mysteries that God has not chosen to answer, and we see with a clouded view.

And because of this, we have to rely on the Lord, we have to seek out the wisdom of Christ. And if something is particularly bothering a person, there is absolutely no reason that God is not able, through scripture and through preaching based on scripture, and through experience related to scripture, to be able to answer those questions for that person individually. But this does not mean, because he feels that God has given him an answer to his question, that he is suddenly set up as God's prophet, to pronounce to the world, "Hey! Here's the further interpretation and classification and answer to this particular shrouded question."

And I feel that, if you'll permit me to offer a criticism of you, and it's meant to be constructive, I feel that since you do have a very strong knowledge of the Word, that when you answer people who call in, in your attitude of meaning to give them as clear and concise and as scripturally based an answer as you possibly can, you given it in a manner which does not seem to allow much

room for the other person to be just as right, just as scripturally based.

And I feel that there have been times in the past where I have listened to your show, when I have disagreed with you, and I felt that you were making a statement that particularly bothered me, that you spoke matter-of-factly, as if it were a proven fact that eternal security was a Biblical concept. And when you do this, it doesn't allow any credibility or believability to anyone's arguing the other side on a scriptural basis. And I don't feel that I can dictate to you or tell you what the answers are in these particular cases. And I certainly wouldn't want to say, "You should avoid talking about them," because that would put a restriction on the honest openness that God wants us to employ when we explore the Word. God never condemns us for questioning.

HC: You know, I appreciate what you're saying very much. I would like to make a couple of comments. First of all, we want to pursue truth. We don't want to be content with half-truths, or we don't want to be content with that which is quite false.

Now if ten people have ten different opinions about a certain subject, at most only one of them can be true. And maybe none of them are. But at most, only one of them can be true. Now the desire of the born again believer that he find that truth. He doesn't want to end up being one of the nine, if indeed one of the ten has found truth. We want to be the one who has found the truth. This is the Biblical principle. Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." When we come to Him, and as we open the Word more and more, we're going to find that truth.

Now if we had an ideal society, where everybody who called in was equally ready to rest on the Word of God, and would faithfully follow the rules of backing up their opinion or their understanding of the scriptures by the Bible itself, my, we would make progress toward truth all over the place. The fact that theologians have differed through the years doesn't say anything at all to me, because normally these theologians have never had a forum where they could talk with each other. Many of them did not have the advantage that we have today, of concordances, so that we can really know where every word is found in the Bible. Much of the theological undergirding that we have today was done in an earlier day, before all of this was available.

And so the ideal would be that everyone who called in would faithfully try to back up their ideas with scripture. And then we could continue to compare scripture with scripture and hone down the rough places, and modify, and gradually we could find the real truth. But we have a very serious problem that can't be avoided, and which militates against this possibility.

First of all, we have all kinds of people who call in, and they're free to call this because this is an open forum, who do not agree that the Bible alone is the divine Word of God. We have those who call in who are unsaved, and who don't recognize the Bible at all as the Word of God. We have people who belong to other gospels, gospels that start out with the Bible but then they have other books that they also believe are inspired, or are divine. We have people who call in, who are very certain and very confident that the Bible is the Word of God, but that their dreams and visions are also the Word of God.

And then again we have a great many people who are convinced that the Bible and it alone is the Word of God, but they have unwittingly listened to a number of theologians, or they have read some notes in the margin of their Bible. And they have come to believe that that, too, was the equivalent of the divine Word of

God. Therefore, in any of these cases, they're operating from a different authority. It's like trying to argue a question of law in a court room. And one attorney is working from the law books of the State of California, or of the United States, and there's another attorney arguing for the other side, and he's using the law books of England, and trying to argue the case. It just becomes a very difficult kind of a thing.

CALLER: I want to say that if there are ten of us, who have ten completely different opinions, based on scripture now (I'm putting that note on it), that we've based it on our scriptural reading and on what we believe the Bible says, based only on what we believe the Bible says, prayerfully sought out (and I emphasize prayerfully), as to the specific meaning of the scripture, I have on many different occasions, in discussing a topic, realized, "Well, there is no specific verse in the Bible that says, 'Once saved, always saved.'" Now I'm just throwing that out as an example, because I don't want to get off on that topic.

There are areas of scripture that have been, for a long time, and I sincerely believe will be, until the second coming of Christ, when we see with perfect vision, that are just not going to have an absolute answer. And we are not going to be able, by all the talking in the world, or all the arguing, to determine what God specifically wants to reveal, because He has not chosen to reveal it yet. But really, on the basis of your being spiritually concerned, to show love for your brothers, we have more of a responsibility to be loving and to be understanding than we have to be right.

I do not have to take the idea that since you do not totally agree with me, and since I believe I'm more right than you are, that I therefore must hold you in lower respect, or treat you as if you have less of the revelation of God, or take this attitude that somehow it's me against you. I don't believe that we have to agree in order to love each other, or in order to exercise our Christian relationship toward each other. I believe that we can have meaningful discussions, and we can agree to disagree. And I believe that that's Biblically sound. You don't have, in order to love and have a respectful attitude toward each other, to totally agree.

HC: I am all for that, that we will never find total agreement, because we do not have a complete salvation. We have not received our regenerated bodies as yet, so our minds are not that clear. But, but, let us never be satisfied with half-truths, and let us make every attempt to be right. In other words, let us continue our study and continue our study.

Now there comes a time, and this is getting to the last part of your discussion, when it is time to be very dogmatic. I know that this doesn't come off well very frequently. But when we are quite certain that we know what God's Word says, and we're willing to stand up and be counted for what God's Word says (and remember that whatever is said is said in the presence of God almighty), we should not be afraid to say, "Thus sayeth the Lord."

Now there are those who operate by consensus. Or they operate from the standpoint of, "Well, let's not ruffle anybody's feathers," or whatever. Now I wonder how Jeremiah would have got along, if he had done that. Or I wonder how the apostle Paul would have got along, if he had done that. Or I wonder how Stephen would have gotten along if he had done that. You see, there is a time when we have to stand up and be counted.

Now when I feel that, before the Lord, I have done my homework, and I've compared scripture with scripture, a lot of times when I offer an answer on this program I do it fairly easily, fairly readily, as if anyone ought to know that.

But it could well be that it's a product of several years of very careful study. Many of these questions I have struggled with and struggled with and struggled with. But now I am very confident of what the Bible says. Now the first thing that I try to do (and you can check me out on this) is that I will never quote another author. I'll never quote Luther or Calvin or Ironside or Walvoord, or anybody else, never, because they're human, and they can be wrong. That can never be the sourcebook of any kind.

I do try to back it up with scripture. And if I don't take time to back it up with scripture, I welcome calls where they will say, "Look. You said 'so and so.' Where do you read that in the Bible?" Now by the same token, I reserve the right to ask someone, "You said 'so and so.' Where did you read that in the Bible?"

And this is, again, the basis upon which we can build truth. My only hope is not that someone will trust me. That is no hope at all, because I'm not trustworthy. I'm not infallible. But I only hope that those who listen, who are serious about wanting to understand the Bible, will take down those verses and patiently read those verses, and see if they speak to the question at hand. And if they do, fine. If they don't, well, they can form their own opinions as to how wrong I am. But at least they're going to go to the Bible to try to seek it out. And in this way we can make great progress.

If we simply agree to disagree, that's no progress. We'll never make progress that way. We'll only make progress if we will take a stand and back it up with scripture, and keep backing it up with scripture, and fact every verse in the Bible. One of the things I learned a long time ago (and it was a tough lesson for me to learn, but I had to learn it) is that if I hold a position, and I'm ready to say, "Thus sayeth the Lord," I better be ready to face every single verse in the Bible that might possibly relate to it. And if I find in my heart that I'm afraid to look up a verse that someone gives to me, then I know that my position is not nearly as strong as it ought to be.

And this frequently is the case? where people hold a position, and verses are offered, but they never face these verses. They simply pass over them. They pay no attention to them, or they fudge with them, or whatever. But we've got to face every verse, very honestly.

And I am convinced that we don't have to continue holding differences of opinion. I'm convinced that if a believer down in South Africa, or in Argentina, or in Alaska, or in Germany, who comes from whatever church, and you can name any church you want to name, if that person is a born again believer, and even those these people in these various lands know nothing about each other, have never met each other and have never read any common doctrinal books of any kind, if they will patiently go into the Word and let the Word be the final authority, and they all have equal incentive, they all have equal intellects, that is, God has blessed them with equal ability to discern the Word, they're going to come out with the same answers.

CALLER: I disagree with the view which I believe is your opinion, which you have just presented, that all people who put forth the same amount of effort, from anywhere in the world, who are basing it on the scriptures, can come to a unity in belief. We have to live by the light that the Lord has given us. We have to live by what we believe. That does not mean that we can say, "Thus sayeth the Lord" to the other person, because he can say it right around back, quoting other scriptures that can be interpreted in exactly the opposite way. And I do not believe that, as you state, we can all come to perfect knowledge, that we can all, by studying hard enough and having all the assets that we have now, even if we hooked up to computers, and so on,

could reach a consensus of opinion. I really don't.

HC: You see, the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. Now the Bible does indicate that there are certain things that we can't understand. For example, there's no possible way that any of us can understand God, because God is infinite and our minds are finite. There is also a timing of the revelation of God's plan. Even as the Old Testament believers did not understand the Old Testament when it talked about the time when people would come into the body of Christ from all nations, but they did begin to understand this after Christ went to the cross, so there are some statements in the Bible concerning the return of Christ that we can't understand, because God has not chosen to reveal these things yet.

But the Bible is the Sword of the Spirit, and God promised that He would lead us into truth. And therefore we seriously have to continue to search for truth. And we must never be content with where we stand.

Now ideally we all start with a certain doctrinal position on any particular question. And maybe my doctrinal position is based upon 5 verses that I have read, which seem to synthesize into the position that I hold, and that I can confidently say, "This is what the Bible teaches."

But now someone else brings up a 6th verse, or in my continued study of the Bible I find another couple of verses that I have to reckon with, that speak to the same subject in some degree. And it may be necessary that I have to modify my earlier position. And so I want to be sure that I've got the grace to do that, to modify my position. And so now I've got my Number One position modified.

Then, a few months later, as I continue to search the Bible for whatever truth I can find, I find additional verses that I haven't taken into consideration. And now I may have to scrap my position, or I may have to make some further modifications. And if we'll all do that, if we'll all do that, be open to the Word, and continually hone away, and knock off the rough edges of whatever position we have, gradually, of course, we're going to work closer and closer to ultimate truth. And that is the goal that we have to shoot for.

And that's the joy, incidentally, of this kind of a program, because I listen to the callers, and I learn all the time, because they come up with insights, and I can put those into what I already know of the Bible. And I have to synthesize those ideas into everything else, if it's going to be truth.

Secondly, I can offer the verses that back up what I believe to be true, so that others can listen to them and reckon with these verses, as they seek truth on a particular question. And if we'll all do this, we're bound to come closer and closer together.

But the great problem is, and this is a psychological problem that we might not be aware of, that there are certain doctrinal positions we hold that we have learned from the margin of the Bible that we use, let's say, or we've learned it from a teacher or a preacher that we hold very dear, and who normally is fairly trustworthy. But of course he's not infallible, and yet we've trusted him all the way. And we hang on tenaciously to these extracurricular sources, these extrabiblical sources. And we don't realize that we're holding on to them.

And yet, if we're going to be honest with the Word and honest with ourselves, every time we read something or hear something from a place outside of the Word of God, we have to say, "Well, he may be right or he may be wrong."

And we have to be very consistent about that, and always be open to the Word.

And then gradually we're going to come closer together.

CALLER: I agree with you one hundred percent. We have to realize that the other person may be right and may be wrong. We don't shoot our mouths off, saying, "Thus sayeth the Lord," after only basing it on five verses. And then later on we read another two that modify it, and another three later on, two months later, that completely reverses our opinion. Then we feel foolish, and realize that in the meantime we have not only offended other Christians who, in their concern for our beliefs, were making known their beliefs, but we have managed to alienate other people who would have been there to accept the Lord. And I feel that this radio program has a responsibility, and that each of the callers who call in has that same responsibility.

HC: Well, thank you for calling and sharing. Good night.

Religious Pressure from Your Employer (226D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I have a question about an employment situation, how to respond to an employer who is of another faith, who doesn't recognize sin, and believes that it's an error in thinking, and tries to lead you into that religion rather than in your own faith. And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. Good night.

What should you do if your employer does not recognize sin, if he belongs to another faith and tries to lead you into that? Of course you have that uneasy situation where you want to be decent and nice to your employer, because you don't want to offend him in any way. He's abusing his privilege. You work for him, and so he's trying to talk you into his particular gospel. And that's not an easy situation sometimes. It can be very difficult.

But again, God lays down some rules. And God says that if someone brings another gospel, then you are to give him no greeting. Now I know that this sounds brutal. This sounds rough, and you run the risk of losing your job. But we have to be faithful to the Word of God.

In II John:10 we read, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting. For he who greets him shares his wicked work." And so, very quietly, and very tenderly, and ask God for grace and wisdom to do this, if your employer is bugging you about a religion or a gospel that you feel is untrue, and you cannot turn it so that you are able to witness to him, if you find that all he's doing is proselytizing, all he's doing is trying to get you to go his way, then you have to very quietly say, "You know, I delight to work for you. I'm grateful for the job. But would you mind if we just leave that out of our relationship. I really feel that it is unwise for us to have this kind of conversation."

And look for God's help to phrase this as tenderly as possible, and yet be very firm about it. Now your employer may feel very affronted. He may treat you very coldly for this. He may even fire you. But ultimately this is what you must do.

However, make sure that through this conversation there isn't a way of turning, in other words, doing your homework and coming right back at him: "But the Bible says so and so. What do you do with this verse?" and letting him squirm as he tries to face that verse.

On Friendship and Making Friends (291B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, my daughter goes to a Christian school,

which we're very proud of, to be able to send her. But she has trouble making friends. She tries to make friends with different girls, and it seems like the girls just pair off, or in groups of three's. And they don't seem like they want to make friends as she would like. And she feels left out. And she just was wondering, what could she do? Do you have any scriptures?

HC: I would say, first of all, that God does not guarantee that we will have friends. Jesus of course is our example, and He was despised and rejected of men. Jesus suffered as He carried out His work of bringing the Gospel, and the Bible indicates that we also suffer.

I would make this practical suggestion. Sometimes we are waiting for someone else to befriend us, or do something for us. We have a little self-pity, or we feel we're entitled to something, and we're waiting for it to happen to us. My suggestion is that you tell your daughter, and encourage your daughter, and guide your daughter, for her to be a friend to these other girls, without particularly worrying about whether they will be a friend to her. If she will try to do little acts of kindness for them, without expecting anything in return, this is true love, you see. And when they do not react in a friendly way in return, that's their problem before the Lord.

We read in Romans 12:18: "If possible" . . . [now this can be carried to even very extreme cases; your case is not at all extreme, but the principle still holds] . . . "If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all." Now let's say you have an enemy. Now you want to live at peace with that person. And so you do everything to live at peace with that person. But he may not want to live at peace with you. He wants to be your enemy. And so that's his problem before the Lord, but you know that insofar as you are able, you try to be at peace with him.

Now it's the same with your daughter and these girls. Insofar as she is able, she should prove to be a friend to them. Think kind thoughts of them. Now this is one area where we can lose friendships very quickly. If she says or even thinks nasty things, bad things, about these other girls, we can telegraph this. In other words, there can be an air of, our manners will begin to show this. And the Bible says in Philippians 4:8, "Whatever things are noble and are loving and of good report, think on these things."

And so encourage your daughter to think noble thoughts about a friend, or those that she associates with. Suggest to her that she try to be a friend to them, without expecting their friendship in return. You see, Christ, when He came, showed His love to the multitudes, didn't He, as He healed them and fed them, and so on? And yet they didn't react in a reciprocal way. They ended up crucifying Him. And that's the nature of life, very frequently.

CALLER: If they start talking about another girl or boy at the school, she won't have anything to do with that part because she doesn't like talking about other people. She knows it isn't right.

HC: And so at that point, first of all, she wants to make sure, when she walks out on the conversation, that she doesn't do it making a big show of it. Or she could try to direct the conversation.

CALLER: She tried this. She thought that this was maybe why they don't want to be her friend.

HC: I see. Then she'll have to patiently endure it. And it might be that she could just gently excuse herself, without being ostentatious about it, or really obvious about it. The Christian life can be a very lonely life. It really can be a lonely life.

CALLER: She loves the Lord too much to give up what she has in the Lord.

HC: Yes. And she must never compromise her spiritual convictions in order to have friends. That is going down the wrong path.

Sometimes we parents worry about our children when they have hard going, when they face this kind of a situation or a much worse situation. But we must remember that childhood is a training ground for life. And whatever she is experiencing as a youngster, it is going to be duplicated more severely perhaps when she is older. And now she can experience this while she is under the encouragement and the guidance of parents who love her dearly. Later on she may have to face it alone. And so it is excellent training.

CALLER: Well, I appreciate your talking with me, and I hope it will help her.

HC: Thank you for calling.

Let me just make one other comment to the young lady who was having difficulty finding friends at school. You know, there is this one problem that sometimes arises. We look at our classmates, and we see these two girls paired together, and those three having an animated conversation together. And everybody seems to have their friend, and we feel left out.

But look around. Look around. You know, God wants us to be friends with those who need a friend. And you're going to find that there are others in school who are very lonely, for maybe other reasons. Maybe they don't dress as well, or maybe they're of a slightly different skin color, or maybe they are very quiet, like yourself. Now you look for an opportunity to be of service to these. Look for the underdog, in other words, the one who just seems to be having the poorest time of it all. And that is the one that you really want to befriend. That is the one who needs you. And you're going to find that before long there's someone who is going to become your friend, and it's going to be a friendship that is really worth something.

Now even if it didn't happen that this person became your friend, you would have at least known that you have been available to do the Lord's will.

Theft and Restitution for Sin (305A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I know that many people take things. You know, when they work for someone, they may take small things like paper clips, or anything. They may pick up pencils and put them in their pockets. I really want you to clarify this over the radio, for people who do have this problem.

HC: All right. You've raised a very practical question. The question really is: What is this business of employees today that put in their pockets little things that belong to the company they're working for, and they take them home for their own use, kind of feeling in their hearts, "Well, after all, I don't get paid enough, anyway. I'm entitled to this." And yet if they would really stop to think, they are stealing. They are taking something that is not theirs. And over a period of time, actually this theft can be quite a large thing, if they would add together all that they had pilfered from their employer.

Now the Bible says, "Thou shalt not steal." And that is the Law of God. Whether we steal a little thing or a big thing, it is still stealing. It is sin, and it has to be answered to before God. Theft is one of the more common sins that God anticipates as we approach the end of time.

In Revelation 9 God speaks of five sins that are going to be particularly in evidence near the end of time. One is the worshipping of other gods, that is, the vast expansion that will occur of other gospels. The other four sins are

murders, sorceries, fornication and thefts. In other words, stealing, fornication (living adulterously), sorceries (and the word that is used here really means enchantment with drugs, and it could be a reference to the drug culture), and murders are four common sins.

And so the question you raised, about pilfering from our employer, is just part of the whole picture, where man today first of all doesn't care about God at all, about living right before God. And secondly, he does not regard his fellow man. He takes whatever he thinks belongs to him, and could care less from whom he takes it.

CALLER: Well, I have a brother who stole several years ago, and I don't think he wanted to make any restitution. But if he comes to God, will he have to make restitution? Or will he just come to God and ask for forgiveness?

HC: The question is raised (and again it's a very practical question): When we finally get forgiveness for our sins from the Lord, whatever sins they are, must we make restitution? You remember when Zaccheus became a Christian. He was a tax collector, and undoubtedly he had stolen from this one or that one. And he said he would return four fold.

Now is this a command of God, that we are to return four fold? In the Old Testament, under certain circumstances they had to return four fold, or five fold. At other times they had to return one-fifth above, and so on. Do we have to make restitution?

Well, let's think about that for a moment. Suppose that when we got forgiveness for our sins we would have to make a list of every sin that we had ever committed, against whomever it was, and make restitution, insofar as we were able. This would really be something, wouldn't it? We'd have to think about every idle word we've spoken, every word of hatred, every sinful thought against someone, every theft from someone. We would have to try to make restitution.

Now wonderfully, the forgiveness that God provides does not call for that kind of restitution. The forgiveness that God provides us is that our sins are forgiven, and we stand right before God. Now we may have to make restitution insofar as the law is concerned, the law of the land. If we find, for example, that we have embezzled funds, and we've been discovered, and we agree with our employer that yes, we will make restitution, because we have done wrong, and this will be part of the agreement where they'll say, "Well, then we won't bring this to law," or whatever, that's a different matter. But insofar as trying to make a list of every sin that we've committed, and trying to make restitution, no, God does not call for that.

CALLER: I like to talk to him and others about these things. And I wanted to get a better clarification of it, since I saw on the TV about people stealing so much, so many billions of dollars worth of things during the Christmas holidays. So I thought about it, and I have a burden on my heart to go around to the apartments here where I live, and deliver tracts, and talk to people about different things that they may have on their minds. And I know it would be a burdensome thing to think that they could pay back all the guilt that they created.

HC: You see, actually, when we are saved we're saved to serve. Now before we're saved we live very selfishly. And because we live selfishly, we are taking wherever we can. We're stealing, we're taking advantage of people. This is the story of our life. But when we become saved, then our life is turned exactly around. And ideally and to a high degree this will be the case, we will live to serve our fellow man. We will do what we can on their behalf. And in so doing, in a sense we're making restitution. We're not

making restitution to the very same person that we stole from before, or that we wronged in some way. But insofar as mankind is concerned, we are making restitution.

Let me, however, emphasize that God does not call for a literal one-to-one restitution. The thief on the cross was a robber, as well as a murderer. When he was saved, Jesus said to him, "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Did he have to make any restitution, in order to be right with God? None whatsoever.

When we are saved, our sins are completely covered. The answer to life's problems is to find our rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we are resting in Him, when we know our sins are covered, then we are beginning to live a more abundant life, then we know we can have a clear conscience, then we can know that we are right with our fellow man.

Marvelously, all the past is covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. It's all forgotten and forgiven. Now we may have committed certain crimes in the past that we are still paying for. We may have abused our life through alcohol, and so we may die of cirrhosis of the liver. Or we may have committed a crime that has brought us to the judge, and we may have to spend a number of years in jail, or whatever. We may have done other things that have brought disease into our life, and now we have to live with this.

But insofar as looking around for restitution, insofar as trying to think of all the sins that I've ever committed, and trying to make amends, that is not called for. We make amends in another sense by simply being available to be used of the Lord in the service of mankind.

CALLER: Wonderful. Well, thank you very much.

HC: Thank you so much for calling and sharing.

On Forgiveness (506A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: My question is, are we as Christians supposed to forgive someone unless they ask us for forgiveness? I have a daughter-in-law who has been absolutely just obnoxious, and now she kind of wants to be friends, but she just wants to forget the whole thing. And I told her, "I'd feel better if you would at least say, 'I'm sorry.'" And she said, "No, I'll never say 'I'm sorry.'" And I said, "Well, I can't say that you're really sorry if you can't say you're sorry." I want to know what should I as a Christian do with this person?

HC: Well, the fact is, Jesus put it this way. "If your brother sins against you, how oft shall you forgive him? Seven times?" And the answer came back, "No, seven times seventy times."

Now that means that you're living with someone who is an obnoxious person, and they sin against you. And are you to forgive them? Yes, you forgive them. You don't hold that against them. You obviously are not going to entrust them with something, knowing their weaknesses, and so on. But you don't bear any animosity toward them of any kind.

CALLER: But without their even apologizing?

HC: Without even their apologizing. That is not a condition for forgiveness. Now in other words, our role as born again believers is that we have to live at peace with them, even though they are going to continue to be obnoxious and continue to do what they want to do. We are to live loving them and at peace with them. We recognize of course that my friend or my loved one is having difficulties. She may be unsaved. She may be struggling with some big sins in her life. Maybe I don't know the condition of her heart at all, and likely I

don't. But all I know is that when she comes against me I am not to live with any bitterness or any hatred or any animosity toward her. I am to live in a forgiven relationship.

Now she may think that I've sinned against her, and she may not want to forgive me. Well, that's her problem. If she doesn't want to forgive me, I'm not going to worry about that. The important thing is that I'm going to live in a forgiven relationship toward her.

CALLER: But there is nowhere in the Bible that it says that we... I don't mean that I'm just holding animosity. I don't want you to get the wrong attitude here. I forgave her long ago, or I wouldn't even say Hi to her really, over what she's done. But there's nowhere in the Bible that says that we are to forgive unless they ask us to. In other words, I'm going to be honest. I go on and I'm friendly with her, but deep in my heart I'm holding this because she won't say, "Look, I'm sorry."

HC: I know. But you see, you can't make that a condition for forgiveness, that she has to first say that she is sorry. She might be totally in rebellion against you, and so on and so on. But you are not to hold any grudges against her. You may feel sorry for her, you can have compassion on her because she won't do this. Lots of husbands and wives get into this. And one waits for the other to say, "I'm sorry." And then they don't speak to each other. And then pretty soon they begin to pick at each other. And then they begin to quarrel. And it just goes on and on because no one will say first, "I'm sorry." And it ends up not infrequently in the divorce courts.

Now that should never happen when one of them is a Christian. Let's say we have someone who is a Christian and someone who is a non-Christian. The Christian is going to be always forgiving, understanding. All right. Maybe my mate will never say, "I'm sorry" and will never take the blame for anyone or anything. But so what? What difference does it make? I'm not going to let them ruin my relationship with the Lord. I will forgive them. I will not hold any grudge or any animosity toward my mate.

You see, it's the world that wants to hold grudges. It's the world that says, "Well, she did that to me, and until she apologizes I'm not going to do 'so and so.'" That's what the world says.

CALLER: Brother Camping, she has just hurt me so deeply. It's not madness. I am just hurt so deep that there's no words to describe it.

HC: Were you hurt as deeply as, for example, when the Lord Jesus, who was without sin, there was no way that anyone could point to any kind of sin in His life, and yet He was insulted. He was reviled, He was spit upon, He was crucified, He took all kinds of slander? Were you hurt that deeply? Were you hurt that deeply?

You see, this the role that God puts us in, that we walk in the same shoes as the Lord Jesus. Now the world, when they're insulted, demand apologies. But when we as born again believers are insulted or hurt very deeply, we recognize, "Well, all right. We understand. The world is full of people who don't understand what a Christian life really ought to be, and they're going to do nasty things and dirty things, and so on." But we're not going to react to this. We understand that this is the situation. And so we'll forgive them. We're not going to hold anything personal against them.

CALLER: The reason I was thinking this way is, you know, the Lord doesn't forgive us of our sin unless we ask Him, which in the same breath we're confessing. You know what I mean. So I was just wondering, I will do what the Lord wants me to do. And if He says, just go on, regardless of how you were hurt, without her saying, "I'm sorry,"

and confessing her sin to me at all, I'll do it. But I just didn't know what my part was in the situation.

HC: You see, when the Lord forgives us when we ask for forgiveness, the only reason we ask for forgiveness is because God inclines our hearts. We don't ask for forgiveness out of our own will. Jesus said, "No man cometh unto Me except the Father draw him." The only reason we ask for forgiveness is because God is opening our spiritual eyes so that we begin to see the desirability of going to the Lord for forgiveness.

Now we don't stand in that kind of a relationship to our fellow man. We have nothing at all to do with what is going on in their heart, or inclining their heart. That's not a parallel situation.

But now let me read to you a few verses from I Peter 2, and this will help us, I think. In I Peter 2:20: "For what glory is it if when ye be buffeted [that is, beaten] for your faults ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, who when He was reviled, reviled not again."

Now God says that we've been called to this, and there are going to be people who will vilify us and slander us. And if we are going to react as the world, our pride is going to be hurt, we're going to take it very personally, and we're going to feel deeply hurt. And we'll nurse this hurt, and there will be bitterness in our soul. Well, that's what the world does.

But as Christians we answer to God. And we know there will be those, and frequently they are those who are very close to us, who will say nasty, terrible things about us, and as long as our conscience is clear before God we say, "Well, what else is new?" We're not going to let it bother us, because we answer to God for our life.

Now if there's an element of truth in what they're saying, and sometimes there is, because we're not very perfect beings, then we have to say, "Well, I'm glad she said it. It was nasty and it was dirty, the way she said it, but there is an element of truth in it, and I'd better try to do a little better in this." And again I'm not going to feel deeply hurt by it.

CALLER: This is just it, Brother Camping. There was just no element of truth at all in what she said or did.

HC: All right. If there's no element of truth in it, then just don't react to it. In other words, you have nothing to be concerning about. If your conscience is clear and your life is right before God in this matter, then what difference does it make what people say about you?

CALLER: I've just never encountered a person like that, ever.

HC: But you see, God brings people like this into our life in order to test us, where we stand. Anybody can live like the world, you know, and nurse hurts and bitterness, and so on. But if we're a child of God, there ought to be a different kind of reaction. And that is what we have the opportunity to show, if we are saved.

Look at it this way. When your daughter-in-law, or whoever it is, says nasty things about you, then accept that as a challenge. This gives me an opportunity to show what a Christian really is. I'm not going to be hurt by that. I'm not going to pay attention to that, because I stand before the Lord, and I know that my daughter-in-law has got her personal troubles, and just look with compassion and pity upon her.

CALLER: God bless you, Brother Camping.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

When Friends Sin (527A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I was going to ask a question concerning a relationship we have with some friends. The situation is this. My wife is a close friend of this woman and her husband, and we've been family friends for some time. And recently the husband and wife decided that they needed to have an abortion after she got pregnant. There was apparently some medication that she was on that they felt might complicate the situation, and they decided that they were going to have an abortion. Both of them claim to be Christians. And we're wondering what our relationship to them ought to be at this point. As I say, they have been close friends.

HC: The question is, if we have friends and they do something that we think is sinful, what should that do to our relationship to them? First of all, we are not to judge what is going on in the life of someone else. That is something they have to work out between them and the Lord. Now if you are close friends with them and they do seek counsel from you, if they ask an opinion of you, then of course you are there as a very close friend, and on a very confidential level you can tell them what you believe the Bible teaches. But if they fall into sin of one kind or another, you still want to be friends with them. You still want to try to help them where you can. Perhaps after the sin they may have remorse, and they'll be grateful that they can talk to a friend that is very considerate of them.

Certainly you cannot look at them and say, "Oh, they committed this sin and therefore we cannot be friends with them any longer." If we were going to follow that process, then none of us would have any friends because any one of us can look at each other for just a little while and we will see sin somewhere in our lives. That's the nature of it.

Now I agree with you, and I'm certain you feel this, that if this were your situation you would never look for an abortion. I would feel that this was murder. But that's their problem with the Lord. You simply want to continue to be a friend, and perhaps sometime when you are talking about the Lord's things together, without pointing the finger at them you can talk about this and be of help in this matter.

CALLER: Where would the matter of church discipline enter in, if someone refuses to recognize something as sin? Shouldn't the church ought to have something to do with it?

HC: The question arises, where does church discipline enter into this or into any other question? If there is a church member who deliberately is living in sin, let's say that he is living in adultery, or he is planning a divorce where there ought not be a divorce, or they are planning a marriage where there ought not be a marriage, then of course the elders and the pastor ought to counsel with this person and admonish this person and exhort this person, that they not go ahead with this particular act because they would warn them that this is sin. That's a very proper role for an elder or someone who rules in the church. Now if the person said, "Well, I don't care what you tell me, I'm going to do it anyway," then the logical question has to be: Is this person really a child of God? Should he really be a member of the church?

Now if they do it anyway, and the minister continues to exhort them and counsel with them, or the deacons or elders, and afterwards there is real repentance (Oh, how could I have done this?) and you really sense that there is real repentance and confession that they had indeed sinned, then of course they would be re-welcomed. They would be welcomed again into the fellowship.

But if they persist in holding that their act was right, even though the rulers in

the church were convinced that it was a deliberate act contrary to the will of God, that it was the kind of thing that has brought reproach upon the congregation, then perhaps they should be excommunicated. We see this of course in I Corinthians 5, where the man who was living with his father's wife was to be excommunicated.

Thank you for sharing those questions.

FAMILY ISSUES

Should We Obey Our Parents if They Ask Us to Sin? (219E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: In Genesis 27 Isaac was deceived into giving the blessing to his younger son Jacob, because Rebecca told Jacob to deceive his father, when his father wanted the blessing to go to Esau. Is this right?

HC: Yes.

CALLER: I was wondering, should we as Christians obey our parents even if they ask us, contrary to our Christian convictions, to partake in or do anything we feel God would not be glorified in, except for our obeying them?

HC: Should we obey our parents if we are asked to sin? Anything at all that is contrary to the will of God is sin, and anything that is not to the glory of God is sin, of course. And we must obey God rather than man.

If our parents would ask us to lie, as Jacob was asked by Rebecca to lie, then we are to disobey our parents. We are to obey God. Incidentally, in this account in Genesis 27, Jacob was not just a youngster. He actually was sixty years of age. And so the sin of lying was a very grievous sin for him, also. He was doing this as a grown man, a very mature man.

CALLER: Also, in verse 13 it says that Rebecca said, "If there is any curse, let it be upon me," and I was wondering if God would look at that and honor it.

HC: Is the fact that she would take the curse, if there was any, a rationale for him to obey his mother? Actually, it was no rationale at all. It changed nothing. The sin was hers, the sin was his. The curse of sin is, "The wages of sin is death." Both were rebelling against God. Both were doing what was exceedingly wicked.

Obedying Divorced Parents (219F)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: My question is: If a family is divorced, do both parents have rights to giving blessing over marriage and future activities of the children involved?

HC: The question is, If the parents are divorced, do both parents have responsibilities or authority over the children, insofar as their future plans are concerned?

This of course is one of those questions that arises out of a sinful, sinful situation, that's becoming more prevalent throughout the world today. It's one of the sad questions, because actually this ought not to be. The Bible doesn't really get into this question. People who are divorced normally are living in very great sin. The children are still children, and they are to be obedient. But they don't have a household anymore. They don't have a father as the head of the house.

I really don't know. This is the bewildering mess that comes with divorce. It reminds me of what we read in Judges, again and again. "There was no king that ruled over them, and each man did what was right in his own mind."

CALLER: What about children of divorced parents, where the father is not living a Christian life? Do they still obey

him, or should they ask the Lord to lead them?

HC: Having said what I've just said, if a parent is divorced, even though he's unsaved, he's still a parent. And I think the children should still be obedient to the father, even though he is a divorced father, even though he is unsaved. Incidentally, nowhere in the Bible does it say that we are to obey our parents only if they are born again. We have to obey our parents regardless of their relationship to Christ.

And I would think that they still must obey their parents, but of course it will be very difficult, because you have such a messy situation.

CALLER: Are there any suggestions for children, scripturally, either to listen more to the mother that's saved, and not to the father? Or how would you work that out? Or what if they both don't agree in a situation, for instance on a marriage partner for the child, when he gets older? If one gives his blessing and one doesn't, how would you work that out?

HC: The question is, where you have a father and mother who are divorced, and now the youngster grows up and is facing such questions as the choice of a marriage partner, and so on, and if the mother is saved and the father is unsaved, who is the child to listen to?

Obviously, of course, the mother who is saved is frequently going to give the more Biblical advice and direction, because she will be conditioning her advice by the Bible, whereas the father, if he was unsaved, would not. In the case of marriage, for example, if the mother was saved, she would certainly counsel her son or daughter to marry a saved person, whereas the father could care less, in all likelihood, as long as the person his child was going to marry was rich, or had some other attribute that appealed to him. And obviously, the son or daughter must obey God, which would be to marry someone who is saved.

The question, however, becomes more difficult if the father says, no, you should not marry this one that is saved, and the mother says yes, you can marry him. Now we come to a point where the son or daughter has to really pray the Lord for wisdom. And it would be very difficult to give a blanket answer to that kind of a question.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

HC: Good night.

Are We to Always Obey Our Parents? (274A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: In one of the Ten Commandments (I'm not sure which number it is), we have, "Honor thy father and thy mother."

HC: Yes. The Fifth Commandment.

CALLER: Yes. Okay. Now if something comes up for example, in my case, I have something I have that against the will of my father, my Dad, not my Heavenly Father. And I wonder if I'm wrong in having this thing, because it's against his will. I mean legally there's nothing he can do about it. It's not hurting anything. But assuming it is something that he would rather I not have, am I not honoring him in keeping this?

HC: You don't have your own home? You're still in your parents' home?

CALLER: Well no, I moved out. I'm renting.

HC: But you haven't established your own home? You are not the head of a house yourself?

Now the question that you are raising is: How do I relate to my parents when I know my parents don't want me to have something? And yet I feel that legally I can have it. Am I showing obedience to my father if I go my own way?

Actually, what do we read in Ephesians 6? It says there that, in verse 1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth."

Let me read to you of the Lord Jesus. Maybe this will be a way of getting at this question. In Luke we read in verse 51 of Chapter 2. Now remember that Jesus lived with His parents. That is, He remained a part of the family unit until He was about thirty-five years of age, according to everything we can read in the Bible, about thirty-five.

CALLER: I thought He was thirty-three.

HC: No. He began to preach the Gospel when He was about thirty. He was about thirty. The Bible doesn't say He was thirty. He was about thirty. That's in Luke 3:23. But when we actually work out the timetable accurately, we find that He was crucified in the year AD 33. And we find that He was born, in all likelihood, in the year 7 BC. We know that Herod, who killed all the baby babies in Bethlehem up to the age of two years, died in the year 4 BC. And so Jesus would have been born before then. And since he killed all the babies up to two years of age, the likelihood is that Jesus was born at least two years earlier than that.

In other words, putting all the information that we have available together, the circumstantial evidence points to 7 BC. Now 7 BC to AD 33 are thirty-nine actual years. And so He was either thirty-nine or forty when He went to the cross. That means that He would have been either thirty-five or thirty-six when He began to bring the Gospel. He was about thirty, but in actuality He was closer to thirty-five or thirty-six, which is still about thirty.

Now in Luke 2:51, with regards to this let me say, here is Jesus, who is Eternal God, who absolutely never, never would do an unwise thing. Now you and I can do unwise things. Even though they're legal, they may be very, unwise. But Jesus is perfect in His wisdom. And so He would never do an unwise thing. But He had parents, one a real parent, Mary, one a stepfather, Joseph and they were human beings. And they certainly laid down lots of rules that were in themselves very unwise, because they were typical parents.

And so here we see the Lord Jesus, Eternal God, living in this home with parents who are capable of doing and certainly did all kinds of unwise things. And yet in Luke 2:51 we read: "And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them." "And was obedient to them."

Now Christ is our example. And Christ many times could have said to his father and mother, "Hey, look. You want me to do this, but that doesn't make any sense. I'm going to go my own way, which is a much wiser way." But He was obedient to them. Even if they asked Him to do an unwise thing, He did it, because they were His parents.

Christ perfectly obeyed the command, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." And so, if you want to obey your Heavenly Father, then you want to obey your earthly father. If you disobey your earthly father, then effectively you're not obeying your Heavenly Father.

Now if your father or mother asks you to do something sinful, that's a different matter. Then you would have to disobey them and take the consequences, because God's authority overrules. But if they ask you to do something unwise, or even something that might appear quite stupid, you must still obey them. Then you know that you're right before God. Then you know that you're walking in a way with your will surrendered to Christ.

The Problems with Television (330A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello I have a real thing with television. I am a Christian, and we haven't had a TV for most of our married life. We've been married about twelve years. And we have three children. But recently we've gotten a TV. And I was just wondering if you would comment a little bit on the effect of television on the Christian family – the spiritual aspects, and communication, and just the general way the TV has gotten a little loose the last few years, and how we've sort of become complacent after a while, watching it.

HC: All right. The question that's raised is concerning the significance in the family of TV. This is a very pertinent question because TV is not only found in the United States, but it's found in almost every nation of the world today.

Actually, in a Christian family we are deeply concerned about God's command to train up a child in the way that he should go. And the Bible's command is, "Fathers, train up your children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord." The question is, can TV assist or not in training my child in the way that he should go?

Now most TV programs are secular in nature; they are not related to the Bible at all. They in some cases might be negative toward the Bible, and might even be pro-Bible. Occasionally you'll find a program like this. But a great many of them of course are contrary to the Bible. They magnify sin, they portray sin of various kinds. And as you watch TV you tend to vicariously take part in what you are seeing. You can test this of course. If you see a very sad scene on TV, you'll find that you feel sad. If you see a very happy scene, then you feel happy. Vicariously we enter into the action that we're seeing on TV.

Now if we simply put our children in front of TV, hour after hour, then we must realize that what they are watching is going to have a very large impact in their training, as any kind of training will. And so we do it with very great care. There may be programs that can be watched, but there are a great many that should not be watched. All that's on TV is not bad. Much of it is bad.

Then again, we look at religious programs. There are some religious programs on various stations. Again, we have to be very discerning. Some of the programs are really God-glorifying, and some are actually portraying another gospel altogether. And again we must be very concerned about what our children are watching.

I really think that it's a wise thing, if parents want to have a TV set, that they ought to watch with the children, so that they can turn the set off at any point that the program is not God-glorifying.

Another point that should be made is that we have to be concerned about the use of our time. We are put in this world to be an ambassador of Christ, to be available to help others, to use our life efficiently for the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is very easy to fall into a snare where we are just sitting in front of the TV set hour after hour, really wasting our time. The programs we may be seeing may not necessarily be sinful, or at least a few of them might not be. For example, a ball game is not necessarily sinful at all. But if you just watch hour after hour after hour, so that you are not taking time to study the Word of God, you're not taking time in talking about the things of the Lord with your family, then just in the passage of time, the waste of time, it has become a very sinful thing in the home.

CALLER: Well, I was just wondering. I've noticed that a lot of times I have come home from work, and we've had dinner, and so on, and the kids are in

bed, then he'll turn television on. If he's not home, I usually don't have it on myself. But I just hate it. I really do. In my personal feeling it just seems like it robs the communication level between husband and wife. Even during commercials, my husband will get so absorbed in the television that he doesn't even hear me when I say anything during TV. And I'm sure that he's like most men. I know you come home from work, and you kind of want to get away from it all. And it's really easy to do. But you can sit, night after night, just turning on the television and going to bed at 11:00 after everything is off, or when the bad things really come on. And so I think that it has a big part in tearing down the communication.

HC: Well, it really can. Now you have had the experience where one of the members of your family has really become absorbed by the TV. And my, then it can destroy the family, because that person, who could be a husband, a child, a wife, just sits, hour after hour. And he just becomes attracted to it, until it makes life unbearable for the rest of the family.

It reminds me. You know, when I was a child I loved to read novels. I was an insatiable reader, insofar as novels were concerned. I just loved to read. It triggered my imagination, you know, to read all of these novels. A lot of them were fanciful in nature. And I found in my young life that it began to be a nuisance, because I would become so absorbed in the novel that I was reading—and these were not bad novels, these were just novels that boys read—that when my mother would ask me to do the dishes, or do my chores, whatever they were, I found I was angry inside because I couldn't finish the novel. I was so attracted by what was being said, I had so entered into the action, that I couldn't wait to get it finished. And many times I would lie awake late at night finishing.

So I found that it was disturbing my relationship with my family. And so God, in His mercy, gave me enough wisdom so that when I entered high school I made a decision, "I'm not going to read any more novels. I can't do my school work, I'm not obedient, I'm angry inside. I just can't get started. This is a weakness I have. I must not do this." And so the only novels I read thereafter were for book reports, or for high school English.

But this is really where you have to come to.

CALLER: I really believe that we're living in the last days, and that we're sort of lukewarm in our churches. But wouldn't you say that television has a great deal to contribute to the apathy that we have? I believe that most Christians have the TV going most of the time.

HC: Well, I'm sure of this. I'm sure that TV is serving very greatly to form lives. I remember when I was younger that the men in the congregation spent time studying the Word. And it was easy to get them into a theological discussion. Today about the only thing a lot of men—many who are consistent churchgoers—really want to talk about is the ball game, or about their fishing trip, because they're spending no time in the Word, and they cannot really talk about the Word, because they are spending their time watching TV. This is just commandeering all of their spare time. And so it's robbing individuals and families of not only communication but also of talking about spiritual things, of getting into the Word.

CALLER: What then do you think we can do, people who are aware of this? Most people that are listening to this program probably aren't great TV watchers. But what can we do in our different churches to make people aware of this? A lot of people probably don't

even realize that this is what's happening.

HC: Well, I think first of all that we cannot point out the sin in others. Secondly, I don't think that most of your friends would agree with you very much. They might agree a little bit, but if they really love TV they'll go right back to watching it anyway. The attraction is so great that they wouldn't change.

The only thing you can do is to make sure in your own life, and in the life of your family, insofar as you're able to guide it, that this will not become a monster in your life. Many homes have done this. They have just passed a rule that no TV should be watched on Sunday, of any kind, because that means that our minds will be not attracted to Sunday School and the worship service, but we'll be thinking about the TV program that we want to see this afternoon. It will take away from the possibility of really using Sunday as a day of worship.

Secondly, serious parents have to talk with each other, and think it out. Are we setting an example for our children? How can we tell our children that there are only certain programs they may watch, that there's a limited amount of time they may see TV, if we sit glued to the tube all evening, every evening? By our example we're training our children as to what they can expect to do.

These are some of the things that can be talked about. And if we find that one of the parents, if both are Christians parents, of course if your husband is unsaved he probably could care less about this kind of a thing. But even then, even as a non-Christian parent, he still will have a concern for his children. But if you find that it is a battle in your own conscience or in the conscience of your husband, it may be necessary to make a parental decision together, and of course your husband would have to be totally agreeable to this, obviously, that TV is not for us. It's just not for us. It's better that we just pull the tube out of it, or sell it. And there are many Christian homes that don't own a TV, because it's not worth the battle. It's not worth the struggle.

Now one of the lurking arguments in our soul is, "If I don't have a TV, I'm going to really miss something." There's that Presidential inauguration or there's that great event that is really being featured on TV. I'm going to miss out. Actually, when we miss these great events that are going on in the world somewhere, we're not really that much poorer. We can read about it in the newspaper. Maybe it really is just a passing thing. Once it happens, tomorrow it's forgotten. And so we don't have to feel sorry for ourselves, if we can't watch something that's really spectacular going on at the moment.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

State Law – A Christian Perspective (034B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello, Mr. Camping. I'd like your thoughts on something that I've been wondering about since I've become a born again believer.

I understand that we're subject to the laws of the land in which we live, and we should try to be good citizens. As Christians, should we attempt to bring the laws of the country into harmony with God's laws? How concerned should we be about laws condoning sinful behavior? And I'm thinking about legislating morality, and so called victimless crimes. What should the relationship be between the laws of the land and God's laws?

HC: We live in a land where we do have the privilege of having something to say about the law, inasmuch as we vote for

lawmakers. That is, we vote for our senators and our congressmen, and we can initiate referendums, and so on. But once a law is on the books, once it's on the books we have to be obedient to it.

Now a law that allows sin to expand and grow, where it simply no longer calls it sin, we are not mandated to obey that law because we're not the ones who are in view in that. In other words, that's a law on the books, and it's a bad law, but it's not something that is causing us to sin because that law is on the books.

However, because of our responsibility in the world to be a witness for Christ, certainly in our voting and in our selection of lawmakers, we would try to get those who would be as moral as possible. When we pray for those who have authority over us, that we might have domestic tranquillity, as God commands us to do, if we really mean business about praying for them then we ought also to try to vote as intelligently as possible, that those who can lead us aright would be voted into power.

On the other hand, in many nations the citizens do not have this freedom to vote. They simply are under a dictatorship. But they have to be just as obedient as we.

Now I haven't answered your question in the sense that I have suggested that we ought to crusade, and that we have this kind of law or that kind of law. I think that a Christian can do this. I really think that would not be contrary to the Word of God. However, we must remember that we are living in a very sinful world. And even though you might make progress with a crusade today, tomorrow you'll lose anyway, because the Bible teaches that wickedness will multiply. I don't mean that we have to be defeatist, either. But neither do we want to have rose-colored glasses, as if by crusading we will be able to have a world that is free from sin. This just won't happen.

We must recognize that most of the people of the world, and this includes most of the people of our land, are unsaved. They are not about to come under the law of God. And so while you may be very sensitive to the law of God and want to make that the law of the land, it would be very surprising if you could get a majority of the people of the land to accept that kind of morality.

CALLER: Yes, but it would be ideal if the laws of the land were in agreement with God's law.

HC: Yes, because we know that God's laws are most beneficial. They are infinite in their wisdom, and they are designed to help men the most. And so the more that the laws of the land are in harmony with the laws of God, the wiser the laws on our statute books would be.

And wonderfully, as a nation, we've been preserved for 200 years now. And as a nation, a lot of this is due to the fact that many of the laws of the land are patterned after the laws of the Bible. Although in our day the Bible no longer is the authority, and those laws are being struck down very rapidly, all over the land.

CALLER: Yes, the trend seems to be going away from the Bible.

HC: Yes. You see, man is rebelling against God. Unfortunately, it isn't just in the political arena that this is happening. This is also happening amongst the believers, isn't it? They are losing their sensitivity, increasingly, to the holiness of the Word of God. The fact that they can countenance some of the books that have been written that purport to be the Bible indicates that we have lost our sensitivity to it. And so we don't have to look very far to find where there has been this turning against God. It's right close at hand everywhere.

And I find in my life that it's a pretty full time job just to judge me. This is a perennial question that the believer faces: What is his posture toward the

land in which he lives? Now if you live in a Christian community, that is, where most of the people regularly go to church, it's a very easy matter to have city laws or community laws that are very much in agreement with the Bible.

But increasingly, as you find that your fellow citizens do not accept the authority of the Bible, you find more and more frustration in your soul, as you see the laws of the land shifting. We must not be too appalled by this. It's a grievous experience, of course, but we must not be too appalled by this because the Bible indicates this will happen.

It's much like Communism, you know. It keeps coming. And even though a nation may be able to keep it out for a little while, it keeps picking on that nation and eventually a nation capitulates in one way or another, either through political overthrow or through war or through an internal coup d'etat, or whatever it may be. And so it is with sin wherever it is. It keeps picking away. And if the law was not changed this year, give it another few years and the try comes in again. And eventually you see that the forces of sin are winning.

Now the reason for this is that we are living in that time when wickedness is multiplying, when Satan has been loosed. I believe this more and more as I view the world in the light of what the Bible declares.

Should Christians Campaign Publicly Against Evil? (197C)

CALLER: I was wondering, how far are Christians to speak out against evil, and so forth? I know we're supposed to take a stand for what's right and wrong. But, for example, how far are we to carry this in a case like a Christian running for public office? Are we to carry on a campaign for him? Or, let's say the entertainment standards of the community aren't what we consider to be proper. Are we to go out and take a stand against these things? Or are we to just more or less live our lives the best way we can, in obedience to God, and then let the chips fall where they may? Do you understand my question? Maybe you could treat that on the air, and I'd appreciate that.

HC: All right. Fine. The question was raised concerning the Christian's stance against evil in his community. And that's a very contemporary question, a very fine question, actually, because we all wonder, what does the Bible say about this?

First of all, let's carry this to its logical conclusion. Let's say that I decide, based on what I think I can find in the Bible, that my role is to put down evil wherever I can find it. First of all, I'm not going to have trouble finding evil. The Bible indicates that this is the generation of evil. Wickedness is everywhere. The greatest proportion of all mankind are slaves of Satan. So I don't have to look far at all to find evil.

I'm going to find evil in my neighbor, I'm going to find evil in my community, I'm going to find evil in the political arena, I'm going to find evil in the magazines I read, I'll find evil everywhere. In fact, I only have to look at my own heart to see that there's still sin that I have to be troubled with. I don't have to look far at all to find evil.

Now if I'm going to make my life a crusade against evil, will I win? Will I win? Well, the Bible teaches no, you won't win. The Bible says that as we approach the end, wickedness will multiply. This is God's decree. Satan is going to be loosed. He is going to be allowed to make this world more wicked than it has ever been before.

And so with all of my efforts, with all of my efforts, I'm going to lose. The Bible says so. More than that, if I would spend all my time in putting down evil wherever I thought I could, what a

convenient way to neutralize me for the real task. Now what is the real task?

Well, the Bible says, in 1 Peter 2:9,10 that we are a holy nation, God's own people, a royal priesthood, "that we may declare forth the marvelous excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light." We are His ambassadors, Christ as it were making His appeal through us. We are His witnesses. We are to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. These are just a few of the phrases that the Bible uses in speaking about the task of the believers. We are to complete the sufferings of Christ, as we read in Colossians I. We are to expect to be persecuted and maligned and slandered, and what have you, as we faithfully present the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What about evil? Well, you see, as we present the Gospel, and there are those who become born again (and they can be in high political office, they can be at the corner grocery store, they can be wherever mankind are), then they are a new creature, and their lives will begin to show the fragrance of the cross, and evil will have been conquered. And only in this way is evil really conquered.

Actually, if we want to develop a vendetta against evil, it ought to be the evil in our own lives. We are to crucify the flesh. We are to put to death that which is lustful within us. This is where the battleground is.

The world is sold under sin. The world is enslaved to Satan. And things are going to go from bad to worse. Now we can take part in causes to try to stop this and try to stop that. And we can really feel like we're winning something. But it's only very temporary. The next turn of the wheel, we'll lose anyway.

Now is this suggesting then that we are not to take part in any of these causes? We're never to sign any kind of petition? I don't think we have to go that far. I think we're citizens of this land, and we can make our voice heard by signing petitions. I think that as long as it's all legal and proper, and it's not taking our time from being an ambassador of Christ as we witness, well and good.

But the moment it becomes the kind of a thing where we are taking time from the major task of sharing the Gospel with our physical means, that is, with our property, with our energies, then we are doing something that goes against the Bible.

Even when we bring the Gospel, we don't get on the air and try to talk about this denomination and that denomination, this sect and that cult. That isn't the real role of the born again believer. The real role of the born again believer is to positively declare what the Bible says. And the Sword of the Spirit will be active in the lives of those who listen. And they will make their own appraisals of where they stand with relationship to the true Gospel.

This, I believe, is what the Bible teaches concerning this particular question.

Capital Punishment (199A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes I have a question. Does the Bible speak of capital punishment, especially anything in the New Testament? And I'll take my answer on the air.

HC: All right. Fine

The question is raised, Does the Bible speak anywhere about capital punishment, and especially is there anything about this in the New Testament?

Let me begin to answer this, first of all, by indicating that the Bible is one whole. And the statements in the Old Testament are just as much God's will as those in the New Testament. However, we will

look both in the Old and the New Testament.

In Genesis 9:6 we read, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. For God made man in His own image." In other words, God has laid down an inviolate rule, and this rule has never been abrogated in the Bible. You can search the Bible, and it has never been set aside. God indicates that when man murders, then he is to forfeit his life.

Now elsewhere in the Bible we'll discover that just anybody can't take that man's life. There are the constituted authorities who must do this. Now going to the New Testament, in Romans 13 we read about the role of government in carrying out the will of God. In Romans 13:1 we read, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed. And those who resist will incur judgment."

And then it goes on and speaks about government in verse 4: "For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid. For he does not bear the sword in vain. He is the servant of God to execute His wrath on the wrongdoer."

Now in the Bible the use of the sword was to kill. It was not to beat, it was not to chastise. It was used to kill. It's like the gun is used today. A gun is used to kill. And here God indicates that it is the government's role to wield the sword, death-dealing instruments, in order to execute God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

This is written, of course, totally in the context of the New Testament, after Christ had returned to Heaven, after the cross experience. And so God very definitely envisions capital punishment.

Genesis 9 is one of the best passages that indicates at least one area where capital punishment is to be administered.

I hope this will help. And thank you so much for that question.

On Donating Human Organs (230A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I wonder if you could tell me if there's any place in the Bible that would say that it's against God's will for a person to donate his organs of the body for transplant.

HC: The question that's raised is: Does the Bible prohibit the donation of parts of our body in order to help somebody else?

Actually, the Bible does not prohibit the donation of parts of our body. The fact is, God says "Greater love hath no man than this, than that he lay down his life for his friends." And so if I want to give some blood to someone in a blood transfusion, or if I thought that I could help someone by donating a kidney or an eye, that would certainly be my privilege to do. There is nothing in the Bible that would indicate that this was contrary to the Word of God.

There are some warnings, however, that ought to be offered. One of the problems is that those who donate the organs of their bodies normally do so upon their death. In other words, they will their organs to medical science to help someone else, or whatever.

Now if this is done, frequently the doctors, after using our bodies, will burn our bodies, the remains that are left. And that I believe is a wrong practice. The Bible teaches that cremation is a figure of Judgment Day itself. And I would want my body to be buried. And so if I thought it would help someone to utilize my eyes or my organs, whatever they may be, upon my death, if I thought that in so doing I could also be assured that

my body would be buried, that is, whatever is left, then certainly this would not be contrary in any way to the Word of God.

Another practice that has been utilized sometimes in connection with this is where a parent or a very close relative has sometimes donated a part of the organs of a child that has died. Now that kind of a practice should not be, I believe. Our bodies belong to ourselves, and we may not exercise control over someone else's body, even if it is a loved one, even if it is a child. Our task, if someone has died, is to tenderly bury that body. It's the last thing that we can do on behalf of this person who has died. That person's body belongs to that person, and nobody else can have any say about what ought to be done to that person's body. All that we can do is to commit that person to the earth, even as God indicates that we are to return to the earth.

Thank you for that call.

Is it Okay to Serve in the Armed Forces? (242B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I have a question on 1 Corinthians 7:10 & 12, which says, "Not I, but the Lord," and in verse 12 it says, "I say, not the Lord." This seems to indicate that the second is more his opinion and that the first is in the way of a commandment.

HC: The question really is, what are we to do with 1 Corinthians 7:10, where we read, "To the married I charge, not I but the Lord," and then in verse 12, "To the rest I say, not the Lord, that if brother has a wife," and so on? Is this suggesting that there are two levels of authority in the Bible? If it's backed up by the Lord, is it more authoritative than if Paul has just said it?

First of all, we must remember that all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for reproof, for doctrine, for training in righteousness, and so on. Secondly, the Bible says that holy men spoke as the Holy Spirit moved them. And so every part of the Bible has equal authority.

Of course it must be read in the context of the rest of the Bible, in order to discover what is really being said. But the whole Bible is the divine Word of God. Now in this particular passage Paul is making reference to the fact, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (remember, it is God speaking) that the Lord Jesus Christ had quite a bit to say about marriage. The fact is, you can read about this in Matthew 5, in Matthew 19, and so on. And so he is saying in verse 10: "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord." That is, the Lord Jesus has already spoken about this. And that's a clue to us to search the Gospels to see what He talked to the disciples about.

And then in verse 12 he says, "To the rest I say, not the Lord," and now he's going to discuss an aspect of the marriage relationship that had not been expressed by the Lord Jesus when He was talking to His disciples. But what Paul is going to say is equally authoritative, because it is also under the inspiration of God Himself.

CALLER: Thank you. One more question, and I'll take my answer on the air. It's pertaining to war, and obeying the government. I know that above all we should obey God. But I'm not too sure exactly what God's law would be if a situation of war came up and I was called by the government to go into the infantry and fight.

HC: The question relates to the problem of what do you do if you are called upon to serve your country in the Armed Services, to fight? Now the Bible does teach in Romans 13 that we must be obedient to government in all things lawful. Secondly, when we search the

Bible we don't find any place where the Bible says that we are not to serve as a soldier. There is no place where God teaches that it is wrong for a believer to be a soldier. You'll remember when the soldiers came to John the Baptist in Luke 3:14, it says, "Soldiers also asked him, And we, what shall we do?" he didn't say, "Now you'd better get out of the army as fast as you can." He said to them, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation. And be content with your wages." When the Roman Centurion was saved, there's no suggestion that he was no longer to be a centurion. Now bear in mind, he was a captain in the army of Rome, which frequently would have to kill in order to put down insurrection, or whatever. And so there is nothing wrong in itself in being a soldier. If the war is an unholy war, an unrighteous war, the government has to answer for that. We are simply to be obedient.

Now of course if your Sergeant told you to go out and shoot some prisoners, that would be murder. That would have to be disobeyed. That's a different kind of a situation. But insofar as serving as a soldier and being a buck Private in the front ranks, that in itself is not contrary to the Word of God.

Now wonderfully, in some lands there are alternatives in the event of war. In the United States we have the alternative of serving in the Medical Corps or the Chaplain's Corps, perhaps. And thus a more efficient use of our time can be gained, and we won't have to face the matter of killing another person. But those who do not serve in these alternative corps, who must bear a gun, or as a policeman does today (he bears a gun, and sometimes he might have to kill), that is not contrary to the Word of God.

"Love Thy Enemy" Versus Going to War (328A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: In regard to what is said in Luke about "Love thy enemy," I never could quite understand how Christians more or less condoned World War II, or any wars, as a matter of fact. Is there a scripture in the Bible that God does allow for the defense of one's country?

HC: The question is raised, Is there anything in the Bible, in the light of the Biblical statement that we are to love our enemies, that condones war, that condones the right of a country to go to war to defend its shores? By all means, there is. Romans 13, the opening verses, indicates that government rules by divine mandate, by divine authority. And it is there to be the executioner of God to administer justice, and it does not bear the sword in vain. Its role is to defend the citizenry. And if it did not defend its citizens, it would be abrogating its responsibility.

But I do know this, that God does give that responsibility to government. Now that doesn't mean, however, that we're not to love our enemies. Actually, what God has in view there is that anyone who is unsaved ultimately is an enemy of the Christian. There are two kingdoms in this world, essentially. There is the dominion of Satan on the one hand. He rules over the hearts of all of the unsaved of the world. And there is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ on the other hand, into which we enter at the time that we're born again. We belong in either one of these two kingdoms.

Satan of course is completely antagonistic and in rebellion and an enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, ultimately his slaves, the unsaved of the world, are enemies of the believers, who are the ambassadors of Christ. But we are to love our enemies. We are to love the unsaved. We are to want the very best for them. Ultimately, of course, the very best is that we desire

their salvation. There's nothing better that we could desire for them but that they would have eternal life, even as we have.

However, that does not negate the role of government in maintaining a police force or an armed force to protect its shores.

CALLER: That really answers my question.

HC: Thank you for calling and sharing. Good night.

Should Churches Join Together to Combat Sin? (341A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I was reading today in the newspaper about two policemen who are now spreading the Gospel. And I go along with the way they're thinking.

HC: It's marvelous, you know, when God lays His hand on people. They become saved, and they find an earnest desire to share the Gospel with others. Each of us as born again believers is called upon by God to be a witness.

CALLER: And they go on to say that Satan is in charge of pornography, homosexuality, drug addiction, alcoholism, suicide and venereal disease. And I think that about sums it up in a nutshell. However, they're talking about born again Christians, and prayer meetings, and everything. Is it possible for all churches to join together and go to our politicians, and tell them that we don't want this anymore for our children? Because I am a parent myself, and I think that if all the churches joined together in the city, maybe with all of us, in all the congregations, it's possible for our politicians to see that we don't want this.

HC: It is true that we see sin around us, and some of our cities are more sinful than others, although we're living in a day when hardly a city does not have its place of grievous sin.

The question is: What is the role of the church in the world? Is it to put down sin? Actually, we could really believe that this would be a marvelous, marvelous activity of the church, to expose sin and to create crusades to put it down.

If we follow the Bible, however, we're going to find that such a procedure would be a losing battle. The Bible teaches that as we approach the end, sin will magnify. Secondly, the role of the church is not to put down sin. The role of the church is to faithfully present the Gospel. If the churches of our cities would decide, each one of them, "We're going to be absolutely faithful to the Bible; we're going to preach the whole counsel of God; we're going to proclaim the Gospel of grace; we're also going to proclaim the fact of judgment and hell, even as the Bible presents it," then you would find that the churches would really make an impact on the cities.

Now you say, "How would that be possible? The only people who would listen would be the ones who are in the congregations." The difference would be this, that God honors His Word. When the church is faithful to the Gospel, it's not just a horizontal activity, where the preacher is proclaiming the Gospel to a group of believers. But there is also a vertical dynamic to that church, where God can use that church in the city in a much more powerful way than what appears on the surface. God Himself will bless His Gospel. And this is really where changes will be made.

The problem, however, is that many many churches are not faithful to the Word of God. Praise God, there still are those that are faithful. But many are not. Many do not present the whole counsel of God. They present only those verses and those passages that are nice, that make people feel good, that win friends

and influence people, so to speak. They're hesitant to present those passages that talk about judgment and damnation.

They very frequently do not believe that the Bible is the divine Word. They simply believe that the Bible contains some of the divine Word.

Now when a church is not faithful to the Word, then the Word has no power. God does not bless His Word, and so the church is very ineffective, not only in its own congregation but also in the city.

I really believe that the answer to this world is in the Gospel itself. But the churches must be faithful in presenting the Gospel.

CALLER: If just one church would join up with the other church, you don't think that with such a large body of people, that we could go to our politicians and persuade them to wipe out pornography, and all of these evils in our city?

HC: I'll tell you what would happen, in all likelihood. And I don't say this just out of my mind. I say this because of what I read in the Bible. You might temporarily win a skirmish now and then. You might be able to shut up some of the houses of prostitution, or you might be able to clean this little area up, or that little area. But it would only be a temporary kind of a thing. You wouldn't win the battle. You wouldn't win the war, because sin is very insistent; mankind wants to sin.

It is not the officials that are allowing sin to come here. It's the fact that mankind wants sin. Prostitutes can't work successfully unless there are men who want to go to them. It takes the citizenry of a city to make sure that prostitutes will abound. Alcoholism and drunkenness are not the sins of just a few. It's an all-pervading sin, that enters into every part of society. Drug addiction, and all of these other things, are found everywhere, because mankind is sinful. The Bible teaches that the heart of man is sinful.

That's why the church's solution, or God's solution, to this whole mess is the Gospel. When we present the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and present the fact that there is a Judgment Day, that the wrath of God is coming upon mankind because of their sins, there will be those who will be exercised, and who will repent, who will cry out to God for mercy.

Now when someone does cry out for mercy, someone does come to the Lord Jesus Christ, regardless of how deep in sin that poor soul may have been, she may have been a prostitute for years and years. He may have been in the depths of drunkenness or drug addiction, or whatever. If they turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, and they become born again, they become new creatures. They become people who are not only citizens of Christ's Kingdom, with eternal life, but also they become effective citizens in this world.

That's really where the solution lies, you see.

CALLER: As I say, I'm a parent myself. And I have both a daughter and a son. And they see all of this in the city. And I just believe in the girl being at home, and the man going out and being the breadwinner. And I don't think they should be subjected to this pornography, and so on, that is on our city streets.

HC: I empathize with you. I, too, am a parent. It's very difficult to bring up young people today, because sin abounds. However, we can bring our children up in the fear and the nurture of the Lord. We can find a school yet where the Gospel is emphasized. We can guide our children in their choice of TV programs, or in the choice of their fun times at home. We can spend time with them in the Word. We can make sure that our home is a place where the Kingdom of Christ is really manifested, by virtue

of the fact that we are talking and thinking in terms of the things of the Bible.

Thus our children will not be isolated from the world. But they will be insulated from the world. As they are more and more involved in the Word of God, as we pray for them, and as we train them in the way that they should go, then they can face a world that is grievously sinful. And they won't necessarily be taken in by it.

Now of course if our children are not born again (and in many instances this is the case), then the world is very attractive to them, because both in body and soul they lust after this kind of sin.

Realizing that pornography is everywhere, realizing that most of the novels that are being written, at least a great many of them, are pornographic in nature, in that certain chapters emphasize illicit lust, and so on, and our children are subjected to this, I can empathize with you. It's very difficult to bring children up today.

CALLER: Because a lot of children are good when they're children, but they go with their peer groups into these things.

HC: Many parents have lost the battle with their children when their children were very small. When a child is two or three or four years of age, frequently this is the time when the battle is won or lost. If a child is taught by firm discipline, loving but nevertheless firm discipline, to respect his parents, to be obedient to his parents, this will carry him through all his lifetime.

But on the other hand, if at that very young age, he already is allowed to have his own way, he is already being brought up permissively, where discipline is hardly ever experienced by him, then as long as he's still a youngster, before he becomes a teenager, he will seem to be a reasonably decent child.

But then he comes into his teenage years. And because he has not been taught to respect his parents, because he has been taught to be allowed to do almost anything he wants to do on a permissive basis, because he doesn't really know the meaning of discipline, then the parents will really begin to tear their hair out, because they'll wonder what happened to their son or their daughter, as they want to follow their peer groups rather than be obedient to the parents.

The training of children begins in the home, and it begins at the age of one and a half or two. This is the time when very firm discipline ought to be administered. This is what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches, "Train up your children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord."

CALLER: Quite a while back, too, Mr. Camping, there was a certain Dr. Spock said that this type of discipline wasn't good for children.

HC: All kinds of people with PhD's, or lots of letters after their name, have come out with pronouncements on the rearing of children. But if you really want to find the Biblical basis, remember God is infinitely wise. He created man. He knows exactly what is good for man. And God has decreed that discipline is altogether God's will. Discipline is altogether God's will.

We read in Proverbs 22:15: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child. But the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." You see, that's the way God speaks of it.

Or again, He speaks in another place in Proverbs, that the rod of discipline, when we administer it to the child in the loving sense of wanting to correct him, will save his soul from hell. Discipline is something that God has given us. And we can trust God. He knows what is best for us.

CALLER: All right. Thank you, Mr. Camping.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Litigation and the Christian (349A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. We have Christian attorneys, and they are necessary. But supposing a patient is injured by a doctor. I believe a patient should not sue for malpractice. And I'd like your opinion on that.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you.

The question is raised, if we are being treated by a doctor, and if he makes a mistake in his treatment, so that we suffer for it, are we to sue that doctor for malpractice? We know, of course, that this is a very common thing that is occurring in the world today. People sue for anything and all that they can. And certainly if they believe that they can hang something on a doctor for doing a poor diagnosis, or whatever, they will try to sue for this.

I would have to agree with our caller. I really don't think that a Christian would sue for malpractice. First of all, there is no doctor that knows everything about us. We recognize that doctors are human beings, who have feet of clay. They are not all wise. They can make mistakes. They do their best in trying to serve us. We try to find a doctor that we trust. But there is no perfect doctor, as there is no perfect carpenter, or no perfect bricklayer, or no perfect cook in the kitchen. Mistakes can occur to any one of us.

This business of suing, just for any reason, I think is contrary to everything the Bible teaches. Certainly we know this, that God has given us the courts to right wrongs, to adjudicate matters. But if a doctor has, let's say, operated when there should not have been an operation, how can money right that wrong? Money is not going to do this. He cannot restore what he has cut away. That's an impossibility. So a suit just seems to be out of the question.

Of course if certain medical bills were developed because of a doctor's poor workmanship, it may be that it might be necessary to get some help from the courts if he was not willing to waive some bills, set aside some of his bills. But ordinarily I think that a Christian has to be very very careful before he goes to court for this or that.

"Thou Shalt Not Kill" (579B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, do you remember when God sent the army down to slaughter those people? We've had so many people give us a different answer on this. The Bible says, "Thou shalt not kill." Could you kindly help us out a little bit on that? And I'll take the answer over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you for calling.

On the one hand we read in the Bible, "Thou shalt not kill." And the Bible says, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." And on the other hand, we read again and again where God would send the armies of Israel against the heathen, or against some other nation, and they would slaughter them. They would kill them, every last one of them, frequently. When the nation of Israel came against Jericho, for example, we read in the Book of Joshua, they were commanded to kill every man, every woman, every baby, every child, every animal. The only ones that were spared were Rahab the Harlot and her family.

Now how does that agree with the statement, "Thou shalt not kill"? You see, first of all, when God is using this phrase, "Thou shalt not kill," God is saying, "Thou shalt not murder; thou shalt not take a man's life just indiscriminately because you want to

take a man's life." But on the other hand, God also brings judgments against certain nations. And He used the nation of Israel to bring His judgment against the nation of Canaan. He used the nation of Babylon to bring a judgment against the nation of Israel. And so these armies fought, and one nation was vanquished by the other. And truly there was much killing.

Now this was killing not in the sense of murder, not in the sense of just indiscriminately taking life, but because God was showing that His judgment rested upon these people. They were subject to death. Now God doesn't do this anymore today. God has given us His word pictures in the Bible. God doesn't command one nation to go against another nation, although God will allow one nation to go against another. But we don't have the same kind of a command as was given David to go against the Philistines, or the kind of a command where the nation of Israel was commanded to go against the city of Jericho. But through these instances God has given us, God is giving us a picture of the fact that the unbelievers, those who are in rebellion against God, are under the judgment of God. And this physical killing was a picture of the fact that they are subject to eternal damnation. At the judgment of the last day, they will be cast into hell.

Now we don't like to read about this in the Bible, but God has put it in the Bible in order that we might understand that if we are unsaved we are subject to eternal damnation, and to be physically killed is only a tiny part of that. But it's a picture of being under eternal damnation.

Now at first blush it would look as if God has a double standard. But you see, God is, we must begin with the principle that God is absolutely holy. God is absolutely just. Now when He takes a man's life and remember, it is God ultimately who allows us to be killed, or even though Satan may be the vehicle God uses to kill us, God allowed it, and frequently God takes our life, when our time has been spent on earth, then God takes us. And God has done the killing then, in that sense. And God can do this because God is absolutely holy. He does not do it as a sinful act in any way, but He does it out of His perfect holiness, out of His perfect justice, out of His perfect love or anger, or whatever it may be, that caused the Act.

In the Old Testament, when we read of one nation going against another, God simply used these as examples of the way God works and showed us that indeed we are subject to the wrath of God if we remain rebellious against Him.

CHAPTER 15 – ELECTION & PREDESTINATION

GENERAL

What Do You Think of Predestination? (009B)

CALLER: My question is about predestination. In Ephesians 1:4 and 5, it says that "He predestined us to adoption as His sons." What do you think of predestination?

HC: Now the doctrine of predestination is, of course, very clearly taught in the Bible. There isn't any question about that. Those who shy away from predestination can do so if they care to, but the Bible is very clear about it. And there's a great reason for predestination, a very great need for predestination. While the Gospel offer goes to all mankind, that whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved, man of his own volition will never turn to the Gospel. Man is dead in his sins, and the

first three chapters of Ephesians 2 teaches this very clearly. Man is a slave of Satan. Mankind is infected by sin; he likes his sin. And no man, no woman, no child, without the intervention of God Himself in his life will respond to the Gospel. But Christ declares: "I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail." That is, "I'm going to build a kingdom of believers, and the prison-house of Satan, in which all unbelievers are, the whole world is, will not hold its victims. There are those that I am going to bring into My kingdom."

And the Bible teaches us in Ephesians 1:4 that these whom Christ would bring into His kingdom were named, were elected, before the foundations of the world. There has been no change in God's plan at all, as He has worked out His program of salvation throughout time. Everything is working in accordance with a very exact plan, a very exact plan. This is tremendously implied by Ephesians 1:4 where it says, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world."

This means that before God created the universe, He knew who our mother and father were going to be, and our grandfather and grandmother. He knew every person that would ever come into being. And He knew precisely at what time we would come into being, and He knew exactly whom He would save.

Now He saves us at birth, He saves another at the tender age of two or three. He saves another at the age of ten, and others He saves at the age of fifty or seventy-five. God has His own program as to the timing of His salvation, but those who are to be saved will be saved.

Now once God decides to save someone, He eventually will incline that person's heart. He may do this through chastisement. He may use a variety of ways to do this. But the next thing that person knows, he will begin to have an intense desire to serve the Lord, and to reach out by faith, to place his whole life in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. The faith that we experience, the works that flow from our life, are both a result of the work of Christ within our heart. We are not saved because we had faith. Now the Bible does say that faith is reckoned to us as righteousness, but faith did not pay for our righteousness. Faith is simply the evidence of the fact that we have been saved. It is what Christ counted as being the equivalent of payment. But the payment was actually made by Christ Himself.

Does God Hide Truth from the World? (136B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I was wondering about the Scripture in Matthew 13:10-13. We were discussing that here. And to me it seemed like it just isn't fair for God to hide things from people who are seeking to know. I mean, these people came out, following after Him and seeking after Christ's wisdom. And yet He hid the sayings from them. And I was wondering what you thought about that.

HC: The question is raised concerning Matthew 13, where Christ says that He has spoken in parables in order that there will be those that will see, "and yet they will not see. They will hear, but will never understand." In other words, God has hidden truth from certain individuals. And the question really is, why would God do this? This doesn't seem fair, if they were really seeking for Christ.

Now the answer to this is this, that God is not hiding information from those who are really seeking Christ. That is, those who have humbled themselves before God and realize their spiritual bankruptcy, and cry out to God for mercy, and in faith trust that what God has declared is true and trustworthy, God

the Holy Spirit will open their eyes, and they will see the truth.

But you see, there are most of the people of the world, who are wiser than God in their own eyes. They really believe that they can know truth, that they can decide what is true or what is not true. They are not ready to humble themselves. They are ready to pick and choose from the Bible what they want or what they don't want. In other words, they want to design a religion that meets their specifications rather than those of God.

And so they go to the Bible, and they will find all kinds of statements that foster unbelief, that will lead them down blind paths, that will encourage them to believe certain doctrines that are quite contrary to the Word of God. God has written the Bible that way. God expects us to come to the Bible by faith, just with a childlike trust. And unless we do, we're going to be lead down the path of unbelief by the scriptures. There are all kinds of statements in the Bible which, if you take them and isolate them from the rest of the Bible, and just let them stand by themselves, will teach exactly opposite of what God really intended by them. This is the way God prepared the Bible.

Now Israel was very guilty of this. God came to them again and again and again and again, from the days of Abraham on, and encouraged them to place their trust in Him. But no, they didn't put their trust in Him. We read in Hebrews 3, for example, that when the nation of Israel came out of Egypt, two million strong approximately, virtually all of them perished in the wilderness because of unbelief, of unbelief. They would not trust God. They really believed that they knew better than God. And so they perished because of unbelief.

And Israel kept doing this. And finally God said, in Isaiah's time, and you can read it in Isaiah 6, the words that are quoted in Matthew 13:14-15. There you read, "With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, You shall indeed hear and never understand. And you shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes, they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart, and turn for Me to heal them."

This began during the days of Isaiah, some 700 years before Christ, and it continues right down to the present day. Now wonderfully, that's not the end of the story. As you go through the Bible, while on the one hand you read this terrible traumatic language about how God has blinded the eyes of the nation of Israel, yet there is also the note of grace shining through. Again and again the Bible speaks of a remnant coming out of the nation of Israel and believing on Christ, a remnant chosen by grace.

During the days of Elijah, there were 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. In the days of Christ there were the 120 who believed. There were more than 500 in Galilee who believed. Right up to the very present day there are individual Jews who do believe. But as a nation they are blinded. Now actually, the same is true of the Gentile nations. The highest percentage of the individuals in any nation of the world remains in unbelief. And it's only a small percentage, a remnant chosen by grace, that actually believe. And these are the ones who have humbled themselves and thrown themselves on the mercies of God and come completely spiritually bankrupt to God. For their eyes were opened.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Was Judas Predestined to Betray Christ? (198A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Could you speak about free will versus predestination? What about Judas? Was he predestined to betray Christ?

HC: The question is raised about this matter of free will versus predestination, and particularly as to how that relates to, let's say, a man like Judas. Was he predestined to betray his Lord? Therefore can it be said that God cannot really impute guilt to him?

Well, first of all, let's talk about free will. Does the Bible teach free will? Now man likes to think that he has a free will. There was one man and one woman who lived on this earth who had a free will. These were Adam and Eve. They were created in the image of God, and they were not infected by sin. They were not enslaved to Satan at all. They were children of God. They had a free will. They could elect to obey God or to disobey Him. Unfortunately, they elected to disobey Him. But they had a free will.

Now the Bible teaches that mankind has become a slave of Satan, has become a slave of sin. He is dead. If he's ever going to elect to go in any direction, it's going to be toward sin. Ephesians 2:1-3 teaches this so very clearly. And we don't like this. This is pretty horrible, to admit that I as a human being cannot elect really to do right, of my own volition. We don't like that. That troubles our self-respect. That troubles our ego, our pride. But that's what the Bible teaches. Man of himself, for example, would never want to come to Christ, because he is a slave to his sin. He likes his sin far too much. He thinks he has a free will. But in actuality he is a slave.

Now in order for a person to be saved, it is necessary for God to intervene in our life. It is necessary for Him to change our will, to incline our heart, to open our spiritual eyes, to make us alive. I think the best illustration of this is the miracle of the raising of Lazarus. Lazarus was dead, dead as a person could be. His body was in the grave four days already. And yet Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth."

Now did Lazarus have a free will? Of course he didn't have a free will. Lazarus couldn't come forth in a hundred million years, no matter how Christ would have pleaded with him, if He left it all up to Lazarus, because Lazarus was dead. And that's how dead we are before we are saved. But Lazarus did come forth. And how did he come forth? Because God qualified him. God changed his will. God gave him the will and the desire and the ability to come forth. And so Lazarus did come forth. And that's the way we come forth when we are saved.

Now this has to do with predestination. God decided, before the foundations of the world, as we read in Ephesians 1:4, who were going to be saved. He had our names already worked out. And so those who do eventually become saved are those whom God elected to be saved.

Well now the question remains, what about those who are used by God in working out His program, who are sinners? What about Judas? Well first of all, Judas is going to hell not because he rejected Christ. Nobody goes to hell because they reject Christ. They go to hell because they're sinners. The wages of sin is death. The wrath of God abides on mankind because they're sinners. The fact that they reject Christ only multiplies their sins. It's just another sin added to all the others. And only by believing on Christ do they take hold of the lifeline, whereby they can be spared hell. But they're not going to hell because they reject Christ. They're going to hell because they're sinners. And Judas, too, is going to hell because he's a sinner.

Now they're not going to hell because they were not elected. Mankind does not go to hell because he's become a slave of sin. Mankind goes to hell because they are sinners. The wages of sin is death.

God has created man in the image of God, to be perfect. And man of his own volition sins. True, he is a slave of sin. But that's part of the make-up of man. And it's because of man's own fault. Man has rebelled against God, and God has cursed man, so that he has this nature now to want to sin.

But man is totally responsible, totally accountable. Man is going to hell because of his sin, not because he was not elected. He's going to hell because he deserves to go to hell. As a matter of fact, there's not one person in the whole human race that deserves to go to Heaven. Not one of us. Not one of us. If God had put the whole human race into hell, there's not one of us that could complain. We all deserve to go there. And it's incomprehensible grace that any one of us might be saved. Not one of us deserves in any sense whatsoever this salvation that God has provided.

So Judas, too, when he sinned, he goes to hell for his sin. Now insofar as the particular sin of betraying Christ, that has an interesting sidelight. Jesus hung on the cross and said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Now we don't know for sure what Christ had in mind. But we can speculate that in all probability He is referring to the specific sins that were committed in bringing Him to the cross. This would include the sin of Caiaphas, who condemned Him to death, it would include the sin of Pilate, for giving Him over to the Jews when they cried, "Crucify Him," it would include the sin of Judas in betraying Him, it would include the sin of the Roman soldiers, when they drove the nails into His hands, it would include the sins of the Jews when they cried out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" The likelihood is that those particular sins are not going to come into judgment. Christ somehow asked for forgiveness. I'm not sure. I'm speculating. I'm really speculating.

But we do know that Pilate nevertheless was an unsaved man. He had all kinds of other sins. And therefore, unless unbeknownst to us he became saved before he died, he ended up in hell. Judas, we know, died an unsaved man. He was called the son of perdition. He ended up in hell, or will end up in hell. Caiaphas, the high priest, unless there's information unbeknownst to us, died an unbeliever. And so he'll end up in hell, not because he decreed that Christ was to be crucified, but because he was a sinner. He is to go to hell.

Thank you for that question. I don't know whether I covered it adequately, but I hope this will help.

The Issue of Predestination (322B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: My question occurs in Ephesians 2:1, and also verses 5 and 8. Are grace and faith gifts of God, or is it one or the other? And the second set of scripture is Ephesians 1:4,5 and 11. I'm wondering if, in God's foreknowledge He actually sees us as persons, by name, by our very soul. And also, maybe you could comment on the sovereignty of God in electing and predestinating.

HC: All right. I'll be glad to comment on that.

The question is raised concerning a number of verses in Ephesians 1 and 2 that seem to give us the impression that we are dead in our sins, and that we have been predestinated by God to salvation. The question really is, how does all of this tie together?

The Bible is very clear in Ephesians 2:1-3, that before we are saved, spiritually we are dead. There is no hope. We are just like the world. Notice this language: "And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, where in times past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit

that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation (that is, our conduct) in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

In other words, God is painting a very true and terrible picture, that we're dead. We spiritually stink. We're decaying. We're corrupted. We're slaves of Satan, we're in complete rebellion against God, just like the rest of mankind. And we were headed for hell just as certainly as anyone else.

Now immediately the question must be raised, "Well, if that is all so, then how is it that anyone ever became saved?" How could it be that if I were a spiritual corpse, without any life, how could it be that I ever could have become saved?

Well, in Ephesians 1 and in Ephesians 2 God gives us the glorious answer. In Ephesians 1:4 God indicates that He chose us to be saved from before the foundations of the earth. Now just think of this. God, before He ever created any of the universe, before there ever was a Lucifer who fell into sin, before there was ever an Adam and Eve who rebelled against God, before there was ever a sinner-cursed earth, or even a Garden of Eden, God already decided precisely who He planned to save. He chose us to be saved. It was His sovereign good pleasure that out of the human race that was going to come forth from the loins of Adam and Eve, there would be certain ones that He would save.

And He chose us in Christ, that we should be holy and without blame before Him, in love. Now after we looked at our condition in Ephesians 2:1 & 3, we know that if He chose me, then He had to save me, too, because I certainly never would have come to Him. Why, I was dead in my sins. I lusted after my sin. I was a slave of Satan, like the rest of mankind.

And therefore, if God chose me, then He also had to do the saving. And so we see this in verse 5 of Ephesians 1: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." It's God's action altogether, you see. He did it for His own good pleasure, through the Lord Jesus Christ. And then He goes on in verse 6: "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved." You see, the whole action is God's action. We were dead, but God elected us to be saved, and therefore He went about the business of saving us.

And this is reinforced in verse 11: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." His will . . . remember John 1:12 declares that to them that received Him He gave power to become the sons of God, "who were born not after the will of man, nor after the will of the flesh, but after the will of God." We're saved by God's will, not because of our will. We're dead. We're dead. We would never, never, never, in ourselves, turn to God. But God predestinated us.

I'm always amazed when I hear Christians say, "Oh, you believe in predestination, don't you? You believe in election. You're one of those that believe in predestination." I say, "Well, of course I believe in predestination. That's what the Bible teaches." I wasn't reading from some book that someone wrote. I was reading the Bible, when it talks about predestination here. And if the Bible talks about predestination, and tells me that I was dead in my sins, well, I better believe in it. And if you don't believe in predestination, you better start reading the Bible. You better ask yourself, "Well, what kind of a gospel do I have then, if I don't believe in predestination?" Where do I get this idea that I wasn't

predestinated, if the Bible says this so emphatically here? Is it possible that maybe I have been led astray insofar as what the Bible teaches?"

Any Christian who is going to follow the Bible has got to believe in predestination, because this is what the Bible is talking about here. Now let's go back to Ephesians 2 for a moment. There it says that we were dead. But now notice verse 4: "But God . . ." Not me . . . not me. "But I saw my sins, and because I reached out to God, He saved me." No, it doesn't say that. It doesn't say that. It says, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us, hath made us alive together with Christ. By grace ye are saved."

Do you see where the action is? Do you see where the action is? It's God's action. We're corpses. We're dead. We're corrupted. It is God who is doing the saving. It is God who is bestowing His mercy, His great love. It is God who is making us alive.

Do you remember Lazarus in the tomb? He was dead, dead. His body smelled like something awful. It had been dead for four days. His body was decaying. He was a mess. And Jesus stood outside of that tomb and said, "Lazarus, come forth." But Lazarus was dead. How could Lazarus ever come forth?

Of course he couldn't come forth. Never in a billion years could he come forth. But he did come forth. He did come forth. Did Lazarus do this of his own will? Did he do it of his own strength? Ridiculous! Of course not! He did it because God bestowed His love on him. God made him alive. And so it says here, in verse 5, "He hath made us alive together with Christ. Well now, Christ was in the tomb, wasn't He? Wasn't He? Was Christ dead when He was in the tomb? Yes, He was dead. He died for our sins. Did He become resurrected? Yes, He did. On that Sunday morning long ago, there was an empty tomb. Yes, there was!

And here God is saying, "You who are saved He made alive with Christ. Christ rose from the grave; we have risen with Him. We, too, have experienced the resurrection.

And now comes the insistent point. "By grace ye are saved." All the time God is saying, "I've done it. I've done it. God has done it. God has done it. God has done it out of His love. God has done it out of His grace. God has done it out of His mercy, to His glory." And now He's making the point stick.

"By grace you have been saved." Don't get any ideas now, that you contributed anything to your salvation. Nonsense, nonsense, you were dead. By grace you have been saved . . . "and hath raised us up together." He has "raised us up together." We've experienced the resurrection.

And that's a very real resurrection, incidentally. It's the resurrection of our souls. We're made alive. We're a new creature. We're born again. And therefore, when we die, in our souls we don't go into the grave. No, No, in our souls we can leave this body and go to live and reign with Christ in Heaven.

And so in verse 8 He says, "For by grace are ye saved," driving home that point. "By grace are ye saved, through faith." Now what's that faith? Can a dead person have faith? Of course not. No dead person can have faith. To trust in God when you're dead? That's impossible.

Well, where did the faith come from? He declares it here: "and that not of yourselves. It is a gift of God." The faith whereby He saved us is a gift that has come from God. It's not of works, "lest any man should boast."

Now do you see the sovereign good pleasure of God? Now having said all

this, let me underscore this. The Bible says, "Make your calling and election sure." If you are unsaved, or think you might be unsaved (and I hope that many, many Christians, as they listen to this program, will become disturbed . . . "Am I really saved?"), I can't be happier than to know this is happening, because then I know there are those who are being stirred up in their souls to really face the question of what salvation is.

It is so much more wonderful to face it now, while you're still physically alive, then it is to face it at Judgment Day, when it's too late. All kinds of people are dying thinking they're Christians, and really they have never known what salvation is. They have just been lulled into spiritual sleep. And they're going to wake up and face the judgment throne, because they have never been saved.

Read Matthew 7:21, or verses 15 through 24, if you don't believe that is so.

Well, here we have the fact that God says, "Make your calling and election sure." And if you're not sure you're saved, you can begin to call out to God for mercy. You can begin to cry out for His saving love. You can begin to turn from your sins and ask God for strength to continue to repent of your sins. And God promises you that if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you will truly seek Him with all your heart, you will really and truly find Him. God will save you.

There will be nobody at all before the Judgment Throne of the last Day who will be able to say to God, "I earnestly sought for salvation, and because I was not elect, therefore now I have to pay for my sins." That is absolutely an impossible idea. That cannot happen.

Because you see, there is no one that will earnestly seek for God unless God Himself is drawing him. And He will only draw those who are His elect. And so if you begin to call upon God and say, "Oh, Lord, I don't know whether I'm elect or not elect, but I know I'm not saved. And I want to be saved." And if you mean business with the Lord, and repent of your sins and cry out to God for mercy, and ask for a faith to trust that Jesus Christ is your Savior and Lord, you will be saved.

But then when you start searching the Bible to find out how it was possible that you finally became saved, you're going to find that it was because you were one of God's elect, and God was drawing you. Jesus said in John 6:44: "No man can come to Me unless the Father draw him." And you can see why that is. We're dead. We're spiritually dead. There's no life. There isn't the slightest sign of life. All the life signs are gone long ago. We're in spiritual corruption and decay. It is absolutely necessary that God draw us.

And the evidence of this drawing power of God is that we begin to earnestly seek for salvation. We begin to really cry out for mercy. We begin to turn away from our sins.

Praise God for such a wonderful salvation.

The Condition of Our Souls Before Birth + Predestination (339E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, I have a question. Are our souls here before we actually are born into the world?

HC: The question is, are our souls actually here before we're born into the world? No. Actually, there is no existence in any sense at all of ourselves until we are conceived in the womb of our mother. At that time we are created by God. God is going on in His creative work in that sense. We are created by God. That is the beginning of our existence.

Now each time a human being is created there is an eternal destiny for that person. His destiny will either be to spend eternity in hell or to spend eternity in Heaven. But we do have a beginning.

CALLER: Okay, in Ephesians 1, about predestination, is that the same as what you just discussed?

HC: In Ephesians 1:4 it says we are chosen in Christ from before the foundations of the earth. In other words, God had a very precise plan for every human being who would ever come into this world, in His mind and in His plan, before He ever created the universe. There were no surprises, there were no changes in God's plan. And out of the whole human race He knew exactly whom He was to save.

Now actually, it was in time that year by year this one and that one would be created. And then if he had been chosen from before the foundations of the earth, before that person died indeed he would become born again. And that is what predestination is. He predestinated us to be saved. We were all dead in our sins. None of us deserved to be saved. And yet God, of His own sovereign good pleasure, decided whom He would save.

CALLER: But we still have a free will to accept Christ as our Savior, as our sacrifice, don't we?

HC: That is the mind of man. Man would like to think that he has a free will. That is because natural man is deceived by Satan. Actually, God gives us the ugly truth in Ephesians 2:1-3 that before we're saved we're dead in our sins. We're dead. We're corpses. We're followers of Satan. We're children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Now how can a dead person decide for Christ? That's an impossibility. We're dead. We don't really have a free will. Our will is completely in revolt against God. It is completely in bondage to sin.

Now the reason that we come to Him is not because of an exercise of our will. We read in John 1:12 & 13, where it speaks about those who believed on Him, that He gave authority to become sons of God. Let me read that so I'll read it exactly correctly: "As many as received Him, He gave authority to become sons of God." And then notice: "even to them that believe on His Name." And then notice the next verse: "which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It wasn't man's will that he decided he was going to be saved. It was God who inclined his will so that he wanted to be saved.

The fact is, in John 6:44 Jesus declares, "No man can come to Me [no man has the power to come to Me] except the Father which hath sent Me draw Him." And then in verse 37 of John 6 God opens the curtain, and we look behind the scenes in Heaven, and Christ declares, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me," because, you see, God intends to save those whom He's going to save. And ultimately it has nothing to do with our will.

Now insofar as we know, as the Gospel comes to us we are told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And for the moment we think that it is our desire that prompted us to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we became saved. But after we are saved, and we read the Bible to discover why we became so exercised by the Gospel, we had such a longing to become identified with the body of Christ, then we'll discover that it is because the Father drew us. It is the Father who inclined our will to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.

CALLER: What about those individuals who refuse the invitation of the Father? Is He actually trying to draw them, and they refuse Him? Have then been predestinated to be lost souls? You know, some people He gave up to a reprobate mind, like Romans says. He gave those

people up because of their sins. He's still doing this, right?

HC: Actually, when we look at the whole human race, the whole human race, to the last individual, has a reprobate mind, is altogether antagonistic against God. Of himself, the whole human race, every solitary individual in the whole human race, if left to himself, would reject the Gospel. Not one of us would accept it.

You could proclaim the Gospel for a thousand years—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life"—and not one person would be saved, because the human race is spiritually dead and is of a complete reprobate mind.

Now out of this human race God, in His sovereign good pleasure, has elected a remnant, a remnant elected or chosen by grace. By grace we have been saved. And in order to save us He had to pay a fantastic price, the price of enduring the wrath of God, the equivalent of an eternity in hell on behalf of those who were to be saved.

And so He drew us to Himself, and we were saved. No one else would ever want to be saved. Anyone who remains unsaved could never really care, will never really care about being saved. They may act like they're saved. They may even belong to the church. But they're coming to church, and they're accepting Christ on their terms rather than on God's terms. And so they really are rejecting out of hand the Gospel as God has proclaimed it, where they're to come to Christ with a broken and a contrite heart, where they're to come recognizing their spiritual bankruptcy, recognizing that it's only by God's grace that they're saved.

Now you can say, "Well then, God has elected the rest of the human race to reprobation, or to judgment." Well, in a sense you could say this. The Bible does not use that language. It does say in one place, in Romans 9, I believe, that there are vessels "made for destruction." That's about the strongest language of the Bible. But it never uses the word elect or chosen of those who are going to hell. The whole human race is going to hell, and God elects, out of the human race, those who are to be saved.

CALLER: I know God called me, and He touched my heart to accept Him and to repent of my sins and to recognize the fact that He did die because of my sins. And so I felt that I'm one of those chosen ones. And my job is to witness to others, to get them to recognize the same things that I've come to know.

It's not for me then to decide, if a person rejects me, whether that person has been predestinated for God's Kingdom or whether he's predestinated for God's wrath.

HC: That's right. As we bring the Gospel, my may never raise the question, "I wonder if you are one of God's elect," or make a judgment. Even the most wicked, sin-hardened sinner that we are presenting the Gospel to might be one of God's elect. God has His own timetable for saving. Sometimes a person responds to the Gospel the first time he hears the Gospel. On the other hand, someone may hear the Gospel for thirty years before he finally responds to the Gospel.

Our task is not to decide who is elect or not. Our task is to be a faithful witness, to be a faithful ambassador of Christ. And we are not the ones who do the saving. We aren't salesmen for Christ. We are faithful witnesses of the precious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have the full assurance that God's Word will not return void, that it will accomplish the purpose for which it was sent.

Those who are to be saved will be saved. We can depend upon that.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you for that answer. I appreciate it very much.

Does God Wish for None to Perish in 2 Peter 3:9? (345A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I was calling in with regard to a question on predestination. The Bible says that God wishes for none to perish.

HC: That's Second Peter 3.

CALLER: It seems that a loving God would not create beings just to destroy them. That doesn't seem very loving. And also, John 3:16. It would seem that God only loved part of the world and not all of it. I'll take my answer over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. Good night.

The question is really raised, Is God really fair? Is He really a loving God? Aren't we somehow in error on this doctrine of predestination? How can that accord with the idea of a loving God?

You see, the problem is that we do not understand the holiness of God. We do not really know what it means to be a perfectly righteous God. We're all tainted by sin. Even after we're saved we still have a body that lusts after sin. We're very much at home with sin. Sin is not that big a problem, basically, to mankind, is it? It's everywhere. Everywhere we look we see sin.

But we begin to sense that sin must be something really terrible, when we realize that the punishment for sin is to spend an eternity in hell. That's not a very short time, you know. That's a pretty terrible thing. And when we read the language of what hell is, as the Bible speaks of it as a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and a place where there's eternal torment, and a place of eternal burning and outer darkness, and so on, we begin to sense that, my, oh my, if God is perfectly just (and certainly He is, because He is holy God), sin must be terrible, to require that kind of terrible punishment. This begins to give us a tiny little insight into the holiness of God.

Now let's look at the human race. And it seems like we have to think about this from time to time. And I'm glad that we can, because we lose sight of these facts. God creates a beautiful world for mankind. This earth was perfect. God saw everything, that it was very good. There was no sin, there was no curse, there was no blemish of any kind upon this earth. And as the crown of God's creation He puts man here, to rule over this creation, to have dominion over it, to be fruitful and multiply, and be a people that would serve God perfectly and live with Him, and have fellowship with Him.

What more could God do? What greater privilege could man have? But mankind, beginning with Adam and Eve, and continuing right down to the last baby that's born on the face of this earth, of their own volition rebels against his Creator God, denies his Creator God, and goes his own way. Rather he begins to serve the creature, or the creation, as we read in Romans 1, rather than the Creator God. It's an open affront, it's repudiation of the God who created us. Certainly God ought to stamp us out. He ought to throw us all into hell, what terrible insolence! What terrible rebellion! What terrible arrogance, that we turn against the Creator God in this fashion, when He has put us in this beautiful world in which to live.

We don't deserve any blessing from God. We don't deserve any mercy from God, when we consider what we have done in rebelling against Him. And bear in mind, we're not animals. We're not non-thinking individuals. We're created in the image of God. We're created with a natural sensitivity to worship God. We know there's a God in Heaven. We within our hearts have a sensitivity to God's justice. We know intuitively that it's wrong to murder and to steal

and to lie, and so on. And yet in spite of this we go our own unholy way. God ought to stamp us out.

Then on top of that, to make matters much much worse, God comes with His gracious offer of salvation. Now this offer of salvation is not an idle kind of a thing. If anyone is going to be saved through the Lord Jesus Christ, it is required that Christ would have paid for his sins, that Christ would have endured the wrath of God, so that God's perfect justice could be taken care of.

And so this is a tremendous, tremendous offer of grace that God is giving to the world, that whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ should not perish but could have everlasting life. And again the Bible tells us that because of the nature of our rebellion against God there's not one of us that would respond to that Gospel. We hate God as Creator, we're in rebellion against Him as Creator, and under no circumstance are we going to want to be redeemed by Him. We like what we are. We like our sin. We're going to take our own chances with eternity. We're going to go our own way.

Could mankind, created in the image of God, affront God any more? Could they be any more rebellious? Can't you see that there isn't the slightest reason why God ought to save any one of us? Don't you ever think that God is unjust in that He lets anyone go to hell. We all deserve to go to hell. Our sins cry out to God's holy Heaven for the way we regard God.

But Christ said, "I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It was God's intention from before He ever created the universe that He's going to have a people of Himself. And so God decided just whom He was to save.

Now the fact that He would save one person, does that mean that He was ungracious to the rest of the human race? No, not a bit. The rest of the human race had an opportunity to be saved, but they didn't want to be saved. The fact that the one who was saved had to be drawn by God, had to be irresistibly drawn by God so that his mind was enlightened and his will was surrendered to God, that didn't change anything. This person didn't deserve to be saved, but God said, "I want you. I'm going to save you." That did not mean that the rest were left with any sense of injustice in any way, because they didn't want to be saved.

Now the fact that God has saved a large number of people (a small percentage in comparison with those who are still going to hell, but nevertheless in total a substantial number of people), that is grace magnified over and over again. Why would God do this? Why did I deserve to be saved? Never! I didn't deserve it at all. Why am I saved? I didn't deserve it. It's all God's grace.

That is the message of salvation. We don't have to think for a moment that the fact that some are not elect is injustice on God's part. Read Romans 9, where that very question is raised, Is there injustice on God's part? And the answer comes right back, By no means! God has a right to have mercy upon whom He will have mercy.

Now in Second Peter 2:3 we read that God does not wish that any should perish, but that all should come to a knowledge of the truth. We also read in the Gospel of Luke that Christ wept over Jerusalem. And in another place it says that He declared of Jerusalem, "How oft I would have gathered you as a hen would gather her chicks, and ye would not."

We must remember that it is not a pleasant idea to God that man must go to hell. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, the Bible declares. That is not a pleasant idea to God. God loves His creation, and mankind is part of His creation. But you must remember that God's justice demands that the penalty

for our sins be paid, that mankind goes to hell.

It's like the judge who has the criminal in front of him who is guilty of a crime. And the law declares that this man must go to jail for the rest of his days. The judge has no pleasure at all in sending that person to jail for the rest of his life. I am sure that that must be a traumatic experience for a judge. But the law demands that this person has to go to jail. And if this judge is going to be faithful to the law, if he is going to be a righteous judge, then he must send that person to jail. Now that is exactly a picture of God's holy justice. The wages of sin must be paid. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

God wept over Jerusalem because He knew that they were coming under God's judgment because of their sins. He is the Creator of these people. And to see His creation in open rebellion and under the judgment of God is a painful experience for God. But God's holiness and His justice demands that they must pay the penalty.

Now why is it that He didn't save everybody? I don't know. That's God's sovereign good pleasure that He didn't save everyone. We do read in Romans 9 that even the wrath of men shall praise Him. We can't understand the whole picture. We only know this, that God says "Make your calling and election sure." We only know this, that God says that "Whosoever cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Actually, after we're saved, and we try to find out why we came to Him, we'll discover that it was because God drew us.

Now in Second Peter 3, which says that He does not wish that any should perish but that all should come to Him, He of course is particularly talking there about the elect, those whom He had planned to save. The context is that of the patience of God in the face of the continued wickedness of the world. If God would end this world before His prescribed time, that is, before the last of the elect have been saved, then God's whole elective program would have been frustrated. And God does not wish this to be. He wishes that all who are to be saved will be saved.

Now when God really desires that some is going to be saved, no human being could resist the will of God. Don't you ever think that God is saying to us, "Now look. I've done all that I can for you, and now it's up to you." That's not the Biblical teaching. When Christ decided to save us, this decision was made before He ever created this universe. And you can depend upon it that all whom He decided to save will be saved. God will draw them. This is John 6:37-44. And read those verses very carefully.

Well, thank you for that question.

Was Judas Destined to be Lost? (444B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question in John 17, with regard to what Jesus says about Judas, in verse 12: "None have been lost except the child of hell, so that scripture would be fulfilled." What I want to know is, was Judas destined to be lost?

HC: Was Judas destined to be lost?

CALLER: Did he have a choice to be saved like everybody else?

HC: Did he have a choice to be saved? Did Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus, have a choice to be saved like everyone else? Yes, he did.

CALLER: Then what is the scripture that's referred to? It says, "so that the scripture might be fulfilled." And I couldn't find a scripture anywhere that said that.

HC: You see, Judas is no different than anybody else. The whole human race, to the last man, woman and child, is given

the offer of salvation. But the whole human race, just like Judas, does not want to be saved. There's nobody who wants to be saved, of themselves, because as human beings we are dead in our sins. The Bible says we're in rebellion against God. We like our sins. We don't want to be saved.

Now the only ones who actually become saved are the ones whom God chooses, whom He elects to be saved. If there was no elective program, then none of us would be saved. And it just happens that Judas was not one of those who had been chosen by God to be saved.

Judas didn't want to be saved. He was with Christ for three and a half years, just like the other apostles, and he didn't like the kind of salvation that Christ was presenting. He didn't want this. And so he ended up under the wrath of God, just like everyone else who refuses to be saved.

CALLER: But I got the impression that there was a particular scripture that predicted that there would be a person, one individual, that would have to betray the Lord.

HC: For example, in Psalm 55 it speaks of the one who would betray Jesus, that "my own familiar friend will betray Me," and so on. It is true that the Bible does speak of someone who would come along and betray Him. For example, where it's really talking about the Messiah, it says in verse 5, "And they have rewarded Me evil for good and hatred for My love. Set thou a wicked man over him, and let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few, and let another take his office." This is talking about Judas. "Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow." In other words, Judas committed suicide, of course, because he was sorry that he had betrayed Jesus. He was not sorry unto salvation. He was sorry only that he had done such a dumb thing.

CALLER: It seemed to me like he repented, though.

HC: Well, he repented in the sense that he realized that he had done something very wrong. But repentance is not salvation in itself. Repentance is an element of salvation. It is what we expect when someone is being saved. But repentance by itself is not the equivalent of salvation. If he had become saved, he not only would have repented of his sins, but he would have trusted in Christ as his Savior. He would have come to the Lord and sought His forgiveness, and received His forgiveness. But he didn't do that.

CALLER: Well, when Peter betrayed the Lord three times, that was a different kind of betrayal then, right?

HC: Oh, yes. It was sin, just like with Judas. But Peter was a child of God, and so of course he came back to Christ. He sought the Lord's forgiveness.

We see this already at the time he betrayed Christ. You remember he looked at Jesus, and Jesus looked at him, after the cock crowed. Then Peter went out and wept bitterly. He realized what a horrible thing he had done, and he was broken before God. Later on, when Jesus said to Peter, "Lovest thou me?" that is, "Do you have that *agape* love that is from God?" Peter didn't dare answer, "Yes, I have that." He had lost his arrogance, his self-confidence. He simply answered, "I have that love," but it was the word *phileo* that he used, which means "I love you as a friend." Peter had become humbled.

As we see him again in Acts 2, of course, he stands up and confidently proclaims the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter was an entirely different kind of a person, you see.

CALLER: It sounded like he didn't have a chance. And I was under the impression that God gives everybody a

chance.

HC: Everybody has a chance. There is no human being that does not have a chance. The betrayer Judas had a chance just like everyone else. But just like everyone else, if God does not intervene in our life, we will go to our deathbed rebelling against God. We don't want the salvation that God offers us.

Is God Responsible for the Unbelief of Sinners? (540A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question regarding election. I was talking with my mother tonight, and we ended on this note. I said, "Do you believe that God will save whom He chooses to?" and she said, "No." I said, "We have nothing further to talk about then." But my question is, what about the people who end up in hell? They never wanted God because God didn't draw them to Him. So why are they responsible for their unbelief?

HC: Well, that's a very interesting question. If there are those who end up in hell because God never drew them, and John 6:44 insists, as Jesus declared, "No man can come to Me except the Father draw him," that is, no man has the power (the word "can" there is a Greek word that means no man has the power to come to Me except the Father draw him), then isn't God somehow responsible for the fact that they went to hell?

Well, that's an interesting way of putting it, and we'd like to kind of get God in the defense chair and make Him responsible for our going to hell in some way. But when we look at the whole picture, we find that it isn't God who sinned. It is man who sinned. It is man who has rebelled against God. God created mankind in the image of God, to have fellowship with God and to be perfectly obedient to Him. And yet man of his own volition has spurned God, has repudiated the law of God, has rebelled against God.

And God's justice demands that the wages of sin is death. And so if God allowed the whole human race to go to hell, without any exception whatsoever, nobody could complain about it. We all deserve to go to hell. Now the incomprehensible thing is, how is it possible that God in His sovereign grace would decide to save even one of these sinners? And think of what a penalty or what a price He had to pay. He had to satisfy His own justice. He had to bear the wrath of God, the equivalent of an eternity in hell for the ones that He would decide to save. And the fact that He would decide to save a great company of believers is God's business.

Now that very same question is asked in Romans 9. In Romans 9:14 God has just declared that before the twin sons of Isaac were born, Esau and Jacob, God said that "Esau I hated but Jacob I loved." In other words, My hand of grace was upon Jacob, and yet I was going to let Esau end up in hell. And so then the question is raised in verse 14: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God," that He would do this? And the answer comes back, "God forbid. For He saith to Moses, I (this is God speaking) will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. And I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." In other words, God is saying, I am sovereign. And it's My business. I can save somebody if I want to, and if I don't want to save somebody I don't owe them anything. They have rebelled against Me. They were created in the image of God. And it's My business if I decide not to save someone.

And so again the question is asked, and the answer comes from God again. He says in verse 16: "So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." God takes the full responsibility, you see. And then He says again in verse 18 of Romans 9, "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He

will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth." And then the question again arises, "Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth He yet find fault, for who hath resisted His will?" In other words, it's really a question that is directed at trying to blame God again. And the answer comes back in verse 20, "Nay, but oh man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" You see, God is claiming full authority and sovereign right to do this.

CALLER: And it sounds like God is a respecter of persons. The Bible says He's not a respecter of persons.

HC: Again, you see, we have to let the Bible be its own interpreter. And God does say this in a number of places, that He's not a respecter of persons. When God says this, we would like to say, well, that means that He doesn't exercise His right to make sovereign choice. But actually, the context of those statements where He's speaking about the fact that He's not a respecter of persons is that God is indicating that there is no nation, there is no political nation, there is no people, there is no generation that has a corner on truth, or that has a corner on salvation. God can save a poor man as quickly as a rich man. He can save a slave as quickly as a king. He can save a Jew as quickly as a Gentile, or a Gentile as quickly as a Jew. God is no respecter of persons in that sense. But God certainly by that statement is not limiting His sovereign right to choose whom He will.

Difficulty in Understanding Pre-election (561A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I'm having trouble, and it's not believing, it's understanding about God saving people, about the fact that He chose to save certain men before they were created. I'm having difficulty understanding how He did it. Is it the conscience He gave to us, or what is it?

HC: Are you asking basically how He effects our salvation once He has chosen us?

CALLER: Yes. But I don't know if I'm having trouble understanding.

HC: Let me see if I can help you by using a physical analogy which is offered to us in the Bible. Let's look at a cemetery of dead people. Now all of those people are dead in that cemetery. They're all in their graves. And you could go through that cemetery, and you could shout at the top of your lungs, as persuasively as you could, with all the love that you could muster and with all the salesmanship, "Come forth! Come forth! Come forth!" and you could do this day after day after day, and not one of those people in those tombs would come forth, would they? They're dead. They're absolutely dead, and they would not come forth.

Now in John 11 God teaches us about Jesus standing outside the tomb of Lazarus. Now Lazarus was in the grave. He had been dead for 4 days. His body was decaying. He was just as dead as any person in the cemetery. And Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth!" And you would say, "Come on now. Lazarus is dead. He never would come forth." But the fact is, he did come forth.

All right. Now what was the difference? Well, you notice that first of all Jesus named him. Jesus knew exactly who He wanted to come forth. He didn't just say, "Come forth" so that all kinds of graves are opened now and people are standing there. He said, "Lazarus, come forth." And so it's Lazarus who comes forth. Secondly, how was Lazarus able to do this? Did he somehow have a little bit of

hearing left? Was there a little conscience within him, a little smidgen of life that still remained? No, no, he was dead. He was a corpse. He was returning to the dust.

But at the same time that Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth," Jesus qualified him so that he could hear the Word of Christ, the command of Christ, and He gave him the will to respond to the command of Christ, and so Lazarus did come forth. Now there is a powerful picture of what happens to us who are unsaved.

By nature we're as dead as those people in the cemetery, every last one of us. But when God has decided to save one of us because He chose us from the foundations of the world, as that Gospel message goes out, while the rest of the people remain dead in their sins, and they could care less about the Gospel, they don't want to be saved, here and there will be one or another who will begin to become uneasy. They'll begin to wonder about their sins. They'll begin to listen more intently. They'll begin to become anxious. Maybe there is a hell, after all. And they will become interested in the Bible. God, you see, is drawing them. As Jesus said in John 6:44, "No man can come to Me except the Father draw him." And He is giving them spiritual ears to hear, and eyes to see. And they become convicted in their heart...oh yes, I am a sinner. Oh Lord, I need that salvation. And they will find that they're beginning to trust in Christ. And they'll find in their heart a desire to be obedient to Him. And the next thing you know, they will find that they are saved.

CALLER: So does He give it to everyone then, and still there will be some that will not receive?

HC: No. He gives the Gospel to everyone. But only those whom He qualifies will respond to the Gospel. Think of the illustration of standing in the cemetery. Christ could say, "Come forth," but only Lazarus came forth, because He called Lazarus specifically, "Lazarus, come forth" and Lazarus was qualified to come forth, and he experienced physical life. So we experience spiritual life when God calls us and qualifies us.

Now the rest of the people in the cemetery remained there. And the same is true of the rest of the people who are unsaved. They remain unsaved, and they don't want to be saved. They'll stand before the Judgment Throne. And they can't argue with God and say, "But we didn't have an opportunity." They didn't want it in any way whatsoever.

CALLER: So before a man is born God knows. Can I put it like this? Does God know if He gives the person spiritual eyes and spiritual ears, if they do come they will be saved? And He can see that if they do get it they don't want it?

HC: No. You see, God does not save us because of anything that He sees in us. When He decided to save me, He didn't look down the corridors of time from before the foundations of the earth and see this fellow that was going to be born in the 20th Century and see that yes, he's just a little bit better than the rest, because when he hears the Gospel he's going to want to respond to it, and therefore I'll elect him. That isn't it at all. He saw me, and He saw a dirty rotten sinner, just as rebellious against God by nature as anyone else with absolutely no inherent desire to turn to God.

But God said, I want him, as dirty as he is, as rotten as he is by nature. I want him. And so God drew me at a very young age, so that I became saved. And that's the way He deals in His own timetable with each individual that He's going to save.

CALLER: I have 2 children, and when I heard this, that God elects whom He wants to elect, it really scared me. And so I just . . .

HC: All right. Now let's talk about this, this matter of election. Should we be frightened by this? Actually, no, not at all. We have to remember that God's election program is God's business, not ours. It is altogether God's business. We don't know who is elect. We only know that anyone at all who responds to the Gospel, who calls on the name of the Lord in the way the Bible asks them to will be saved.

God also promises that if you bring up your children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord, or in the way that they should go, in their old age they'll not depart from it. And He commands you to bring your children up in the fear and the nurture of the Lord. And so you can begin to see that God is suggesting that in all likelihood your children will be saved also. What we have to do is claim God's promises and say, well, all right. I'm going to train my children as citizens of God's Kingdom. I'm going to train them as well as I possibly can to love the Lord. And then God in His mercy may save my children, too, because He promises He'll be a God to me and my children.

Now because I find that I have developed this love for God and I really am concerned about whether I'm elect, and so I cry out to God for mercy, finally I become saved. If I call on His name I will become saved, if I really surrender my will to Him. Then afterwards, when I look in the Bible to find out why I became saved, I'll discover it was because God was drawing me. It was because God had elected me, because if God had not elected me you can rest assured I never would have had any desire to be saved on God's terms.

CALLER: I see.

Can We Just Sit and Wait Until God Saves Us? (570A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a question about predestination. If it's not up to your will to be saved, then anybody could say, "Well, I'll just do what I want until God chooses me. He'll draw me when it's His time."

HC: The question is, if indeed God is sovereign and He saves whom He wills, and it does not depend upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy, then why couldn't I as an unsaved person simply go along waiting for God to save me, if it is His will? After all, He is sovereign.

Well, let me ask a very practical question. If you were on a ship, and it was out in the middle of the ocean, and suddenly the word came that the ship had struck an iceberg and it was going to sink in the next two hours. And to the utter dismay of the captain and all of the passengers aboard (it was heavily laden with passengers), they found out that they only had life boats sufficient for ten percent of the passengers aboard. And there was no way to get help. That meant that in all likelihood ninety percent of the people would drown.

But then the captain, because he wanted to make sure that he would save the most important people aboard, radioed back to his homeland and said, "What is the passenger list? Will somebody tell me who are the preferred passengers, that have to be saved?" And quickly the whole passenger list was gone over, and ten percent of the names were selected that were to be saved. So now the captain announced to all of these passengers, "You know, we're going to sink. Many of us are going to drown. But there is a preferred list of ten percent of you who will be saved. And as I call your names, you get into the life boats."

Now you're one of these passengers. What are you going to do? Are you just going to stand there and wonder, "I wonder if I'm one of the ten percent?" Or

are you going to be clamoring, "Oh, Captain! Am I one of them? What do I have to do to get on that list?" Aren't you going to do everything possible to make sure that your name also is on that list?

Well, that's a poor illustration, I admit. But this is a little bit the way it is. If indeed God means what He says, that we are going to hell for our sins, then I would be so upset, I would be so concerned, if I knew I was unsaved, I would be calling to God. I would be beseeching Him. I would say, "Oh, Lord, I don't know whether I'm elect or not. I don't know anything about that. But I know I don't want to go to hell. I know that the Bible is true when it says that the wages of sin is death, and the death God has in view is hell. And I don't want to go to hell. Oh, Lord, have mercy on me! Is it possible that I can be saved also?" And that's exactly the reaction that God wants of us. And the Bible promises that if we seek we shall find, if we knock the door will be opened. And so I will become saved.

But then after I become saved, and I begin to get acquainted with the Bible and I begin to reflect on this, "Now why is it that I had such a tremendous urgency to know that I was saved? I had no idea whether I was elect or not. And my friends couldn't care less. They don't even care about God's predestination or anything else. Why did I feel this way?" Then I'll find from the Bible that it's because the Father was drawing me. It was because God was doing a work of grace in my heart.

And so anyone who is just going to stand idly by with a fatalistic attitude is already giving evidence that he doesn't understand the command that we are to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and he doesn't understand that God means what He says, that we're really going to hell.

CALLER: What if you really believe that you were predestinated, but you weren't chosen?

HC: The question is, is it possible that anybody who really wanted to be saved will be denied salvation because he was not chosen? In other words, will there be people at Judgment Day who can legitimately say to God, "Oh, God, you're judging me for my sins, and I know I deserve to go to hell. But oh, how I tried to be saved. But here I am because I'm not chosen." The fact is, that is an impossibility.

The Bible teaches emphatically, "There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that seeketh after God." There is no member of the human race on his own that is going to be concerned about salvation. The only ones who will begin to respond are the ones that God Himself is drawing and opening their eyes, and so they do that. Nobody will ever be able to say to God, "I tried to come to you but it wasn't possible, because I wasn't chosen."

And you can see this right in your own life. I've said this so many times, but it's so true. If you have become a born again believer, your neighbors on either side of you, who may be unsaved, they don't care about that. They don't envy you. They don't wish that they could be saved like you. They like their life. And at best they tolerate you, and at worst they think that you're a little bit odd, as you have become so zealous for this Christian Gospel.

CALLER: I know salvation doesn't depend on your works. But by going after it, that would involve your will, wouldn't it?

HC: Our caller is talking about our will. Where does that fit in? We like to believe that our will is our will, that we can do what we want to do. But the fact is that our will is surrendered to sin. Our will is sold out to Satan. We won't admit that, but that is the case. Left to ourselves, there isn't one of the human race, not one of us, that would will to come to Christ.

When the Bible says, "Whosoever will may come," the fact that if God leaves us alone, no one will come to Him, because we don't want to come to Him. We love our sin too much, and we are spiritually dead in our sins. We're corpses. And we just would never come to Him.

And so God has to incline our will. When in our will we begin to respond, it's not me that can take the credit in any sense whatsoever. We're going to find that ultimately it was God who was inclining my will so that I would want to do this.

Thank you so much for calling. Good night.

Does God Love Everybody? (600A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. Good evening, Mr. Camping., My question is, does God love everybody?

HC: The question is, does God love everybody? The Bible teaches that from a creation vantage point God loves the whole world. God sends His benevolent rains and His warm sunshine on the wicked and on the just, on those who are unsaved as well as those who are saved. From the vantage point of God as Creator He loves everyone.

From the vantage point of God as Redeemer, as He thinks about mankind from a redemption vantage point and man's sin, then the whole human race stands under the hatred of God and is under the wrath of God. And the only ones who come to know the love of God in that area are those who become born again believers, those who are chosen by God.

We read in Psalm 5:5, "The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight. Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." Now that's the Bible, you see. We read in Psalm 11:5, "The Lord trieth the righteous, but the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul hateth. Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone and a horrible tempest. This shall be the portion of their cup." That is the way God speaks about the unsaved.

Now the way we can know the love of God altogether is by responding to the Gospel. And after we've responded to the Gospel and we wonder why we responded to the Gospel, then we discover that it's because God drew us.

CALLER: When He commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves, can God command something that He Himself doesn't do? Isn't that agape love, that we should love our neighbors?

HC: The question is, if God hates sin and the sinner, when God's justice is in view, how can it be that He asks us to love our enemies?

First of all, we must remember that sin is not against us. The sin is against God. God created man in His own image, to love Him and to be altogether faithful to Him. And man has rebelled against God; man as it were is shaking his fist at God and is going his own way. The sin is against God. And it is God's holy justice that is being violated, not our justice.

Now we stand as part of the sin problem. We are sinners saved by grace, true. But we are fellow human beings. And we don't know whom God has planned to save. We don't know God's elective decrees at all. And so God simply says we are to love our enemies. We are to love all of the unsaved. And we leave the justice of God and the wrath of God and the hatred of God to God. That's His department, because the sin is against Him, not against us.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Camping

Predestination Explained (731B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I called to discuss witnessing. I've heard skeptics say, "If I'm elected to be a Christian, if I'm supposed to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and God does the saving, then I don't have to do anything. If I'm elected to be saved, I'll be saved; if I'm not elected to be saved, I won't be."

HC: Let me set up a human analogy. Let's look at that question a little bit. Suppose that you were having a picnic along with a lot of other people of your church. And it was a long ways away, way up in the mountains, and it was a long ways away from a town or from any transportation. And you were all brought there by buses, and the buses were going to come very late in the day to bring you home again. And you were all having a happy time together.

And then let's suppose that in the city, in the middle of the day, somehow the message got through that that mountain was a volcano, and at any moment it was going to erupt. And if it erupted it would destroy everyone that was at that picnic. This is a hypothetical story; we can paint it any way that we want. But I think it will serve the purpose.

But it just happens that the buses that had taken up all the people had been sent off on another mission. That's the reason they didn't stay there; they had to take another group of people to another location. And they would not be back for several hours. And yet the information was that that volcano could erupt at any moment, and it was absolutely desperate that they be taken down.

Well, there was one automobile in town, and maybe ten people could ride in that automobile. And so the mayor of the town was quickly going to dispatch that automobile at least to save ten people from that volcano. But now all the city fathers are gathered together, to figure out, "Who are we going to save?" There are two hundred people up there, and the car will only hold ten.

And so they quickly decided. They made a list of the ten people that they really felt it was most important to save. They were the ones who were to be put into the automobile. And the rest would just have to perish up there, because there was no more room.

And so they quickly sent the automobile, as fast as possible, up the side of the mountain, up to the picnic site. And the driver came running up, and he said, "Look, this is a volcano we're on, and it's going to erupt at any moment. I'm sorry, I can't save all of you. But there are ten of you that I can save. That's the most that I can carry down the mountainside."

Now you were one of the picnickers up there, and you heard this statement. And you realized that this driver was for real. This was not just a joke. You really sensed that indeed you were right on the edge of death, that this volcano could erupt at any moment. And so you stood there, and you thought, "That's really something. Only ten of us can be saved. I wonder if I'm one of the ten. Well, it doesn't really make any difference. If I'm one of the ten he's going to name me. On the other hand, if I'm not one of the ten, I guess I'm just going to die here."

Well, I don't really think that that's what you'd do. I think that if you really understood that that volcano was going to erupt, and you knew that you weren't interested in dying right then, you're going to be running over to that driver, saying, "Hey! Am I one of the elect? Is there any way I can get in that car? If the ten are on there, can I get on the roof? Is there any way that I can possibly get down?" I mean, you just don't want to die. And so whether you're elect or not, you're going to use every means possible to try to be included in the group that's going to go down the mountainside.

Now I think that that is analogous to the way we're going to react to the Gospel. Whether we're one of God's elect or not is not the question. The fact is that if we

begin to recognize that we are unsaved and that we're headed for eternal damnation, and this is real, that this is not just a play of some kind, or just some theological conversation, but that God really means what He says, then we're going to begin to cry out, "Oh God, I don't know whether I'm one of Your elect, but I know this. I don't want to go to hell. God, have mercy on me. Is there any way that I can be saved?"

Now the Bible promises that those who seek Him with all their heart will surely find Him, even as we read in Revelation 3:20 that He will come in and sup with those who open the door to Him. And so indeed, when we begin to cry out to God this way, we're going to be saved.

But then after we're saved we wonder, "Why was I so stirred in my heart when I heard the Gospel? Why did I become so afraid of hell? Why did I begin to cry out to God this way?" And then I study the Bible and I find that it's because I was one of God's elect, and God was drawing me.

You see, the command to us is not... God doesn't come to us and say, "I've elected some of you, and the rest of you aren't going to be saved. So you just wait and see what God will do." That's not the way that God puts it. God commands us to believe on Him. God commands us to repent of our sins.

CALLER: We believe because of our free will, though.

HC: If it's our free will, then two things must be said. First of all, it means that we're not spiritually dead. The Bible says that we're spiritually dead. We're like spiritual corpses. So how can any man believe of himself? That's the first contradiction you would run into.

Remember when Lazarus was raised from the dead. Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth." Now Lazarus was dead. Did he have a free will? Could he have strength in himself to respond if he wanted to respond? The answer is, absolutely no. He was dead. And yet he did respond, and he did come forth. And in that context Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." This is beautiful language that relates exactly to salvation, because that raising of Lazarus was a picture of salvation. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (This is verse 25 of John 11, as Jesus stands outside of the tomb of Lazarus.) He's saying that as He stands there prepared to raise up Lazarus from the dead. And so this is a picture of our salvation. We are spiritually as dead as Lazarus was physically dead. And even as he could never claim any free will, that he made a decision to come out of that grave, so we can't claim any free will.

Moreover, there's something even more ominous than that. And that is that if Christ has paid for our sins at the cross, and now He comes to us with the offer of salvation, and it depends upon the action of our free will to turn to the Lord Jesus, so that effectively the salvation program would be stopped unless we would respond, and if we didn't respond, then that's too bad, we're going to hell, then effectively we have a gospel of grace plus works. We've got a gospel of the grace of God in going to the cross for our sins, and our work in completing that salvation program. And any gospel of grace plus works is a gospel that will not bring eternal salvation. From everything I read in the Bible that is what I discover. The only Gospel that will bring us salvation is a Gospel of grace alone. Our work made no contribution of any kind. And so on both counts the idea of free will is very very dangerous.

CALLER: Grace is the free gift of God. He offers us eternal life.

HC: Yes.

CALLER: If election is true, then obviously some are elected to hell, right?

HC: No. We have to be careful in our language. The Bible indicates that the whole human race is on the path to hell. Every last human being ought to go to hell. The Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one." And "the wages of sin is death." And the death that God has in view is eternal damnation. And God is under obligation to save not a single one of us. So He did not elect us to go to hell. We go to hell because of our sins. We go to hell because we've rebelled against God. We go to hell to pay for our sins.

Now He elected a people for Himself out of those who were going to hell, by taking upon Himself their sins and giving them eternal life. And that is election. Now why God, in His sovereign grace, elected one and not another, that's entirely God's business. God says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy."

CALLER: So some are not elected to eternal life, right?

HC: The major part of the human race is not elected to eternal life. That is exactly true.

CALLER: The second part of my question was, how do you witness to people about this? Usually you witness to people by telling them about grace as a free gift of God, and that they should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And you try to explain the Gospel to them.

HC: You see, it depends on what kind of a gospel we're presenting. If we're simply trying to get them to join up, to join the club, then we present to them as beautiful a picture as we can of what salvation is, that indeed we won't be miserable any longer, we'll find a purpose in our life, we will have eternal life Jesus will be our Friend, He will be our Savior, whatever that means. And all we have to do is "accept" Him; all we have to do is invite Him into our hearts. And then we will be part of this great wonderful Christian Gospel.

But that is not the Gospel of the Bible. The Gospel of the Bible goes this way. We go to the unsaved world and we say, "The Bible declares that you are sinners, and that all men are sinners, and that we're headed for eternal damnation. And the Bible tells us that you must repent of your sins, and that you must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as your only possible way of escape. The Bible says, 'How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?' The Bible indicates that God's wrath dwells on mankind and on you as a sinner. And you are under the hatred of God as a sinner, even though God has bestowed His love upon you in the sense that He has given you good health and placed you in a beautiful world, and has given you all these blessings. But God's hatred and wrath are upon you because of your sins. But you can know the love of God if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you cry out to Him for mercy, and if you seek Him as your Savior and Lord. And you can pray that God will give you that faith and that God will give you that desire to repent of your sins." That's the Gospel presentation that ought to be sent forth.

CALLER: Okay, thank you. Let me ask one more short question. I once heard you say that the unsaved would not go to hell until the second resurrection, and they would be in soul sleep, or whatever, from when they die until the time of the second resurrection.

HC: Yes.

CALLER: Is there a verse that shows that, I believe that the Lazarus story in Luke 16 is a parable, and a parable is never as bad as the real thing. So if it is a parable, that means that the man will be in eternal torment from the day he dies, forever, worse than the parable.

HC: You see, in Luke 16 it talks about the rich man dying, and yet he has a tongue. He wants Lazarus to come there

with a drop of water for his tongue. And Lazarus has died, and yet he has a finger. When a believer dies his body goes in the tomb. The Bible is very clear about that. And when an unsaved man dies his body goes in the tomb. And so immediately we sense that chronology certainly is not in view in this.

And we know that this cannot be after the Judgment Day because the rich man still has 5 brothers that he's talking about, that he would like to tell about what had happened to him. And so the whole business becomes confusing if we try to look at it chronologically.

But when we look at it from the standpoint of the other spiritual truths that shine through, then it begins to make sense. God is teaching, for example, that what appears on this side of the grave is not what really is. Ultimately Lazarus was far more blessed than the rich man, even though from appearances it looked like the rich man had all the blessings. And there are such truths as the fact that once you die there is no crossing over. Your eternal destiny is sealed forever. And so on and so on.

But then we look at a verse like Rev. 20:5: "The rest of the dead lived not (that is, did not have conscious existence) until the thousand years were ended." Or we look at a verse like Psalm 115:17: "The dead do not praise God, nor do any that go down into silence." And the context there is that it's talking about the spiritually dead, because the next verse says, "But we will praise God from this time forth and forevermore." Those who are spiritually alive praise God now and continue to praise God even after we have physically died.

And so the Bible is very clear. And when we think of the justice of God, we can see why this is. God first of all has to officially put on trial those who are to be cast into hell. They are to stand before the judgment throne, to answer for their sins. Now what kind of justice would this be if a man died and then immediately would begin to suffer the torments of hell, when he had not even been tried as yet? Even though we are consigned to hell, nevertheless God's justice demands that there be an official arraignment. And that is what Revelation 20, for example, speaks about, as it says that there was a great white throne, and God sat on it, and the dead stood before that and were judged by that which was written in the books, and then they were cast into the lake of fire.

CALLER: What's the point of the parable having a man in torment from the day he went down there?

HC: Because in Luke 16 God is not giving us a chronological understanding of the details of what will happen first and next and so on. But rather He is giving us the quality of what it means to be a child of God, or not a child of God...the fact that the rich man had everything going for him in this life, and he has nothing going for him in eternity, the fact that Lazarus had nothing going for him in this life, but he has everything going for him in the life hereafter, the fact that once you have died there is no crossing over - if you're going to end up in hell, you cannot ever get into Heaven, the fact that if we don't believe in the Bible, then neither will we believe in some sign. In other words, God wants us to walk by faith and trust what He has declared in His Word, not in signs and wonders. These are the characteristics or the truths that God is developing in this parable.

But he is not in this parable attempting to give us a step by step development of what happens when we die. If that were so, this parable would be in violent contradiction not only to itself, but also in contradiction to everything else the Bible teaches about what happens when we die. Right within its own context it says that this rich man died. And yet here in hell he's got a tongue. In fact, it says

that the rich man died and was buried. And then it says that he has a tongue. That's a contradiction. And so by that God is indicating that we should not look for a chronology here; just look for quality.

AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Do All Infants Go to Heaven When They Die? (175C)

CALLER: Is there a Scripture in the Bible where it states what happens to babies or little children that die?

HC: The question is asked, "What happens to babies that die in infancy? Where do they go?" Actually, the Bible gives a wonderful promise to parents who are believers. If one of the parents is a believer, God says, "I will be a God to you and your children."

When David's little baby died, he said, "I shall go to be with him." He claimed God's promise that his baby had gone to Heaven, because God says that He looks with special favor on our children, because we are born again believers.

In I Corinthians 7:14 or 15 it says that because we are a believer, our children are holy. That is, they are set apart. Now not every baby of every born again believer is born again, and only as they grow up will we see exactly which ones are born again, as we see the evidence of the grace of God in their lives.

But when they die in infancy, we have the promise that He is a God to our children, to us and to our children, and so we can cling to the promise that He will have looked with favor upon our child, even as David did.

Now in the case of the baby of an unsaved parent, there is no such promise. The Bible teaches that "there is none righteous, not one." The Bible teaches that we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The Bible teaches that we're conceived and born in sin, and that the wicked are wicked from the womb, from birth.

And so the baby of an unsaved parent is born an unsaved baby. We know this, because you look at the world, and it's made up of unsaved people. If they grew up as unsaved people, it means that they were unsaved as babies, because if they had become believers at some point, then they never would have lost that salvation.

Now we may not, however, say, categorically and absolutely, "Therefore, since they are not saved, if they die in infancy they go to hell." We can't say that, either, because the Bible indicates that God, in His sovereign good pleasure, can reach down and save a baby from unsaved parents. We have an example of this in the case of Jeroboam, the first king over the ten tribes of Israel. And he was a very wicked king, so wicked, in fact, that God decreed that the whole family of Jeroboam would not experience burial, to indicate that God's curse was upon them.

But one child died as a child, and was buried. In other words, it was an indication that God's favor was upon him. And the Bible says that there was something good found in him. Now the only good that this child could have experienced is the righteousness imputed to him from Christ. And so we may not say that the infant of an unsaved parent went to hell. But neither do we have any assurance that they went to Heaven. They probably went to hell. On the average, they would have gone to hell.

We see this dramatically in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham pled with God, "If there are only ten righteous, will you destroy the city?" And God said, "If there are ten righteous, I will not destroy the city." Now the only way one can be righteous is to be covered by the blood of Christ, to be born again.

Well, the fact is, God did destroy the city, and there were unquestionably hundreds of small children and babies in that city. But they were not named among the righteous.

CALLER: I see. Okay. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

The Age of Accountability (459C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I listen to your program all the time, but tonight I seemed to get a lot of questions. For one thing, you say that you have been a Christian since you've been born?

HC: Let's put it this way. I have never known when I was not a Christian. And so I presume that at a very early age God opened my heart.

CALLER: Yes. Well, that's marvelous. The thing that bothered me tremendously is when you say that babies go to hell. And I don't see anything in the Bible about that. I find that a child is innocent until the accountable age.

HC: You know, let me make two observations, very quickly. First of all, I know that every time the question is raised to me about the eternal destination of babies that die, I know that I hurt lots of people's feelings. And I'm a human being, and I'd like to be able to believe that all babies go to Heaven, also. But I have to read the Bible and be true to the Word of God.

Secondly, there are many who talk about the age of accountability. Now that is not found in the Bible. That is a doctrine that is taught that has no Biblical validity of any kind. There is nothing in the Bible that speaks about an age of accountability.

CALLER: Now where does it say that babies go to hell?

HC: Like I indicated, when we look at such passages as Psalm 58, where God speaks about the wicked going astray from their mother's womb. They're under the wrath of God, you see, from the moment they're born. When we look at the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, where God indicated that there none righteous in those cities, except the family of Lot. And if there are none righteous, then they're subject to hell.

Another way of looking at it is this way. We know that the Bible teaches very clearly that once we are born again we cannot lose our salvation. We know this. And we also know that the only way to go to Heaven is by being born again. There is no way to the Father except through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now if you looked at a group of a thousand people who lived and died unsaved, it would mean that as babies they were unsaved. And had they died as little children or as babies, they would have been just as unsaved as they would have been as adults.

CALLER: I would have to see that in scripture. I can't believe that. I can believe as adults. I have little grandchildren of six and seven years old who have made decisions for the Lord. But I can't believe that a tiny baby, that has no awareness of the sin in his life, the sin that he is born with.

HC: Well, you see, it isn't a matter of what I can or cannot believe. When we go to the Bible, we have to be very careful that we do not design the salvation program. Now I'd like to design a salvation program. In myself there are a lot of things that I'd like to say about this. But I know this, that my mind is not trustworthy. I am part of the sinful human race, and I cannot really look at myself objectively, nor the human race objectively. I don't really understand the perfection or the holiness of God. I don't know the wonder of the perfect justice of God. These are things that my sinful

mind is not capable of understanding altogether.

So the only thing I can do is patiently read the Bible. And I'll find occasionally things in the Bible that I don't like at all. And yet, because God has so declared, I must accept them, even though I don't like it.

Let me say, first of all, that under no circumstance may we say categorically of a baby who dies in infancy and his parents are unsaved that that baby went to hell. That would be contrary to the Bible, because God gives us an instance, for example, of a baby that was born to very sinful parents, parents that were so sinful that God makes a big description of how His curse was upon them, so they would not even be buried. This was the family of Jeroboam, the first king over the ten tribes of Israel. And yet Jeroboam had a young son, in this very sinful household, who died in infancy. And he was buried, and God said He took him because He had found something good in that child. Well, the only thing that was good there would be what God had put there. In other words, that would be language to indicate that God had saved that child.

And so there's an instance where in the most sinful conditions God chose to save this baby. But God does not make that a promise. He does make a promise to the children of saved parents. He does say to them, "I will be a God to you and your children." And so when David's baby died in infancy, he could say very confidently, "I will go to be with him." In other words, he expects to see his son in Heaven.

But an unsaved person does not have that promise. And you may as well read this. It's ugly language. I don't like it, but God gave it to us and we can't turn away from it. Psalm 58:3 & 4: "The wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent. They are like the death adder that stoppeth her ears." Now that doesn't sound nice at all. It's terrible language.

When we see the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the fact that all the babies were killed right along with the adults, because God said there are no righteous here, when we see the destruction of the world in Noah's day, so that the babies were killed right along with the adults, and the only people that were saved were those who were in the Ark, we don't like these things, but that is the fact.

Now incidentally, this is the reason that we have a compelling desire to send for the Gospel, because the Gospel is the Gospel of salvation. And marvelously, if a parent turns to the Lord Jesus Christ, and if a parent becomes saved, then God has special blessings for his family, too. Then God comes to that family and says, "I will be a God to you and your children. And if you bring them up in the fear and the nurture of the Lord, in their old age they'll not depart from it. In other words, God has special blessings that flow to the family of the believer."

CALLER: And if a believer's child never accepts the Lord, then that promise has kind of . . .

HC: But you see, the problem is that we as parents are not faithful to our commitment to bring up our children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord. Even at best we do a poor job of it, and I admit that it's only God's grace that any of our children are saved.

But the fact is that with parents who earnestly claim these promises and diligently work at bringing up their children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord, they'll also find that a high percentage of their children will eventually show that they, too, have become born again, either as infants or later in life. Sometimes these promises don't find their full fruition until a child has turned the age of sixty or

seventy. We have to remember that God is very patient in these matters.

CALLER: I would want more scripture on the babies. Do you have more than the Psalms?

HC: Yes. You see, in Romans, for example, we read, "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. Now the only ones who are made alive are those who are in Christ. And we only become in Christ when we are born again. The New Testament says that there's no way to the Father except through the Lord Jesus Christ."

And so salvation is necessary for the baby in the womb just as much as it is for the adult. There are no two paths to God, two reconciliations. We must all come through the Lord Jesus Christ. And if the babies that are born are born again, then they'll grow up as born again people. You aren't born again for a little while when you're a baby, and then grow up to show that you're still a slave of Satan. That's an impossibility.

CALLER: Well, that's eternal salvation, and I believe in eternal salvation.

HC: Then you can see how consistent we have to be in all of this. If babies are born saved, then they're going to grow up saved. There's no way that a baby can be born saved and then show up later on as being eternally lost. That's an impossibility.

CALLER: How can he be born saved when he can't acknowledge that he is saved through Christ?

HC: Because the work of salvation is altogether God's work. Now in the case of an adult, or an older child, the evidence of salvation is seen in the fact that we reach out in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, and we turn away from our sins. If faith and works are not there, then it shows that we're still dead.

CALLER: Good-by.

HC: Thank you. Good night.

ETERNAL SECURITY

What Does it Mean to "Fear the Lord"? (142D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I've been reading in the Old Testament, and there's so much in it about the fear of the Lord. And you hear so little today about it. And what I've heard is often conflicting. And I wondered if you could spend a few minutes on it. And I'll take the answer on the air. How should we regard the phrase? What does it really mean to us?

HC: All right. I'll speak to that. The question is raised concerning the phrase, "the fear of the Lord." What does the Bible mean by this?

Now in the Old Testament we read, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." And then we also read that "the fear of the Lord is to depart from evil." The word fear is used in two senses in the Bible. But ultimately it is pointing to the same total conclusion.

We are to realize that the Lord is Eternal God, that He is His Divine Majesty, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and that we must answer to Him for all that we do. Now before we are saved, we ought to be in abject fear. We ought to be in terror of Him, because the Bible says that we are going to be condemned for our sins. We are going to come into the hands of an angry God and be cast into hell because of our sins. And so an unsaved person ought to really be in terror of Him.

Now God draws the curtain aside and gives us a look at Judgment Day, when Christ comes. And in Revelation 6 you see that the rich and the poor and the slaves and the free, and all men are calling to the rocks to crush them, and for the hills to hide them, because the day of God's wrath has come. The day of

the wrath of the Lamb has come. They are in abject terror of God. They never showed any fear of God while they were living, because they disdained God. They were in rebellion against God. They would not recognize God. But ultimately they must recognize Him. And then that fear will be a horrible fear, because God's wrath will be poured out upon them.

Now this is the way that mankind ought to look at God, with just great fear and trembling, because of the fact that we have repudiated Him. We have disobeyed Him. We've rebelled against Him. And rightly we deserve His wrath. But God in His mercy, while He comes as a wrathful God, and His wrath is upon the unsaved, He also comes with a message of love, that whosoever will cry out to God in their spiritual bankruptcy, will admit their total inability to do right, and will repent of their sins and believe in God, that there is a way, through the Lord Jesus Christ, to have forgiveness.

Then we can know God's love, and we can know that the wrath of God has all been taken care of in our lives. Now the fear of the Lord, which before we were saved could have been one of abject terror, now is one of love and of friendship, but still of honor and respect incidentally, even before we're saved, the fear of the Lord ought to include these qualities of fear and respect and reverence. But of course, in the unsaved, this is not found, either.

But now that we are saved, there is this honor and this respect and this high regard for the holiness of God, for the person of His Majesty. But it is not the fear of God's wrath. That has all been taken away. We read in Romans 8:15: "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery, to fall back into fear. But you have received the spirit of sonship, when we cry, Abba, Father. It is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God." The terror is gone. The insecurity, the terrible feeling that something awful is going to happen should all be gone.

Now we are secure in Christ. But we still have the fear of the Lord in the sense that it is the beginning of wisdom. We have the desire to depart from evil. We have the desire to live God's way, because He is our King, and He is our Lord. Our fear has had eliminated from it all that is terror, all that is trauma. But that which is honor and respect and regard still remains.

I hope that this is at least somewhat of an outline of how the Bible looks at this question of the fear of the Lord.

Can You Lose Your Salvation? (197A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: My question about salvation is, once you accept Christ, are you saved forever? This question came up in our house. I said that if you blatantly disregarded Christ and went back into the world, and Christ happened to come that day, you were not saved. Was that the correct answer?

HC: Let me ask you a question, to help you think this out. When you talk about being saved, what are we saved from?

CALLER: We are saved from, now, let's see.

HC: What are we saved from? Are we saved from our misery? Are we saved from our loneliness? What are we saved from?

CALLER: Well, not saved from our loneliness. We're saved so that we can be with Christ.

HC: Yes, but we're saved from something. You know, if someone is drowning in the river, and you jump in, and you save that person, you have saved that person from drowning.

CALLER: We're saved from the devil.

HC: We're saved from the devil. Do you really think that that is all we are saved from?

CALLER: Well, I say that we are saved from all the things that are not good for us, that we will go to live with Christ.

HC: All right. Now let's see if we can expand that a little farther. The Bible teaches that "the wages of sin is death." And it's referring to eternal condemnation by God. And the Bible teaches that all of us are sinners.

Now therefore, the wrath of God abides on us before we're saved. We're under the condemnation of God. We are to spend an eternity in hell for our sins. Now this is what we're saved from. We're saved from hell. We're saved from the wrath of God. We're saved from Judgment Day. And of course we're also saved from Satan. But Satan isn't the biggest threat. The biggest threat is the wrath of God that we have to pay for, although how awful that is, we can't really know. The Bible uses some horribly ugly language, to describe how awful this really is.

All right. Now if in order for Christ to save me it was necessary that He take upon Himself all of my sins, and in fact the Bible says He became sin for me, and He was found guilty and He was punished for my sins (the wrath of God came upon Him - that's what happened when He went to the cross), now all of my sins have been paid for, every one of my sins. When Christ went to the cross, He looked down the corridors of time, and He saw me. And He saw every sin I would ever commit, before I was saved or after I was saved, every single sin. And He took upon Himself all of these sins, and they were all paid for.

CALLER: For the rest of your life?

HC: There is no way that I can ever be threatened by hell. There's no way that I can ever come under condemnation. That's why the Bible says so confidently, in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Or in John 5:24 it says that "those who hear His words and believe on Him have eternal life, and they do not come into judgment. They have passed from death into life."

If you could think of a sin that I could commit that could make me lose this salvation, then it would mean that God is lying to me. Then it would mean that He didn't really become sin for me. He hadn't really paid for all of my sins, because there was one sin He didn't cover.

CALLER: What is the point in our trying to be like Christ and to live like Christ?

HC: The fact is that when we actually have become born again, we have become a brand new creature in our souls. We have experienced the resurrection of our souls. And in that part of our life, which is as real a part of us as our bodies, we're a new person.

Now in our new soul, we never want to sin again. I John 3:9 teaches that that which is born of God cannot sin. The only reason we still sin as believers is that our body hasn't been saved yet. And that's also a real part of us. But in our soul we never want to sin again.

First of all, there is an ongoing earnest desire, because I have my new soul, to live for Him. This is the desire of my heart, to live for Christ. It's as natural with me now as it was once natural, with every fiber of my body, to want to live in sin.

Now in my soul I want to live for Christ. In my body I still lust after sin. So there's a conflict going on. So what happens? Let's say that I begin to sin. I tell a lie, or I begin to have lustful thoughts, or whatever. Immediately I feel very uncomfortable. In my soul I'm doing what is contrary to my new nature, and there's a struggle that's going on. And I can't stay with this sin very long before I begin to cry out to God, "Oh God, have

mercy on me. Father, help me to get victory over this sin. How can I live this way?"

As a born again believer, I don't want to live in sin. More than that, if I would persist in sin, I must remember that God has bought me by the price of His blood. I am His possession, and He indwells me in the Person of the Holy Spirit. And God has something to say about this. And so He would begin to chastise. He'll begin to deal with me, in order that I'll straighten this matter out. It is not God's program that I am to live in sin.

And I don't want to live in sin, either, even though I am troubled by it because I still have a body that lusts after sin.

You see, the Gospel is not one of fear. A lot of people are led to believe, "Now look. You're saved. But you watch out now. You be sure that you keep all the commandments, because if you don't keep all the commandments, you're going to lose your salvation." Now that isn't what the Bible teaches. We aren't under fear. We're not under duress. We keep the commandments because we love to keep the commandments, because we belong to Christ.

We read the Bible, as a born again believer, if we've really become born again, and it's not a threat to us. We read it knowing that it reveals sin in our lives, and we'll never be perfect. But we're glad that it does. And we have a real desire to be obedient to it as we read it.

CALLER: In other words, what you're saying is that when we really accept Christ, we want to do right, and we can't lose. And if we just blatantly go on, we have just never really accepted Christ.

HC: It means we've never become born again. You see, the language of "accepting Christ" is not really Biblical language. Nowhere does it talk about accepting Christ. It talks about believing in Him. That means trusting Him with our whole life, so that He is Lord of our life, so that He is King over our life, and we trust Him that all of our sins have been forgiven. Our will has become surrendered to Him.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: I hope this will help a little bit.

CALLER: It will help, and with all the passages I'm reading, I'm certain to get a real clear understanding of this. I thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Eternal Security (435A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like you to discuss eternal security, and the idea that you can fall from grace. And also, about the spirituality of music in the church. Some church music seems melancholy, and in some churches now we have a lot of rock music, religious rock. And one other point I'd like you to discuss would be, did God know that Adam was going to fall, that man was going to fall?

HC: All right. Let me ask you one question concerning your first question, eternal security. If someone asked you (if you believe you're saved), "What are you saved from?" how would you answer him?

CALLER: I'm saved from eternal damnation.

HC: You're saved from eternal damnation, good answer. Now why is it that you're saved from eternal damnation? In other words, what was going to bring you to eternal damnation in the first place?

CALLER: Because Christ died on the cross.

HC: Why did that save you from eternal damnation?

CALLER: I accepted Him into my heart.

HC: Why did the fact that you accepted Him into your heart save you from

eternal damnation? In other words, what did Christ's dying on the cross, or the fact that you accepted Him, have to do with the fact that you're saved from eternal damnation? You notice there's a gap of some kind there, isn't there?

CALLER: I know that we have to follow in good works. In Ephesians 2:8-10 it talks about that.

HC: All right. We have to do good works after we're saved. But does that save us from eternal damnation?

CALLER: It says, "If you love Me you will keep My commandments."

HC: "If you love Me you will keep My commandments." Okay. So by keeping His commandments, does that insure that we will be saved from eternal damnation?

CALLER: Well, we're saved by His grace.

HC: We're saved by His grace. We're saved from eternal damnation by His grace. All right, but what does that mean, that we've been saved by His grace?

CALLER: Through faith.

HC: Through faith. What does that mean? You see, the missing ingredient in our discussion, I purposely asked you these questions to get you thinking, because once you understand salvation you'll automatically know the answer to the question of eternal security.

Those who believe we can fall from grace, that we can lose our salvation, do not, I'm afraid, understand what salvation really is. They don't really understand what happened that our salvation was accomplished.

Now let's start at the beginning. Here I stand. I'm a sinner. It's because of my sin that I must go to hell. Is that true?

CALLER: That's true, yes.

HC: "The wages of sin is death." That is the reason I'm condemned to hell. Now the only way that I can not go to hell is that something has to be done about the judgment of God that rightly ought to come against me because of my sins. Someone has to take care of that situation.

And that's what Christ did when He went to the cross. The Bible says He became sin for me. And He was found guilty for my sins, and God poured out His wrath on Him as payment for my sins. That is why when Christ went to the cross He made possible my salvation, or He made possible the fact that I will not suffer eternal damnation, because He suffered eternal damnation on my behalf, as my substitute. He became sin for me. He took my guilt for all of my sins, and paid for my guilt. So therefore no guilt can be imputed to me any longer. Is that clear?

CALLER: Yes.

HC: Now what sin would I have to commit in order to lose my salvation? What sin would it be? When you stop to think of it, there is no sin, is there? Because Christ became sin for me. He took all of my sins, and paid for them. So there's no way that I could lose my salvation.

More than that, when I was saved God declared that I have eternal life. Now what does that mean? Is that just a figure of speech? I have eternal life, the seed or the possibility of eternal life exists within me? Or do I actually have eternal life? The Bible says I have eternal life.

The Bible also says I'm born again. The Bible also says I'm a new creature in Christ. Well, how is all of this? The Bible teaches that in my soul, or in my spirit, I have experienced the resurrection. I have received my resurrected soul. I've been raised with Him. Now it didn't happen in my body, but it happened in my soul.

At death what happens? In my body I can't go into Heaven, because I still have my sin-cursed body. But lo and behold, in my soul I do go into Heaven, don't I? Because my soul has already experienced eternal life. Now if I have eternal life,

then I can't die. Otherwise my life would not be eternal. So from that vantage point I could never lose my salvation.

Or again, Jesus Himself said in John 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice and follow Me, and I have given them eternal life, and they shall never perish. And no one shall snatch them out of My hand." These are the promises, you see. And there are many other promises of a similar nature.

CALLER: In Revelation it talks about being blotted out of the Lamb's Book of Life.

HC: Not out of the Lamb's Book of Life, but it speaks about being blotted out of the Book of Life. At least in Psalm 68 it speaks of that.

You see, in Adam we all begin in the Book of Life. Because Adam was the head of the whole human race, in a real sense we were in his loins. And he began without sin, he began as an eternal being who would live forever with God. In the day that he sinned, of course, the seeds of death were sown in him, he experienced physical death, and he also was estranged spiritually from God, in spiritual death. And that became the lot of all mankind.

The Bible uses the figure that we are in the Book of Life, but if we die wicked, that is, unsaved, then we cannot remain in the Book of Life. We are included amongst those who are cast in to hell. Or it uses another figure, that we are enrolled in the Lamb's Book of Life, if we are saved.

CALLER: Okay. There is a man who has led an extremely Godly life. He has professed Christ openly in the church, been baptized in water. As far as those in the congregation, we see this man as a Godly man, as being saved, a born again Christian. And he leads a Godly life for several years. But then he backslides. (And it talks about backsliding in II Peter, I believe.) And then let's say now he's backslidden, and Christ comes back. At that point is that man saved?

HC: Now remember, when a man is saved he is born again. He's received his resurrected soul. Now there are all kinds of people in the church today (and I don't know who they are, but God knows them, we can't point the figure at anyone else, but God knows who they are, and the Bible speaks of these) who really believe they're saved. But actually they're not saved. They are really making like Christians. They're trying to do things that Christians do, and desperately they're trying to live a life that is pleasing to God so that God will look with kindness upon them. But they have never personally broken before God, admitting their own sinful rottenness and cried out to God for mercy. They don't really know what it is to be born again. They don't really know what it is to trust altogether only on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. There are all kinds of people in the church today who are trusting in their good works in one sense or another. And if we do that in any sense at all, then we're not saved.

Now as near as we can tell, we think they're saved, because they look just like someone who is saved. As long as they continue to stay that way in the church, and if they died that way, we would have to assume that they went to Heaven. But frequently they don't continue that faithfully. The temptations of materialism or of pleasure or some other sin come along, and they fall away. And so then we have the evidence that they were never saved. They were never saved, no matter how holy they may have looked.

If they were truly born again, and they began to fall into sin, by the temptations of lust or materialism or pleasure, or whatever, they could not continue in that sin, because in their new soul, their resurrected soul, they would be violated. They would be so troubled, they would be so

abhorred by their sin as they got deeper and deeper into it, that finally they couldn't stand it. They would cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me. How could I go this way?"

If someone claims to be a believer and lives like a believer for many years, and now he falls into sin, and in the face of what the Bible says, in the face of what the elders of the church admonish him about, he continues in his sin and he excuses his sin, and alibis for his sin, the likelihood is that he's not born again at all. That's incongruous. That's an impossibility for him to live this way.

CALLER: Okay. So he was professing Christ, but he wasn't possessed by Christ.

HC: He was professing Christ, but he had never become born again.

CALLER: That makes sense.

HC: All right. Now your other two questions. Let me answer the last question first. Did God know that Adam was going to sin? Absolutely yes. We read in Ephesians 1:4 that we were chosen in Christ from before the foundations of the earth. We read in Revelation 13 that the Lamb of God was slain from the foundations of the earth.

The whole program of salvation was carefully developed and designed and outlined, down to its most minute detail, before God ever created the heavens and the earth. God has never been surprised by anything that has happened on this earth.

The other question that's been raised is concerning music. A lot of Christian music today is of the rock variety, or something between the rock variety and some other kind of contemporary music. Just how does all of this fit into the plan of God? Or how are we to relate to it?

The Bible teaches in Ephesians 5:18, "Don't be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit, addressing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Now the content of this language really is that it's talking about music that is related to God. And if it's related to God it's going to be related to His word. Putting it in another way, it's going to be holy music. It is going to be music that is set apart from the music of the world in a very distinctive way, because it is the music that is conveying the thoughts that relate man to a holy God, a just God. It's going to convey the love of God, and all of the other attributes that we find concerning God in the Bible.

A lot of the music of the world, you'll find, is like the painting that you see, where someone apparently splashes some different colors on the canvas. I was in an art studio a few weeks ago, and they had some paintings on display. One painting was for sale for \$1,500, and my 4-year-old grandson could have done just as well, I think. It was really a pain to behold. I thought it was a travesty on the whole art profession. Well, that's my personal feeling about it.

Actually, that painting, however, was indicating the confused and bewildered and mixed-up nature of the soul of the artist. And music is frequently the same way. A lot of the rock music, and a lot of even Christian music that we hear, is conveying the confusion that exists within the soul of the composer.

The music we ought to sing, however, is not music that's confused and messed up and mixed up. It ought to be music that identifies with the Bible, with the holiness of God, with the majesty of God, with the greatness of God, with the love of God, with the wonder of God. The most sublime, the most beautiful, the most marvelous music on the face of the earth ought to be the Christian music. It's the music that soothes the soul. It's not the music that gets us all upset inside and agitated, and so on. That's not Christian music. Gospel music ought to be majestic, it ought to be holy

music, set apart from the music of the world in a very distinctive fashion.

Now of course because music very frequently has lyrics, there are voices that are singing, we have a double opportunity to make it great and grand music, because in the lyrics God can be praised. In the words that are offered the will of God can be articulated in a very beautiful way.

That's the goal of Christian music. And when we view a lot of the music that calls itself Christian, we have to say no, no, no. It will never make it.

FREE WILL

Free Will Versus Predestination (391B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I would like to ask you about something you were talking about just a few minutes ago, about predestination, and those being chosen from the foundation of the world. Is it not true that we have been given the power of choice, that we have our own will? I don't understand how these two things are operative at the same time. If the Gospel is for everyone and we have choice, then how could we be predestinated? That would seem like He has a few chosen out. How can it be for everyone if only certain people are predestinated?

HC: Let me read to you from Ephesians 2:1-3. He's talking here about those who became saved: "And you hath He quickened, hath He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, where in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air (that's according to Satan), the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conduct in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Now that's my condition before I was saved.

Now you say we are told that we have a free will. All right. Now let's examine these three verses. What is my will interested in? The Bible says here, I'm interested in the lusts of the flesh, I'm a child of wrath, I'm a slave of Satan, I walk according to his power, I'm dead. I'm spiritually dead. So can a corpse decide to become alive? You see the problem of our will?

We like to say we have a free will. This is the deceitfulness of sin. We like to say, "I have the freedom of choice." But the fact is, our minds, our whole beings, are sold out to Satan. And we're so rebellious against God that unless God would intervene in our life and qualify our will, we would never turn to Him.

CALLER: But there are obviously people who do not turn. Then he is only making certain people able to be turned?

HC: As a matter of fact, there is nobody who will turn to Him. And as a matter of fact, yes, God in his sovereign good pleasure decides whom He is going to save.

CALLER: But how can the Gospel be for everyone then?

HC: Because God ordains this to be. Let's look at the picture. God comes, first of all, to the human race, and puts them in this beautiful creation, marvelous beyond words, and gives all kinds of evidence everywhere that there's a Creator God. But mankind says, "We don't want You. We'll go our own way. We have our evolutionary theories. We have our own ideas about what this universe is. We're not interested in God." God ought to stamp us all out and send us to hell just for that.

Then God comes along with a magnificent salvation program by which anyone at all who would respond to

Christ can be saved. And again mankind says, "Forget it, God. We're not interested. We don't care about Your salvation program, as loving and as gracious and as merciful as You say it is. We don't want it." And for the second reason God ought to send the whole human race to hell, every last man, woman and child. We don't deserve salvation at all, ever. We are altogether rebellious.

But God says, "I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail [I'm going to have a people for Myself, whether they want it or not]." And so He, in His sovereign good pleasure, makes a decision to save one of these human beings. Now is He being unkind to the rest? No. The rest don't want this salvation. It's His good pleasure if He wants to save one. And in order to save this one, He had to pay an enormous price. God Himself has to endure the wrath of God, the equivalent of an eternity in hell, to pay for this man's sins.

So nobody can complain about it. It's God's sovereign good pleasure to do this. And so it's just incomprehensible that God in His sovereign love would decide to save as many as He has.

This is the message of salvation. Now suppose that you're unsaved, and you say, "Well, that means that if I'm not one of God's elect, there's no point in even listening to the Gospel. There's no point at all." Well, let's think about this. Suppose that you were in a situation where you were on a ship, let's say, and you struck an iceberg, as the Titanic of old. And suppose the ship's captain quickly made a count of the life boats and found that only 10% of the passengers could be saved. There was only that much space in the life boats, if they were crowded as full as they could be. And so he quickly wired to shore to find out who of the passengers must be saved. And so finally, as quickly as possible, the wire came back with the names of those who could enter the life boats, and nobody else was to enter.

Now you're standing there, and you know that that ship is going to go down any minute, and you know your only safety is in the life boats, and you know that only certain names had been named to go into the life boats. Now what are you going to do? Are you just going to stand quietly by and wonder, "I wonder if my name is going to be called?" Of course you're not. You're going to be clamoring, you're going to be running to the captain, or to anybody else, "Is my name there? Is my name there? I want to be saved, too! I don't want to stay on this ship. I want to be one of these who was named."

And that's exactly the posture we ought to have if we're unsaved. We don't know whether we're one of God's elect. That's beside the question. If we realize that what God is saying is true, then we're going to begin to pray to the Lord, "Oh, Lord, have mercy on me. Lord, have mercy on me. I don't know if I'm one of God's elect, but I know that I don't want to go to hell. I know that I want Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. Oh Lord, save me!"

Now the Bible says that those who seek Him will surely find Him. And this person will become saved. And then, when he begins to search the Bible to find out why he had this enormous desire to be one of God's elect, he will find out that it was because he was one of God's elect. Only those whom God is drawing will ever respond to the Gospel.

Now this is a wonderful, wonderful teaching, because this means that if we have an unsaved loved one who's as hard as nails in his sin, as wicked as he can be, if he's repudiated the Gospel at every turn...look. We can pray for him because if God would choose to save that man or that woman, God can break down the hardest will that you want to name.

Read Romans 9 very carefully. You will find there that it declares that God will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and it depends not upon man's will or exertion.

CALLER: But then we don't have any will of our own to say, "I want this"?

HC: We cannot take one smidgen or ounce of credit for our salvation. We can never say, "I became saved because in my will I decided for Christ." There's no credit we can receive. All we can say is, "I'm saved and I don't understand why God chose me, why He inclined my will." He inclined my will.

When Lazarus was in the tomb, there's no way that Lazarus could respond to the call of Jesus to come forth except Christ qualified him altogether. And that's a tremendous example of our salvation.

CALLER: Well, that is kind of confusing, but all right. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you so much for calling and asking those good questions. Good night.

Does One "Accept Christ"?

(199E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. The last time I heard your program, I heard you make a comment on "accepting Christ," that this wasn't a Biblical statement. Do you recall that conversation? Could you maybe review two or three of the points that you made? I was kind of interested in it. I'll try to take the answer over the air, if I can.

HC: All right.

The question is raised concerning the phrase that is frequently used in bringing the Gospel, which is to encourage people to "accept Christ" as their Savior, as their Lord. Now as I indicated previously, this is not a Biblical statement. In fact, it has overtones, it has implications that are contrary to the Word of God.

It is somewhat compatible with the idea that is also frequently expressed, that God has done everything that He can, and now it's up to you. It's really portraying God as being somewhat impotent, somewhat unable. Some have even argued, "Well, the only reason God is impotent at this particular point is that He self-limited Himself." In other words, He decided, "Well, I'll just go so far, and I won't go any further. And now it's up to you."

It also at least carries an overtone of the idea that it is man's work that really initiates salvation for us. God over here has provided a way of escape. Here is the salvation that He's provided for all mankind. And now, man, it's up to you, by an act of your will, by your work you can be saved. There are all kinds of dangerous suggestions inherent in this phrase, "accept the Lord Jesus Christ," suggestions that are contrary to the Word of God.

The Bible teaches that we cannot work in any sense for our salvation. God is not impotent in relationship to our salvation. We read in John 6, where Christ said in verse 37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me." In other words, here is an agreement within the Godhead, where the Father said, "Look. I have given you these people. I elected them from before the foundations of the earth. And they will come to you." Why? Because it says, "No man cometh unto Me unless the Father who sent Me draws Him," we read in verse 44, "They will come because I will draw them," says the Father.

And then He says in verse 39 of John 6, "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me." In other words, God is sovereign King. He's Lord of lords and King of kings, and there's no human being that is going to remain unsaved if God wants to save him. There is no

suggestion in the scripture that God is limited in His ability to save a man. God has decided who He is going to save, and He will save them.

Now the Bible teaches that we are to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Again and again it emphasizes faith. And faith and believing are two sides of the same coin. We place our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now how do we do this? By a wonderful act of courage on our part? No. By recognizing the horrible truth about ourselves, that we're spiritually bankrupt, that we're dead in our sins, that there is no hope in the path we are following. We've messed it all up, and we're headed for hell. We're under the wrath of God because of our sins. And we simply abandon ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. We hang our life on Him. We trust in Him, that what the Bible says is true, even though we don't understand it and we don't know how it's all going to go together.

And then we even discover that believing on Him, or having faith in Him, is a gift of God. The whole transaction is God's.

Now I think there are at least 2 verses that encourage people to use the language of "accepting Jesus" as Lord and Savior. One of these verses is in John 1:12: "But to all who received Him, who believe in His Name, He gave power to become children of God." And this word receive is looked upon as a word that means that God has supplied the salvation over here, and you are over there. You're still miles apart. But here is the salvation. And now if you'll go over and receive what God has there, then you too can be saved.

Now that is not the Biblical meaning of that word. In John 3:27 we have a commentary on this word receive, the very same word. God declares through John the Baptist, "No one can receive anything except what is given him from Heaven." In other words, if you have a gift that you want to give to someone, and they are sitting in a chair over there, you walk over to that person, and you lay that gift in that person's lap. And he receives it because you have given it to him. You have laid it in his lap. He is a recipient of that gift. He is receiving that gift. But he is not reaching out for it. That is, he is not walking across the room to get it. He is simply the recipient of that gift.

Now notice how this ties in with verse 13 of John 1. In John 1:12 it says, "But to all who received Him [that is, to whom God had made a gift of salvation, and they received what God had given, not as an overt act on their part, but because God was drawing them to Himself], He gave power to become children of God, who were born [now notice] not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The whole transaction was God's.

Okay. Now the other verse that is sometimes used, and in fact very frequently used in bringing the Gospel, is a verse in Revelation 3:20. There we read, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with Me." And so the picture is painted that here is Christ knocking at a man's heart's door . . . knock, knock, knock, knock. And it's completely up to that man to decide whether he wants that Gospel or not. It is completely his decision whether he's going to open that door or not. And that of course matches the kind of an idea that here is salvation that I've provided. You're over there. If you want to walk over and reach for it, then you can have it. Then if you don't it's up to you. I've done all that I can do, and now it's up to you. You see? The same kind of a picture is painted.

But there's a phrase in this verse that has to be recognized, and that phrase is, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

"If anyone hears My voice." "If anyone hears My voice." Ah. Who hears the voice of Christ calling? Just anyone? Is that up to man to finally, ultimately hear His voice?

Well, the Bible teaches that I'm dead. Now a corpse doesn't have very good hearing, does he? A corpse is just a decaying dead thing. And a corpse is never going to hear that voice. And there isn't an unsaved person himself who is not a dead corpse. His hearing is absolutely zero.

Now when Jesus stood outside the tomb of Lazarus, Lazarus was dead. He was a corpse. And Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth." Did Lazarus hear His voice? You bet your life he heard His voice. He heard Christ's voice, and he came forth. "He who has ears to hear, let him open the door, and I will come in to him and eat with him." And so Lazarus heard the voice, and he obeyed. He came out of the tomb. But the only reason he heard Christ's voice is that when Jesus called to him, God also gave him ears to hear.

Now so it is when the Gospel goes forth. There will be those who will hear His voice. And anyone at all who hears His voice will come forth, because the only reason they are hearing His voice is that God the Father is drawing them. God has given them ears to hear.

The Bible repeatedly says, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Only those who are chosen of God, who are born again believers, have ears to hear. And so you can see again that even in Revelation 3:20 the final decision is not man's. It is absolutely not man's. We are not born of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man. We're born of God.

Now if you're unsaved, and you're hearing all this, you can begin to ask, "Well, my, I don't know whether God has opened my ears. I don't know whether I am one of God's chosen ones. But I know this, I'm a sinner. I know this, that I'm unsaved. I know this, that I can't go on this way. And oh Lord, give me ears to hear. Oh Lord, could it be that my spiritual eyes might be opened? Oh Father, could it be that I might have the faith to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

And the very fact that you would begin to pray that way would indicate that God is already drawing you. He is already giving you ears to hear.

GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE

Why Did God Create Man Knowing He Would Sin? (338C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I am a born again believer. God, knowing all things, would He create man knowing he would die a death in which the spirit would be lost? If so, what purpose would like be here? Jesus came to give an abundant life. And I'm kind of concerned about whether God would really create something knowing the end, knowing that man is going to die.

HC: The Bible is very very clear that God knew precisely what was going to happen before He ever created the universe. There were no surprises for God. We read in Ephesians 1:4 that He predestinated us from before the foundation, or He chose us from before the foundation of the world, in Christ, to be holy and conformed to God's will, and so on. He predestinated us.

This was before He ever created the world. He already planned our salvation. He knew right along that man would rebel, that man would be under the wrath of God. Now we must remember that God is sovereign, altogether sovereign. Number two, we must remember that God did not create mankind sinful. He created mankind good, after His own image.

Mankind was created a responsible

being, accountable to God for his actions. Mankind of his own volition rebelled against God and came into the terrible state that he did come into. And God in His sovereign good pleasure walked the second mile by providing for our salvation at a very dear and terrible cost to Himself, of course, because it was necessary for God to become man and endure hell for our sins in order to save us.

Now why God did this is all to His glory. The whole creation is to His glory. We read, for example, in Romans 9:22, "What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He hath afore prepared unto glory." Here God is saying that He is sovereign in these matters. If he wants to glorify Himself through His poured out wrath on the unsaved, that's His sovereign good pleasure, even as it's His sovereign good pleasure to save those whom He will.

We of course, as sinners in the misery of sin, can't understand this. We just can't fathom the love of God, we can't fathom the grace of God, we can't fathom the holiness of God. We only know that it exists.

CALLER: He is mighty.

God's Foreknowledge Explained (340C)

CALLER: Does God know from before the foundation of the world about our lives, what's going to happen?

HC: Does God know everything that is going to happen in our lives from before the foundations of the earth?

I like to use this illustration because I'm on very solid Biblical ground when I use this. In Ephesians 1:4 we read that we are chosen in Christ from before the foundations of the earth. That means that the Lord knew my name before He ever created the universe. Now who am I? And you can ask the same question, Who am I?

Each one of us are what we are only because we had a certain set of parents. And our parents are only what they are because they in turn had a specific set of parents. And their grandparents in turn are only what they are because they had a certain set of parents. And you can go all the way back to Noah this way.

In other words, when God named me to be saved from before the foundations of the earth (and this would be true of anyone who is born again) He thereby knew exactly who I was. He would have had to have known my parents, my grandparents, my great-grandparents, my great great-grandparents, all the way back down the line. Now when I think of all the detail that is part of my parents' life in coming together so they became married, and my grandparents so that they became acquainted with each other so eventually they became married, and my great-grandparents (marriages sometimes that were good marriages, marriages that were bad marriages, births out of wedlock, some within, marriages that were broken, all kinds of details that are part of the whole marriage relationship) all of this would have had to have been in view in order for God to name me or to name you, if you're born again.

This gives us one way of looking at the marvelous foreknowledge of God in seeing the end from the beginning. God saw the whole program. And out of all these He preordained those who were to be saved, as we read in Ephesians 2. Now if He could have known all this detail, then certainly He could have known all the details of our lives.

When we talk about God, then we're talking about His Infinite Majesty. Our minds are finite, and so for us to say that He would know all the details down

through the ages, from before the foundations of the earth, that's just incomprehensible. That's beyond any possibility. Well, that's because we're finite. We can't appreciate this possibility. But God is God. He is the Great I AM, the ever present one. We must never suggest for a moment that God is limited in any way.

God's Purpose in Allowing Sin (341B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: The Bible states that God is perfect. Therefore, how do you explain the creation that went sour, and that's Satan. Now God is supposed to know everything, from the beginning to the end if He knew that Satan would eventually mess up the world, why did God send him down in the first place?

HC: The question is raised: Why, if God is perfect, and knows the end from the beginning, would He create a world that eventually would become completely rebellious against Him? Why would He create angels, so that one of them would lead many of the other angels into rebellion against God?

The fact is that before God ever created the world, the universe, God not only knew that sin was going to enter the world. But He already made provision for the redemption of the world, for the redemption of the believers. We read in Ephesians 1:4 that He chose us, the born again believers, "in Him [that is, in Christ] before the foundations of the world." So you can depend upon it that God did not become surprised at any point. He not only knew what was going to happen. But He also made provision for the redemption of those whom He planned to save.

Now the question might then logically follow: "Well, why did God go through all this agony, of creating a world, allowing it to rebel against Him, so that He would have to go through this massive effort in order to redeem the world? The best answer that I can think of (and I know that this is very biblical) is that everything happens to God's glory. He says that "even the wrath of man shall praise God."

But let's think of it this way. The Bible says, "God is love." That's an excellent statement: "God is love." But it is not nearly as dramatic and recognizable and highlighted when it is said, as when it is expressed in reality. Think, for example, of the love that God had for this creation, allowing it to rebel against Himself, so that it became that which ought to be stamped out. It did not deserve to continue. But to provide for its redemption, it was necessary for Christ, for God to become the God-man, to be humiliated as a man, to be maligned by sinful men, to be spit upon, and then to endure the wrath of God, the equivalent of an eternity in hell. All this had to happen in order to redeem this world.

Now that is an expression of love that cannot be gainsaid. There's no deeper love than this, that God would do this for those of us who are so unlovable, who by nature are so rebellious against Him, that God would leave the perfection of Heaven, and become so involved in the misery of our sins. That is a dramatic expression of the love of God, that dramatizes that God is love far beyond what words could ever express.

Now the same thing can be said for the wrath of God, and the justice of God, the mercy of God, the grace of God, the patience of God . . . all of the divine attributes, which are all true and trustworthy. They're truisms that will stand forever. But all of them come into sharp and brilliant focus in actual demonstration in the drama of the fall of man and the redemption of man and the universe, by virtue of the fact that Christ went to the cross. This I believe, is one

reason that God allowed all of this to happen.

Isn't it marvelous that we have a God who so loved us? If He had not made provision for our salvation, you could rest assured that every last human being on the fact of the earth would end up in hell. We deserve to go there. Absolutely, we deserve to go there. There's not one of us that deserves salvation. Praise God for such a wonderful Savior.

Did God Know that Adam Would Sin? (435A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I'd like you to discuss eternal security, and the idea that you can fall from grace. And also, about the spirituality of music in the church. Some church music seems melancholy, and in some churches now we have a lot of rock music, religious rock. And one other point I'd like you to discuss would be, did God know that Adam was going to fall, that man was going to fall?

HC: All right. Let me ask you one question concerning your first question, eternal security. If someone asked you (if you believe you're saved), "What are you saved from?" how would you answer him?

CALLER: I'm saved from eternal damnation.

HC: You're saved from eternal damnation, good answer. Now why is it that you're saved from eternal damnation? In other words, what was going to bring you to eternal damnation in the first place?

CALLER: Because Christ died on the cross.

HC: Why did that save you from eternal damnation?

CALLER: I accepted Him into my heart.

HC: Why did the fact that you accepted Him into your heart save you from eternal damnation? In other words, what did Christ's dying on the cross, or the fact that you accepted Him, have to do with the fact that you're saved from eternal damnation? You notice there's a gap of some kind there, isn't there?

CALLER: I know that we have to follow in good works. In Ephesians 2:8-10 it talks about that.

HC: All right. We have to do good works after we're saved. But does that save us from eternal damnation?

CALLER: It says, "If you love Me you will keep My commandments."

HC: "If you love Me you will keep My commandments." Okay. So by keeping His commandments, does that insure that we will be saved from eternal damnation?

CALLER: Well, we're saved by His grace.

HC: We're saved by His grace. We're saved from eternal damnation by His grace. All right, but what does that mean, that we've been saved by His grace?

CALLER: Through faith.

HC: Through faith. What does that mean? You see, the missing ingredient in our discussion, I purposely asked you these questions to get you thinking, because once you understand salvation you'll automatically know the answer to the question of eternal security.

Those who believe we can fall from grace, that we can lose our salvation, do not, I'm afraid, understand what salvation really is. They don't really understand what happened that our salvation was accomplished.

Now let's start at the beginning. Here I stand. I'm a sinner. It's because of my sin that I must go to hell. Is that true?

CALLER: That's true, yes.

HC: "The wages of sin is death." That is the reason I'm condemned to hell. Now

the only way that I can not go to hell is that something has to be done about the judgment of God that rightly ought to come against me because of my sins. Someone has to take care of that situation.

And that's what Christ did when He went to the cross. The Bible says He became sin for me. And He was found guilty for my sins, and God poured out His wrath on Him as payment for my sins. That is why when Christ went to the cross He made possible my salvation, or He made possible the fact that I will not suffer eternal damnation, because He suffered eternal damnation on my behalf, as my substitute. He became sin for me. He took my guilt for all of my sins, and paid for my guilt. So therefore no guilt can be imputed to me any longer. Is that clear?

CALLER: Yes.

HC: Now what sin would I have to commit in order to lose my salvation? What sin would it be? When you stop to think of it, there is no sin, is there? Because Christ became sin for me. He took all of my sins, and paid for them. So there's no way that I could lose my salvation.

More than that, when I was saved God declared that I have eternal life. Now what does that mean? Is that just a figure of speech? I have eternal life, the seed or the possibility of eternal life exists within me? Or do I actually have eternal life? The Bible says I have eternal life.

The Bible also says I'm born again. The Bible also says I'm a new creature in Christ. Well, how is all of this? The Bible teaches that in my soul, or in my spirit, I have experienced the resurrection. I have received my resurrected soul. I've been raised with Him. Now it didn't happen in my body, but it happened in my soul.

At death what happens? In my body I can't go into Heaven, because I still have in my sin-cursed body. But lo and behold, in my soul I do go into Heaven, don't I? Because my soul has already experienced eternal life. Now if I have eternal life, then I can't die. Otherwise my life would not be eternal. So from that vantage point I could never lose my salvation.

Or again, Jesus Himself said in John 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice and follow Me, and I have given them eternal life, and they shall never perish. And no one shall snatch them out of My hand." These are the promises, you see. And there are many other promises of a similar nature.

CALLER: In Revelation it talks about being blotted out of the Lamb's Book of Life.

HC: Not out of the Lamb's Book of Life, but it speaks about being blotted out of the Book of Life. At least in Psalm 68 it speaks of that.

You see, in Adam we all begin in the Book of Life. Because Adam was the head of the whole human race, in a real sense we were in his loins. And he began without sin, he began as an eternal being who would live forever with God. In the day that he sinned, of course, the seeds of death were sown in him, he experienced physical death, and he also was estranged spiritually from God, in spiritual death. And that became the lot of all mankind.

The Bible uses the figure that we are in the Book of Life, but if we die wicked, that is, unsaved, then we cannot remain in the Book of Life. We are included amongst those who are cast in to hell. Or it uses another figure, that we are enrolled in the Lamb's Book of Life, if we are saved.

CALLER: Okay. There is a man who has led an extremely Godly life. He has professed Christ openly in the church, been baptized in water. As far as those in the congregation, we see this man as a Godly man, as being saved, a born again Christian. And he leads a Godly life for several years. But then he backslides. (And it talks about backsliding in II

Peter, I believe.) And then let's say now he's backslidden, and Christ comes back. At that point is that man saved?

HC: Now remember, when a man is saved he is born again. He's received his resurrected soul. Now there are all kinds of people in the church today (and I don't know who they are, but God knows them, we can't point the figure at anyone else, but God knows who they are, and the Bible speaks of these) who really believe they're saved. But actually they're not saved. They are really making like Christians. They're trying to do things that Christians do, and desperately they're trying to live a life that is pleasing to God so that God will look with kindness upon them. But they have never personally broken before God, admitting their own sinful rottenness and cried out to God for mercy. They don't really know what it is to be born again. They don't really know what it is to trust altogether only on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. There are all kinds of people in the church today who are trusting in their good works in one sense or another. And if we do that in any sense at all, then we're not saved.

Now as near as we can tell, we think they're saved, because they look just like someone who is saved. As long as they continue to stay that way in the church, and if they died that way, we would have to assume that they went to Heaven. But frequently they don't continue that faithfully. The temptations of materialism or of pleasure or some other sin come along, and they fall away. And so then we have the evidence that they were never saved. They were never saved, no matter how holy they may have looked.

If they were truly born again, and they began to fall into sin, by the temptations of lust or materialism or pleasure, or whatever, they could not continue in that sin, because in their new soul, their resurrected soul, they would be violated. They would be so troubled, they would be so oppressed, they would be so abhorred by their sin as they got deeper and deeper into it, that finally they couldn't stand it. They would cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me. How could I go this way?"

If someone claims to be a believer and lives like a believer for many years, and now he falls into sin, and in the face of what the Bible says, in the face of what the elders of the church admonish him about, he continues in his sin and he excuses his sin, and alibis for his sin, the likelihood is that he's not born again at all. That's incongruous. That's an impossibility for him to live this way.

CALLER: Okay. So he was professing Christ, but he wasn't possessed by Christ.

HC: He was professing Christ, but he had never become born again

CALLER: That makes sense.

HC: All right. Now your other two questions. Let me answer the last question first. Did God know that Adam was going to sin? Absolutely yes. We read in Ephesians 1:4 that we were chosen in Christ from before the foundations of the earth. We read in Revelation 13 that the Lamb of God was slain from the foundations of the earth.

The whole program of salvation was carefully developed and designed and outlined, down to its most minute detail, before God ever created the heavens and the earth. God has never been surprised by anything that has happened on this earth.

The other question that's been raised is concerning music. A lot of Christian music today is of the rock variety, or something between the rock variety and some other kind of contemporary music. Just how does all of this fit into the plan of God? Or how are we to relate to it?

The Bible teaches in Ephesians 5:18, "Don't be drunk with wine, but be filled

with the Holy Spirit, addressing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Now the content of this language really is that it's talking about music that is related to God. And if it's related to God it's going to be related to His word. Putting it in another way, it's going to be holy music. It is going to be music that is set apart from the music of the world in a very distinctive way, because it is the music that is conveying the thoughts that relate man to a holy God, a just God. It's going to convey the love of God, and all of the other attributes that we find concerning God in the Bible.

A lot of the music of the world, you'll find, is like the painting that you see, where someone apparently splashes some different colors on the canvas. I was in an art studio a few weeks ago, and they had some paintings on display. One painting was for sale for \$1,500, and my 4-year-old grandson could have done just as well, I think. It was really a pain to behold. I thought it was a travesty on the whole art profession. Well, that's my personal feeling about it.

Actually, that painting, however, was indicating the confused and bewildered and mixed-up nature of the soul of the artist. And music is frequently the same way. A lot of the rock music, and a lot of even Christian music that we hear, is conveying the confusion that exists within the soul of the composer.

The music we ought to sing, however, is not music that's confused and messed up and mixed up. It ought to be music that identifies with the Bible, with the holiness of God, with the majesty of God, with the greatness of God, with the love of God, with the wonder of God. The most sublime, the most beautiful, the most marvelous music on the face of the earth ought to be the Christian music. It's the music that soothes the soul. It's not the music that gets us all upset inside and agitated, and so on. That's not Christian music. Gospel music ought to be majestic, it ought to be holy music, set apart from the music of the world in a very distinctive fashion.

Now of course because music very frequently has lyrics, there are voices that are singing, we have a double opportunity to make it great and grand music, because in the lyrics God can be praised. In the words that are offered the will of God can be articulated in a very beautiful way.

That's the goal of Christian music. And when we view a lot of the music that calls itself Christian, we have to say no, no, no. It will never make it.

When Was Revelation Written? Does God Know Who Will Turn to Him? (483B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Brother Camping. One question I'd like to ask, or two. The first one is, was Revelation written when the Bible was complete as we know it today?

HC: Was Revelation written (that is, the book of Revelation) when the Bible was complete as we know it today? Based on the testimony of the Bible itself, we can know absolutely that the book of Revelation was written as the last book of the Bible, and the last chapter of the Bible would be Chapter 22. It was the last written Word of God. If anything else was written after that, whatever the nature of it may have been, no matter how holy it would have appeared to be, it would have to immediately be discounted as the Word of God because it would be in violation of Revelation 22.

For example, there are theologians who speculate (and I underscore the word speculate) that maybe the Gospel of John was written after Revelation. Well, that's sheer nonsense. That cannot be. That is speculation that is based on no regard at all for the authority of the Word of God.

There's no way that any of the books of the Bible could have been written after the Revelation. Had they been, they would never have appeared in the Bible.

CALLER: Any kind of a miracle now is just as impossible, according to the Bible?

HC: Any possibility of an articulated word of God outside of the Bible is impossible, because God says we're not to add to the words of this book. And we know that the miracles were done because God was given historical parables illustrating the nature of salvation. But the rule of salvation is that we walk by faith, not by sight. And when we study the Bible to look for any information at all that might relate to miracles, particularly near the end of time, in every case without exception we find that any language always relates to Satanic activity. And that is terribly ominous.

CALLER: You also made some statements about predestination. Does that mean that people that God didn't plan to save aren't going to be? Or does it mean that God knows who will turn to Him and who won't?

HC: That's a good question. Does God know who will turn to Him and who won't, and those who will turn to Him He predestinates to save? Or does God actually plan whom He is to save, whether they want to turn to Him or not?

Now there's a big school of thought of those who say that God knew who would turn to Him, and these are the ones that He predestinated. Now let's examine that idea for a moment. In Ephesians 2:1-3 God indicates that those—He's speaking there about those who did become saved, therefore they would have been those who were predestinated in some sense—now He describes them before they were saved. And let me read these three verses very carefully, because this tells us about our condition before we were saved:

"And you hath He quickened (that is, He made alive), who were dead in trespasses and sins." Dead! Now that's a pretty heavy word.

"Where in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." That is, it's talking here about according to Satan's activity.

"Among whom also we all had our conduct in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Now this is describing people who eventually became saved.

Now how could these dead people, spiritually dead slaves of Satan, lusting after sin just like the rest of the world, why would they be inclined to accept the Gospel or to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ? They would have no more desire to do this than anybody else, because they're just as sinful as anyone else. They're just as dead as anyone else.

So the idea that God knew who would turn to Him is contrary to what the Bible allows. That's an impossibility. Secondly, if we would hold that idea, that God knew who would turn to Him, then we have a salvation that is based on works plus grace. In other words, I took the first step, I did a good work by turning to the Lord Jesus Christ. God recognized that, and then He applied His grace to my life and completed my salvation. And so we are partners in salvation, Christ did His work and I did my work. And that is flatly contradictory to the Gospel of grace. "By grace ye have been saved, not of works, lest any man should boast." The moment that we tie in even the least smidgen of our own merits or works into our salvation, then we have to stand before God by our works and we're going to end up in hell for sure. Either we're saved by God's grace or we're not saved. And so on both of these counts that

particular theological idea cannot pass Biblical validation. The fact is, when God predestinated me or anyone else who has become saved, He saw me as a dirty rotten sinner. He saw me as someone who was spiritually bankrupt. He saw me as someone who would never turn to Him. But God inclined my heart and God gave me spiritual eyes so I began to see the sinfulness of my life, so that I would respond to the Gospel. And this is the way He saves everybody that He plans to save.

CALLER: What about in Revelation where it says, "I stand at the door and knock. And if any man opens the door I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me."

HC: Ah, yes. Now the question is, doesn't Revelation 3:20 say something different, because it says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." Doesn't this teach conclusively that after all, it is up to mankind whether he wants to be saved or not, that Christ is simply standing at the door and knocking?

Well, the key phrase, the big phrase that is missed here is, "if any man hear My voice." Now look at verse 22: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Well now, here is Lazarus in the tomb, the brother of Mary and Martha. And Jesus is outside of the tomb, knocking on the door of that tomb: "Lazarus, come forth, Lazarus, come forth." Well, Lazarus is dead. He can't hear Jesus. He's dead. Jesus could call like this forever and Lazarus wouldn't come forth. But Lazarus did come forth. Why did he come forth? Because God gave him ears to hear and a will to respond. And Lazarus did come forth. And so when Jesus knocks at our heart's door, as the Gospel call goes forth, only those to whom He gives ears to hear will open the door, because they recognize this is a call that must be obeyed.

In other words, it isn't my will that finally made the difference. It is because God inclined my heart and qualified me so that I would be saved. Now you see, this strips me of all ego or all self-congratulation. There's no way that I can take the slightest glory or the slightest credit for my salvation. I can never think, "Oh my, am I not a wonderful person, because I look at me. I chose for Christ, while all my neighbors just continue in unbelief." Nonsense...I can't take one ounce of credit. All I can say is, "Oh God, how is it possible that You saved me when by nature I'm just as guilty a sinner as anyone else? How can it be? And oh Lord, if you saved me all I want to do is live out my life in thankfulness to Thee for what you have done for me."

CALLER: But even if you didn't want to be saved, you would be, because that's what He wants.

HC: Even if I did not want to be saved, I still would be saved, is the next question. And you are absolutely correct. By nature I don't want to be saved. There is no human being that wants to be saved. The Bible says in Romans 3, "There is none that seeketh after God." We all love our sin too much. We all like the idea that we think we're king on the throne of our life. We actually aren't. We're actually slaves of Satan. But we've been deceived by him. And there isn't one of us that wants to be saved.

But God begins to deal with us. The Father begins to draw us. And we become increasingly uneasy because of our sins, and we become concerned about Judgment Day and hell. And we begin to seek for answers. And we don't find our rest until we find our rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, God gives us the "want to."

CALLER: Thank you, Brother.

HC: Thank you for calling.

Are Predestination and Foreknowledge One and the Same? (526A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I would like to ask you if you would speak on predestination and foreknowledge. Are they one and the same, or are they two different things? And if predestination is correct, then are we robots? I would like to take an answer on the air, please.

HC: The question that is raised is concerning the matter of predestination. Now the word predestination sends shudders in the lives of many who believe that they are followers of Christ. They don't like the word predestination. They immediately say, "Well, if you believe in predestination, that's some kind of a Calvinistic term," or whatever.

This is very unfortunate because the word predestination is a word that is found in the Bible. It is a Biblical term. It is not a term that was designed by theologians trying to explain some doctrine of the Bible. It actually is the word that the Bible itself uses.

Now the word predestination is actually speaking of God's program whereby before the foundations of the earth God chose those whom He would save. We read in Ephesians 1:4: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."

Now this, you see, is the language of the Bible. This is the language of God. He predestinated us, those who are to be saved. He chose us (in vs. 4) in Him, and according to His good pleasure (verse 11 of Ephesians 1) "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ."

Now we can't get around this language. The Bible does speak of predestination. And therefore if you love the Lord, if you are a child of God, then by all means don't skirt around the word predestination. Don't be appalled at the word predestination. The word predestination is a concept that God Himself has set forth for us in the Word of God.

And you'll notice, and let me underscore this, that predestination has to do with being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, as we read in verse 4 of Ephesians 1.

Now the idea of predestination as we find it set forth here in Ephesians 1, is an idea that is not very acceptable to many, because this infers that it is God who has saved us and we had nothing at all to do with this. And yet we feel (many of us) that after all, we did have something to do with our salvation. Didn't we accept the Lord Jesus Christ? Isn't it true that God has done all that He can do and now it's up to us? Isn't it really a fact that this business of salvation is some kind of a partnership, where God has done what He was supposed to do and now we also have to do something about it?

After all, again and again, as we bring the Word of God we tell people that they are to accept the Lord Jesus Christ. And the inference is that God now has provided salvation. It's here for the taking, for the asking, and it's up to us now to reach out and accept what God has planned. And so this requires an action on our part. And it depends finally upon us. In some sense God has limited Himself to our will, because isn't it true that we have to accept the Lord Jesus Christ?

But this idea of predestination goes against this idea of the fact that God has done everything He can do and now it's up to us. This idea of predestination as we find it outlined in Ephesians 1 is emphasizing that God chose us and predestinated us to His glory.

Well now, those who struggle with this conflict look at Romans 8 and feel that they have some kind of a solution to cut the Gordian knot that separates these two ideas of the predestinating love of God on the one hand and the fact that God gives us a free will so now we have to choose and do our part in accepting the Lord Jesus Christ. And so they turn to a verse that speaks of predestination in Romans 8:29. There we read, "For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Aha! Here we have a solution to the problem of the work that we have to do in trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and matching that with the predestinating love of God, because doesn't it say here that God foreknew who would want to be saved? Doesn't this say that He looked down the corridors of time and He saw you and me who would become born again, and saw that we would incline our hearts to Christ, and therefore He did predestinate us to be conformed to the image of His Son?

And many feel that this solves the problem. But does it solve the problem? After all, if God predestinated, and the idea of predestination has to do with election or choosing whom He's going to save, if He looked down the corridors of time at those who would believe on Him and then decided to elect them, or choose them to salvation, then there is no election anymore, is there? Then God is not electing who He's going to save. The decision as to who is going to be saved depends entirely upon us. We are the ones who finally are the final deciders as to who is to be saved. If we decide to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, then we will be saved. If we don't decide to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, then we are not saved. If we decide to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, then God will have predestinated us because He saw that we would be one of those who would decide to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. And you see the total difficulty here with the language of the Bible. God can't choose or elect or predestinate someone with whom the decision to be saved rests.

If God elects someone to be saved, it means that the decision to save is God's decision. Now secondly, we have the problem of the condition of man as God looks at man. Those who would want to teach, and there are many who teach this, and they feel very confident in what they're saying. They teach that after all, God has done what He's supposed to do, and now you have a free will. You make a choice. You have a choice to come to Him.

But the problem is that the Bible tells us that there is none that seeketh after God. That's Romans 3:10: "As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre. With their tongues they have used deceit. The poison of asps is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

In other words, God is saying that as He looks at the human race there is not one that seeketh after God. They're all unrighteous and unprofitable and in rebellion against God. So if by God's foreknowledge He was looking for someone who would turn to Him and these He would predestinate, God would

have to look forever and never find one, because God reveals to us that there is none that seeketh after God.

And so for the second reason this idea that God's foreknowledge is seeing ahead of time who would turn to Him and these He predestinated just doesn't work. It will not work, because there is none that seeketh after God. Moreover, in Ephesians 2 God describes those whom He saves. And in the first 3 verses of Ephesians 2 He's talking about people who did become saved. And look what He says of them: "And you hath He quickened (that is, He made alive), who were dead in trespasses and sins." Now how can a corpse turn to the Lord Jesus Christ? Spiritually we are dead. "Where in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." In other words, we were followers of Satan. We were slaves of Satan. "Among whom also we all had our conduct in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

Now this is the way God looks at us, those whom He plans to save. Does He see any inclination here that we're going to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ? No, not a bit...not a bit. He says we walk according to this world, just like the unsaved. We follow Satan. We obey the lusts of the flesh and of the mind. We're exactly like the rest of the world, and we're children of wrath like the rest of the world.

Where is God going to foreknow somebody who of himself will turn to Him? That's an impossible idea, you see, when we turn to the Bible. We're dead. We are spiritually dead. And we will not come to the Lord. And so when the Bible says in Romans 8 that God foreknew, "those whom God foreknew He did predestinate," He is not talking, regardless of what you have learned, it cannot be that God foreknew those who would turn to Him, and therefore He predestinated them. No. No, that's an impossibility.

The Bible will not allow this. And I say this dogmatically, because we have read it in the Bible. We've read Romans 3. We read Ephesians 2, did we not? God Himself is speaking, and He's saying that's an impossibility because spiritually we're dead, and we're slaves of Satan, and we will not come to Him. So the idea that foreknowledge has to do with those whom He saw would believe is an impossible idea.

Well then, what did He foreknow? Well, He foreknew that the whole human race...God knows the end from the beginning...He knows every individual that would ever be born in the world, as He views all of history before He ever creates the universe...He knows all of our names, and He sees all of us as being dead in our sins, as being in enmity against God, as having no desire to come to Him whatsoever. And yet these whom He foreknew as being the dirty rotten sinners that we are by nature, rebellious against God, poisonous vipers by nature, out of these whom He foreknew He predestinated us to be saved.

And those whom He predestinated He called. And so the message of salvation comes to the world. And those whom He predestinated, that is, those whom He elected to be saved, they in God's own time will respond to the Gospel, because God qualifies them. God will not be frustrated in His plan.

Remember John 6:37, where Jesus opened the curtain of Heaven, and He said, "All that the Father giveth Me will come to Me." — "will come to Me." God is not limited by our wills in any sense whatsoever. Have you heard this? "God is a gentleman. He'll never force anyone to come to Him." What nonsense. What

nonsense! When God made a decision to save any one of us, we will come to Him. And how does God make us come to Him? Well, He may use chastisement. He may have to get our attention by bringing severe affliction into our lives. And many of us will have to testify that we were going our own way, and God had to beat down on us very hard. And then finally we began to sense that our spiritual eyes were opening, and we began to see our need of a Savior.

However God deals with us, however He does, we know that when He has decided to save someone, because He foreknew us as rebellious sinners, He in His own time is going to open our eyes, and He will draw us to Himself. We will come to Him.

The way we'll sense this in our lives is that we become uneasy with our sins. We become nervous about hell. We begin to sense that hell is real, and we know we don't want to go to hell. And we're going to get more and more concerned about what this sin and that sin in my life is going to develop into insofar as God's judgment is concerned.

And pretty soon we're going to start asking a lot of questions about what the Bible might teach concerning this. And the day will come, because God is drawing us and the Father is opening our spiritual ears, and the Holy Spirit is cleansing us, the day will come when we'll cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me." And we will have placed our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has become our Savior.

You see, it is God who is doing the work. We will come to Him. And as John 6:39 teaches, "Of all that the Father giveth Me I have lost none of them." There's not a single one who was predestinated to salvation who will not come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We read in Romans 8:29 that "whom He did foreknow (that is, whom He saw long before He created the world as the one that He wanted to save) He predestinated (He elected them, He chose them to salvation) to be conformed to the image of His Son." And to be conformed to the image of His Son means that we have become like Christ. We have been covered by His righteousness. We have become a son of God again. We are of royal blood. It's a fantastic idea of the nature of salvation.

And then it goes on in verse 30: "Moreover, whom He did predestinate He called (that is, He gave us the Gospel), and whom He called He justified." What does justified mean? To be justified means that we stand before the Judgment Throne of God, and there is no guilt any longer. The criminal who stands before the judge is not just as he stands there. He is guilty. He is to be sentenced to go to jail for his crime. And only after he has paid the penalty can he be deemed just before the judge, because then he no longer has any guilt.

Well, we have been justified by the Lord Jesus Christ in that He paid for our sins, in that He took upon Himself our guilt. And so there is no longer any condemnation that can come against us. And therefore we have been justified. We have been made just. We have been made like those who have no guilt whatsoever before the bar of God's justice.

"And them He also glorified." And that's a marvelous, marvelous promise, you see, to be included amongst those who are glorified. To be glorified means that we are reflectors of the glory of God. There's no intrinsic glory in us except in that God's glory shines through us in that we are the trophies of God's grace. We are the recipients of His mercy.

Now this idea of predestination comes very very hard to many. Now if you'll notice as we've talked about this...and I think this is an exceedingly important question, and I'm very grateful for the call, that we might talk about this

together, because there's such a misunderstanding about this, I'm afraid, in the lives of many, that this is a very difficult doctrine to swallow for many of us. Because, you see, the doctrine of predestination robs us self-commendation.

Now you see, by nature you and I want to be commended for what we have done. If you are a housewife and you bake a beautiful cake, and you put a lot of labor of love in that cake, and now you invite your neighbor over for coffee, and you drink coffee together, and you offer her a piece of this splendid cake which you've baked and which you're so proud of, if she never mentions that cake, if she never refers to it at all in the whole conversation, when she goes home after awhile you're going to feel, "Well, that coffee date sure didn't amount to very much," because really you are waiting for a little bit of praise... "Oh my, isn't this a delightful cake! Did you bake this?" This is the way we're designed, that whatever we have put our labor of love in, we want to be recognized for what we have done. And this is ingrained within us, that we would expect this.

Now the fact is that we believe we've become saved, and we look at the world around us and we realize that all kinds of people are not saved. And so obviously something wonderful has happened to us. And by nature therefore we want to receive a little bit of commendation. Oh yes, we know it's the grace of God. God is the one who saved us. He went to the cross in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ to pay for our sins. But certainly, certainly we can receive a little bit of credit, can't we?

And we desperately want that little bit of credit. But the fact is that the Bible says no, you can't have any credit. You're dead in your sins, you're a corpse. You're absolutely without any hope of salvation in yourselves. And it's by grace you have been saved, not of works, lest any man should boast, as Ephesians 2:9 teaches. There's no way that we can receive any credit. We have to give God all the praise. Even the faith which was the lifeline that tied us to God is a gift of God, as we read in Ephesians 2:8.

Now some would argue, "Well, this doctrine of predestination. All right, you find it in the Bible, but doesn't this make us robots, as if we have nothing to do then with our salvation, we're just without any will?" No, we're not robots. We're corpses. We're dead. We can't even credit ourselves with being a robot. We're dead. Spiritually we're dead.

Do you remember the story of the account of the raising of Lazarus? And if you ever want to see a picture of salvation, just look at the raising of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. Now how dead was he? He was dead for 4 days, the Bible says. Three days was the resurrection, the Bible says. Four days means you're beyond the resurrection. You're dead. What was the condition of his body? Mary and Martha told Jesus "he stinketh." He was a smelly, decaying mess. Have you ever had a dead animal under your porch for 4 days? Have you ever had a dead fish someplace around where it wasn't refrigerated? It's a horrible smell, isn't it? It's a terrible thing. It's the kind of thing that makes you say, "Get it out of here! I don't want anything to do with it! Bury it! I can't stand the smell." That's what the condition of Lazarus was when he was raised. And his soul had left the body. There wasn't any life at all in him. Well, that's a picture of you and me before we're saved. We're corpses, stinking, dirty corpses. You don't like it, do you? Well, I don't like it, either. My self-respect says, "No, no, no. I'm created in the image of God. It can't be that bad." Well, too bad. We may not like it, but that's what the Bible talks about. We're dead. And God sets up this historical parable of the raising of Lazarus so we

see a beautiful picture, a descriptive picture of the nature of our salvation.

Now when Jesus stood outside of that cemetery and said, "Lazarus, come forth!" was there a tiny bit of life in Lazarus? Was there just a little bit of life there, a little smidgen of life, so that he was able to say after he rose from the grave, "You know, you've got to credit me a little bit, because I heard Jesus speak to me and I decided that I wanted to come forth, and then God poured His love on me and He gave me the strength and the will, and indeed I came out of the tomb"? That's ridiculous, isn't it? Of course that isn't possible. Lazarus was dead. He was a stinking corpse.

And yet Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth" and Lazarus did come forth. He came forth as much alive as Mary and Martha were alive, and anyone else that was looking at this scene were alive. And that's exactly a picture of the condition we are in before we are saved. We're not robots. We have no life. We're dead. We're corpses.

And yet God has predestinated us to be saved. And so He comes with the message of salvation. He calls us. And then He begins to give us ears to hear. Remember how often you read in the Bible, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear"? And then He gives us a will to respond and a faith to trust. The whole thing, you see, is utterly dependent upon God's action in our lives.

And then in response to all this we say, "Oh Lord, I believe. Help Thou my unbelief. Oh Lord, have mercy on me. I'm a sinner. Oh Lord, what must I do to be saved?" And the next thing we know, we are born again because we find that we have a deep and earnest trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and desire to do His will. And we know that we are saved. It is altogether the action of the Lord

Well then, a question has to be raised. Then if I'm not predestinated, if I'm not predestinated, what about me? Can I be saved? Well, the Bible promises that whoever believes on the Lord shall be saved. The Bible promises, "Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you." And if you are unsaved and are concerned about whether you are elect or not, don't worry about whether you're elect or not. That's God's business. That's altogether God's business.

Why Did God Create the Universe Knowing There Would be Evil? (546A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi, Mr. Camping. I have one question, and I really don't know how to state the question, but I'll do it the best I can. I'm a Christian, but I've had a problem that I've dealt with for quite some time. And last night on your show you discussed the creation of evil. Well, if God knew that there was evil or that there would be evil, or that Eve would succumb to Satan in the Garden, why was it all done? Why did He do it?

HC: The question is, if God knew that after He had created this universe good and perfect so that everything was very good, everything was to God's glory, there was no sin, if God knew that somehow the angels would rebel against Him, as Lucifer did and became Satan, as Eve did and so mankind became rebellious against God, why did He do this? It ends up that He has to send most of the human race into hell, a great number of the angels are going to end up in hell. How can all of this come to pass?

Well, we get a clue in Ephesians 1. In Ephesians 1 God discusses why He saved us. He says in verse 5: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved." In verse 11: "in

whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ." Now that's one strong clue that God gives us, that the whole plan of mankind's creation, the universe's creation and all that followed out of it, and then finally the redemption of man, was to the praise of God's glory.

Now let's develop this for just a little bit. Let's suppose that God said, "I am infinitely holy, I am altogether just, I am altogether gracious, I am altogether merciful, I am infinitely loving," and so on and so on. That's one thing. But suppose that God now says, "I am all these things, and I will demonstrate, so that all of the principalities and powers (whomever God is demonstrating this to) will all see this in actuality." Then God will be glorified even more greatly.

Now notice that in saving us how God's justice was maintained. For God to save us He could not just say, "Well, by sovereign decree, because I am God, I forgive you, sinners, and you are going to be My children." No, God had laid down the law that the wages of sin is death, and there could be no avoidance of that. And so it was necessary that God Himself take on a human nature and endure the wrath of God, the equivalent of an eternity in hell, in order that God's justice might remain inviolate, so that it would still be absolutely holy justice.

Now that's a fantastic idea, you see. And then in accomplishing this and maintaining this holy justice, God also showed His fantastic love, that He would condescend to do this, and His grace and His mercy, and so on. In other words, in this whole plan God is demonstrating in no uncertain terms the reality of His attributes that come to the fore in the salvation program.

But with that I'll have to say Good Night, because we've run out of time.

Does God Know Who Will be Saved? (597B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a couple of questions. First of all, does God know who will be saved and who won't?

HC: The question is, does God know who will be saved and who won't? Absolutely yes. There are no surprises concerning this. God chose, from before the foundations of the earth, those who were to be saved.

CALLER: Then why must life go on? Why must it keep going, if He already knows what's going to happen?

HC: The question is, why then doesn't God simply end it all?

First of all, you must remember that those who are being saved come from each generation that goes along. The world has gone on for almost 13,000 years now, and in each period of time there have been those who were to be saved. And if God had ended it all at, let's say, a thousand years ago, then there would be numerous people whom God had planned to save who didn't even come into existence. And God would have frustrated His own salvation plan. Therefore the world has to go to its predetermined end, so that everyone whom God has predestinated to be saved will actually be born into this world so that they can be saved. And when the last one is saved that God plans to save, then we're at the end of time. Then we're right up against the end of the world.

CALLER: What do you know about the Book of Life? Everyone who's saved, are their names in the Book of Life? Could you explain this to me?

HC: Yes. The question is raised concerning the Book of Life. Now God speaks about the Book of Life in

numerous places. In some cases He talks about those who were named in the Book of Life from before the foundations of the world, and indicates that there were others who were not in the Book of Life from the foundations of the world. And in that sense He is speaking of the Book of Life from a redemptive vantage point.

On the other hand, God talks about the Book of Life in other places, where He speaks of everyone being in the Book of Life, and the unsaved being removed from the Book of Life. And in that kind of a place, He is talking about the Book of Life from a creation vantage point. We all began in the Book of Life because we were in the loins of Adam. And as we arrive on the scene and die unsaved, we are removed from the Book of Life.

But from God's eternal decrees only the born again believers were in the Book of Life.

CALLER: OK. By being born again, do you mean that you're a child of God forever, after you're born again?

HC: The question is, are we a child of God forever if we've become born again? Yes. The Bible says that we have eternal life.

CALLER: So you cannot lose your salvation.

HC: No way possible, because you see, to be saved means that Christ has saved us from the wrath of God, which we deserve for our sins. He has saved us from hell and eternal damnation, by paying for all of our sins. Therefore there is no sin that we could commit that would estrange us from God and cause us to again be under the wrath of God. We are saved eternally.

CALLER: So you mean that. Are you saved?

HC: Am I saved? I know this very certainly that I am saved.

CALLER: So do you sin?

HC: Yes, I still sin, because you see, I still have a body that lusts after sin, and I don't therefore live perfectly before God. I would desire that I would live perfectly before God and in my soul, where I've become born again, I never want to sin again. But in my body I still can be lazy, I can be unkind, I can think lustful thoughts. There are sins that can come into my life. And each day I have to go to the Lord, "Oh Lord, forgive me. Help me tomorrow to live more for Thee."

CALLER: Okay. What about blaspheming the Holy Spirit?

HC: Blaspheming the Holy Spirit has to do with believing that Christ was under the power of Satan. And if anyone came to that belief in his life, he wouldn't have the slightest interest in Christ as his Savior or Lord.

Thank you so much for calling and sharing those questions, and I hope this helps a little bit.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you.

CHAPTER 16 – SALVATION & FAITH

THE WAY TO SALVATION

Being "Good" Does Not Ensure Our Salvation (099C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I have never called before, but I have a problem. I have been attending some Bible classes, and some of the things just do not coincide with what I feel. I feel that if you are a good person, and you do God's will, and you're not living a life of sin, when you pass away you go into the presence of God. And if you're not a good person, you're judged right away, and you're sentenced.

They believe that you go into the grave

and that you just remain there as if you were asleep. I mean your body, of course, decays. But there's no consciousness until the resurrection. And this has disturbed me very much.

HC: Let's just talk about this a little bit, because you're speaking for many who are looking for truth. You can be grateful of one thing, and that is that you are searching for truth. God is disturbing your soul, and you want to find truth.

Now let me say at the outset, the Bible alone is the sourcebook of truth, and in its entirety it is the sourcebook of truth. And therefore you want to steer away from anything at all where the idea is held that God can bring truth from sources outside the Bible.

CALLER: This religion is strictly the Bible.

HC: Now the second point is, as you begin to search for truth, make sure that those who are involved in bringing you information are bringing you the whole Bible, everything that's in the Bible, that is the infallible word of God. Now for example, there are those who deny that God the Holy Spirit is a real Person of the Godhead. They think of the Holy Spirit only as a force. And that's contrary to the Bible. The Bible insists that the Holy Spirit is Eternal God, and that He is a Person like the Lord Jesus Christ is a Person.

Secondly, there are those who deny that Jesus Christ is Eternal God, and they think of Him as a God.

CALLER: The Son of God.

HC: Well, the Son of God, or someone who is a superman really, because we're gods also. But actually, it is true the Bible speaks of mankind as gods because we were created in the image of God. But Jesus, while He is shown to us to be the Son of God, is the only Son of God. In John 3:16, He is the only-begotten Son of God. He is God Himself, and the Bible is replete with references to the fact that He is Eternal God Himself.

And so any religious group at all that denies that Christ is Eternal God no longer has any way of providing salvation. Because, you see, if Jesus was simply a superman, if He was simply just more perfect than man, as something that we might try to attain to and maybe might be able to attain to on some basis or another, then He could never have been the Savior. He took upon Himself the sins of everyone who believes on Him and endured the terrible wrath of God, the equivalent of an eternity of hell on our behalf. He would have been consumed in the attempt.

And so those who deny that Christ is Eternal God, as Colossians 1 puts it, "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." When they deny this, then they no longer have a Savior, even though they talk about a Savior and even though they talk about the blood of Christ.

CALLER: They said we should believe in Jehovah God.

HC: But you see, the Bible talks about Jehovah God. But what does the Bible say in Isaiah 43? It says that "I am Jehovah, and besides Me there is no Savior." Now the Lord Jesus Christ came along and said that He is the Savior. He is the one who would save mankind from their sins. And so He has to be Jehovah God, because God says, "I am Jehovah, and besides Me there is no Savior." So we know that the Lord Jesus is Eternal God Himself.

So I would suggest this, that you seek out a church that holds to the whole Bible as the Word of God.

CALLER: I have a religious mother, and I have had a very good religious training. I went to a private school, and it started with Bible in the morning. And I know a great deal about the Bible. And I don't lie, and I don't steal. I try to lead a very holy life.

HC: But you see, that will not save you.

CALLER: Now I am so confused, and I am so afraid. Am I saved, or am I not saved? If I was to pass away, what's going to happen to me?

HC: That of course is a very legitimate question.

CALLER: I never felt like this before. I mean I always felt that I was a child of God.

HC: Let's start at the beginning. First of all, we are not saved because we are a good person. Jesus did not come to call the righteous. He came to call sinners. And when God looks at you, and measures you and all of your deeds that you feel are quite good, and measures them against the standard of His perfect holiness, then He comes to the conclusion in Romans 3 that you are unrighteous, that you are a despicable sinner. And the Bible says, "The wages of sin is death."

And so the Bible starts right out and says that we're in trouble. We're in deep trouble. We're under the wrath of God because of our sins, and there's not one human being who stands outside of that indictment. We all stand there, outside of Christ, as being under the wrath of God.

Now that's the beginning of where we can go toward salvation, when we recognize the awful truth about ourselves. I'm a sinner, and I'm under the wrath of God. Then we face this promise, that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish [that is, should not be destroyed from this world into hell], but shall have everlasting life." Now the Bible is insisting here, therefore, that we place our trust entirely and without reservation upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

CALLER: I do. I always have.

HC: Now the way we do this, or the evidence that we have placed our trust in Him is that we repent of our sins and we cry out to God for mercy: "Oh Lord, have mercy on me. I don't want to sin anymore. And I believe what your Word says." As we read, for example, in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

May I make first one suggestion? You're bewildered because you're listening to lots of other doctrines, and this is confusing you. And I would suggest that for the time being you forget about talking to anyone that brings their doctrines. And just spend time reading the Word.

God Forgives Completely (112A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Can I just ask you one question? When you have committed a sin, maybe years ago, and you've prayed about it and asked God to forgive you, should you pray for that same sin to be forgiven years later?

HC: There's no reason to, if we believe in God and take Him at His Word. We read in 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now that's a faithful promise, you see.

CALLER: I really believe. But then years after it seems to haunt me again. What is that? Is that just natural, or . . . ?

HC: Well it can be. It can be. One of the questions that has to arise is: "Do I really trust in Christ? Do I really take Him at His word, when He says that He'll forgive all my sins?"

CALLER: I heard a party make a statement to a Sunday School teacher who said that we should ask forgiveness from a person if we've harmed him. And this party asked? "Well, what if the person that we harmed is dead?"

HC: Yes. Well, you see, our sin is against God. And we admit our sin to God and resolve not to sin again. That is, we repent of our sin. And that's the end of the matter. We don't have to worry about it anymore.

CALLER: Well, if the party died before you made up your mind to ask for forgiveness . . .

HC: It doesn't make any difference. The sin has all been taken care of by the blood of Christ, if we have trusted in Him.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Does One "Accept Christ"?

(199E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. The last time I heard your program, I heard you make a comment on "accepting Christ," that this wasn't a Biblical statement. Do you recall that conversation? Could you maybe review two or three of the points that you made? I was kind of interested in it. I'll try to take the answer over the air, if I can.

HC: All right.

The question is raised concerning the phrase that is frequently used in bringing the Gospel, which is to encourage people to "accept Christ" as their Savior, as their Lord. Now as I indicated previously, this is not a Biblical statement. In fact, it has overtones, it has implications that are contrary to the Word of God.

It is somewhat compatible with the idea that is also frequently expressed, that God has done everything that He can, and now it's up to you. It's really portraying God as being somewhat impotent, somewhat unable. Some have even argued, "Well, the only reason God is impotent at this particular point is that He self-limited Himself." In other words, He decided, "Well, I'll just go so far, and I won't go any further. And now it's up to you."

It also at least carries an overtone of the idea that it is man's work that really initiates salvation for us. God over here has provided a way of escape. Here is the salvation that He's provided for all mankind. And now, man, it's up to you, by an act of your will, by your work you can be saved. There are all kinds of dangerous suggestions inherent in this phrase, "accept the Lord Jesus Christ," suggestions that are contrary to the Word of God.

The Bible teaches that we cannot work in any sense for our salvation. God is not impotent in relationship to our salvation. We read in John 6, where Christ said in verse 37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me." In other words, here is an agreement within the Godhead, where the Father said, "Look. I have given you these people. I elected them from before the foundations of the earth. And they will come to you." Why? Because it says, "No man cometh unto Me unless the Father who sent Me draws Him." we read in verse 44. "They will come because I will draw them," says the Father.

And then He says in verse 39 of John 6, "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me." In other words, God is sovereign King. He's Lord of lords and King of kings, and there's no human being that is going to remain unsaved if God wants to save him. There is no suggestion in the scripture that God is limited in His ability to save a man. God has decided who He is going to save, and He will save them.

Now the Bible teaches that we are to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Again and again it emphasizes faith. And faith and believing are two sides of the same coin. We place our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now how do we do this? By a wonderful act of courage on our part? No. By recognizing the horrible truth about ourselves, that we're spiritually bankrupt, that we're dead in our sins, that there is no hope in the path we are following. We've messed it all up, and we're headed for hell. We're under the wrath of God because of our sins. And we simply abandon ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. We hang our life on Him. We trust in Him, that what the Bible says is true, even though we don't understand it and we don't know how it's all going to go together.

And then we even discover that believing on Him, or having faith in Him, is a gift of God. The whole transaction is God's.

Now I think there are at least 2 verses that encourage people to use the language of "accepting Jesus" as Lord and Savior. One of these verses is in John 1:12: "But to all who received Him, who believe in His Name, He gave power to become children of God." And this word receive is looked upon as a word that means that God has supplied the salvation over here, and you are over there. You're still miles apart. But here is the salvation. And now if you'll go over and receive what God has there, then you too can be saved.

Now that is not the Biblical meaning of that word. In John 3:27 we have a commentary on this word receive, the very same word. God declares through John the Baptist, "No one can receive anything except what is given him from Heaven." In other words, if you have a gift that you want to give to someone, and they are sitting in a chair over there, you walk over to that person, and you lay that gift in that person's lap. And he receives it because you have given it to him. You have laid it in his lap. He is a recipient of that gift. He is receiving that gift. But he is not reaching out for it. That is, he is not walking across the room to get it. He is simply the recipient of that gift.

Now notice how this ties in with verse 13 of John 1. In John 1:12 it says, "But to all who received Him [that is, to whom God had made a gift of salvation, and they received what God had given, not as an overt act on their part, but because God was drawing them to Himself], He gave power to become children of God, who were born [now notice] not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The whole transaction was God's.

Okay. Now the other verse that is sometimes used, and in fact very frequently used in bringing the Gospel, is a verse in Revelation 3:20. There we read, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with Me." And so the picture is painted that here is Christ knocking at a man's heart's door . . . knock, knock, knock. And it's completely up to that man to decide whether he wants that Gospel or not. It is completely his decision whether he's going to open that door or not. And that of course matches the kind of an idea that here is salvation that I've provided. You're over there. If you want to walk over and reach for it, then you can have it. Then if you don't it's up to you. I've done all that I can do, and now it's up to you. You see? The same kind of a picture is painted.

But there's a phrase in this verse that has to be recognized, and that phrase is, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice." "If anyone hears My voice." Ah. Who hears the voice of Christ calling? Just anyone? Is that up to man to finally, ultimately hear His voice?

Well, the Bible teaches that I'm dead. Now a corpse doesn't have very good hearing, does he? A corpse is just a decaying dead thing. And a corpse is never going to hear that voice. And there

isn't an unsaved person himself who is not a dead corpse. His hearing is absolutely zero.

Now when Jesus stood outside the tomb of Lazarus, Lazarus was dead. He was a corpse. And Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth." Did Lazarus hear His voice? You bet your life he heard His voice. He heard Christ's voice, and he came forth. "He who has ears to hear, let him open the door, and I will come in to him and eat with him." And so Lazarus heard the voice, and he obeyed. He came out of the tomb. But the only reason he heard Christ's voice is that when Jesus called to him, God also gave him ears to hear.

Now so it is when the Gospel goes forth. There will be those who will hear His voice. And anyone at all who hears His voice will come forth, because the only reason they are hearing His voice is that God the Father is drawing them. God has given them ears to hear.

The Bible repeatedly says, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Only those who are chosen of God, who are born again believers, have ears to hear. And so you can see again that even in Revelation 3:20 the final decision is not man's. It is absolutely not man's. We are not born of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man. We're born of God.

Now if you're unsaved, and you're hearing all this, you can begin to ask, "Well, my. I don't know whether God has opened my ears. I don't know whether I am one of God's chosen ones. But I know this, I'm a sinner. I know this, that I'm unsaved. I know this, that I can't go on this way. And oh Lord, give me ears to hear. Oh Lord, could it be that my spiritual eyes might be opened? Oh Father, could it be that I might have the faith to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

And the very fact that you would begin to pray that way would indicate that God is already drawing you. He is already giving you ears to hear.

The Physical Versus the Spiritual Aims of Mankind (211D)

HC: Good evening . Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I wanted to ask you about election. I was studying something about this in a study, and I wanted to get your opinion on some things. First of all, the scripture is given in 1 Corinthians 15:46, that says, "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural and afterward that which is spiritual," which might indicate that the spiritual is to be over the natural. And it says that this law runs through the entire Word of God, in picture or type, when you look at people like Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Manasseh and Ephraim, and Esau and Jacob. In other words, there was one there representing the earthly man and fleshly pursuits, and there was another that was concerned about God. And I wondered what you thought about that.

HC: In other words, your question really is, Does the Bible consistently show through this fact that there is that which is of the flesh, that which is physical and that which is spiritual? And you of course are correct. These are the two lines that run all through the Bible.

The line of Cain was totally related to this earth. He built the first city. He got his security and his hope out of this earth. The line of Abel was that of a shepherd. He was a stranger and a pilgrim here and served as a pastor, caring for the sheep, a figure of every born again believer.

We see the same thing in Abraham. His brother Haram built the city, but Abraham again was a shepherd, a stranger and a pilgrim. We see it in Jacob and Esau also, the physical over against the spiritual.

We even see it today, you know. There are many Christians who are just terribly concerned about this earth. That's all they ever talk about, what this earth is

going to be. And they fail to realize that salvation has to do with something that is tremendously spiritual. It is related to Christ. It transcends this earth. It is far more glorious than anything this earth could ever produce.

CALLER: That's true. Some people are so concerned about the environment these days, about the earth.

HC: Yes. The same picture is there, that there are those who are beginning to think that it's the ultimate crime to destroy anything of this environment, because this is Mother Nature, whom they serve. And they fail to realize that this earth is not the bountiful Mother Nature, but that it is wearing out. It will not produce continuously for all of man's needs. And when it has worn out, then God will return. God has a prescribed program for that.

CALLER: You were talking about Cain. That interests me. So he did build a city. I think that reference says that they were the ones that dwelt in tents, and they made the instruments of iron, and things. Right? In other words, it was an industrial sort of thing.

HC: It's very significant, when you read Genesis 4, that all of the artisans, all of the industry, came from the line of Cain. They were the forgers in iron and bronze. Cain built the first city, they invented musical instruments. And when you study the line of Abel, you find nothing of this. He was a shepherd. That's all that you read. You go all the way to Noah, and you don't find that they built anything at all.

And you can see why this is. The world is deeply concerned about making this its place of security. And so it's deeply concerned about bigger and better cities, and all of the things that have to do with this life, because that's as far as they can see.

But the believer, the Bible teaches, is a stranger and a pilgrim here. It really is unimportant what kind of a house we live in. It's really unimportant what kind of a car we drive, it is unimportant how much money we have in the bank, or if we have any money in the bank. None of these things are important, because we're just passing through. We have a task now to be an ambassador of Christ, to live to His glory here in sharing the Word. But once that task is done, our destiny is to be with Christ forever. And first it's to be in our spirit with the Lord Jesus Christ in Heaven, and eternally it's to be in the New Heaven and the New Earth with Christ. We have a spiritual kingdom that is just as real as this earth, as real as any physical kingdom, but it is infinitely more glorious.

CALLER: Going along with this thing about the two natures, this study also talked about Esau and Jacob again, saying that the word hunter was used to describe Esau, but that Jacob was a very quiet man, dwelling in tents. Then it says that the word hunter is used of two men in the Old Testament. It's used of Nimrod, who was the founder of Babel, and Esau, from whom the Edomites descended. And it's significant that Babylon and Edom are mentioned in Isaiah and Revelation as an abomination to the Lord. In fact, He's utterly disgusted with them, especially since Babylon is the figure of sin, as you say. Right?

HC: Yes. Well, now you can see how the hunter figures. The hunter goes out, by his strength and by his ability, his stealth, his superiority, to hunt game, to find that which will provide for his needs. He is the master of his fate, the captain of his soul, so to speak. And that's a figure of unsaved man.

But the born again believer gets his food from God, like the Israelites receiving the manna from Heaven. They did not receive it because of their ability, or the fact that they were worthy in any way. They received it totally as a gift from God. And this is where we feed

spiritually. Everything that we have spiritually is a gift of God. It is not anything at all that we have achieved for ourselves.

CALLER: You've certainly shed some light on that. Thank you for spending time with me.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Praying in a Doomed Airplane (328B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. If a person is on an airplane that is about to crash, and he prays to God because he's in fear, what would happen to him?

HC: Well, if the plane crashed, the likelihood is that he would die in the crash. Since he is unsaved, he will be resurrected on the last day to stand before the judgment throne, to give an account of his life. All of his sins will be examined, and for each sin he will be condemned to hell.

The fact that a man prays does not in itself prove anything. All kinds of people pray. The more important question is, have I abandoned myself to God? Have I placed my trust altogether in Him as Savior and Lord? That's what's important.

It's pretty risky, you know, to wait until the plane is going to crash to start praying. It's pretty risky to wait until I'm old or until I have been told I have a terminal illness, to start praying. Ordinarily, in those situations we're so busy with dying, we're so busy with our terminal illness, that we find it's impossible to concentrate on this matter of my sins and my relationship to God.

It's far better to follow the Biblical mandate, "How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?" "Now is the day of salvation," the Bible says. Now is the time to get right with God.

Do "Good" People Go to Heaven? (398A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, good evening. My question is, do good people go to Heaven?

HC: The question is, do good people go to Heaven? It all depends on what you mean by good.

CALLER: Now I'm talking about people that are good, you know. They do the right things.

HC: Upright, decent, solid citizens of the world.

CALLER: With good principles, and good ethics, and good religious practices. They try to do the right thing by everybody.

HC: They practice the Golden Rule, and so on.

CALLER: Yes.

HC: No, they do not go to Heaven. That is the path to hell. Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The only way we can go into Heaven is to acknowledge the sad but dismal fact that we're a sinner, that all of our goodness is as filthy rags. It is self serving, it is not ultimately to God's glory. It's looking upon ourselves through rose-colored glasses, not really looking at ourselves against the standard, against the yardstick of the holiness of God. Once we measure our goodness, whatever we think this may be, against the perfection of God's holiness, then we see that really it isn't good at all. It's tainted with sin everywhere, and the wages of sin is death.

Therefore the only way we can go to Heaven is to acknowledge our sins, to cry out to God for mercy, and trust only in Christ as our Savior.

CALLER: Well, I think this is where a lot of people have a great

misunderstanding, just exactly what you're saying.

HC: I think you're correct. I think that lots of people feel that a good God certainly will look upon all of their good things they are doing, and forgive the few bad things they've done, that He'll weigh the good against the bad and come out in favor of the good, and certainly all is going to be well. That path will lead to hell.

CALLER: That's right. That's what I'm finding in my Christian walk. This is a question that I run into, and I'm glad you cleared that up. Of course it says in the Bible that we're just filthy rags, according to God's standard. But a lot of people believe that they're here on this earth, and they're doing to the best of their ability, not realizing that it's filthy rags. And when you tell them that, it kind of hurts them.

HC: Yes.

"I Don't Care if I Go to Hell" (732A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Is this a Christian station, where you talk about the Bible?

HC: Yes. This is a station where we're interested in encouraging people to the Bible. If you have a question, I'll try to relate it to the Bible.

CALLER: Okay. I don't care if I go to hell.

HC: You don't, care.

CALLER: I don't. I really don't.

HC: Why do you say that?

CALLER: Because, first of all, I couldn't believe in the Bible, because if I did I would feel like a robot: "You can't do this, you can't do that, God's watching you."

HC: Yes, I can see what you're saying. And of course the fact that you don't believe the Bible and you really don't think that the Bible means what it says when it talks about eternal damnation, of course doesn't mean that hell doesn't exist, does it?

CALLER: No.

HC: And the Bible indicates that it's everlasting torment. It is a terrible thing to come into the hands of an angry God. And when the Bible paints pictures of hell, it paints it in the language of the most terrible kinds of suffering. Now since you can't see hell, and you can't go anywhere to see people suffering in hell, it seems like that's only a figment of man's imagination, and maybe it's not real. And very boldly you can say, "Well, I don't care if I go to hell or not," but the fact is that doesn't change the matter of hell. Hell is still there. And if you die unsaved you're going to hell. You may say, "I don't care," but you'll care when you get there. And there is no escape from hell. It is eternal damnation.

CALLER: I just have a hard time, I don't know if it's pride (I hope it's not) or whatever, but I just have a hard time believing that.

HC: You mention that you hate to get to the point where you have to do this and you have to do that, and you just become a robot of some kind. Well, you know, before we're saved, before we're really a child of God, the Bible says that we're blinded by our sin. We're deceived by Satan. We're slaves of Satan, and he rules over us. And we really think we've got a lot of answers, but the fact is we don't have the truth at all.

Now let me just tell you something. Those who have really become children of God, those who have really trusted in Jesus as their Savior, are not robots. Nor do they find that it's just an uphill climb, a miserable existence, because they can't do this and they can't do the other thing. As a matter of fact, they have a lot more joy in their lives than people who are not saved. You see, when you're not saved of

course you would hate to always obey God, because in every part of your being you want to do your own thing. Man by nature is very selfish and just wants to do his own thing. But when you become a child of God, God makes you a new personality in a real sense. In your soul existence He gives you a brand new soul. And in that sense you have an earnest desire to do the will of God. And the joy of obedience to God will be far more wonderful than the miserable pleasure you get in doing your sin today.

Now I can only say these things as a fact because I've experienced these things. And the Bible tells us about these things. But you have not experienced that, so of course you can say, "Well, I just don't buy that."

CALLER: Yes, but man was created to do great things, be creative and be constructive, and so on. And yet when you look at the Bible, you can't do this or you're sinning, or you can't get rich or you're going to hell, etc.

HC: Well, you see, man was created, first of all, to have fellowship with God. The Bible opens up the curtain and really gives us the full explanation. You know, even heathen people sense that they ought to have some relationship with God. They'll worship an idol, or they'll worship the crocodiles. And they'll even get uneasy about the way they're living, and they'll offer sacrifices of some kind. Sometimes they'll even offer their children as a sacrifice, because deep in man's heart he realizes that there is a God and he's got to have some kind of a relationship with Him. And he'd like to figure out how to do it.

Now wonderfully, the Bible is God's book to us, that opens up the curtain and tells us the truth about ourselves. The Bible tells us that we were created in the image of God. We were created to have fellowship with Him. And that's where we can have our highest joy.

But the problem is that man rebelled against God. And so man's heart has become desperately wicked. And so we're in rebellion against God. And we're under the curse of God. And so we're really all messed up, and man cannot realize his highest goals and good. He can't live with maximum happiness and satisfaction, because he's estranged from God.

But when you become a child of God, then you are reunited with God, and then you find a real love for God in your heart. And you find that life really has meaning and purpose, and you no longer wonder about what's going to happen when you die. You know what's going to happen. The Bible tells us exactly what will happen when we die. And when you see troubles around and in your life, you know where they come from, because the Bible tells us. I'll tell you, the Bible is just absolutely a wonderful book. You can learn more truth there in a day than you could in a million years going to some of the great libraries and universities of our land, because the Bible gets right down to the very fundamental truth.

CALLER: Yes, but everybody interprets the Bible in their own.

HC: It's true that a lot of people don't regard the Bible properly. The Bible insists that we are to believe it alone and in its entirety as the Word of God. The Bible insists that we are to interpret the Bible by the Bible. In other words, the Bible is God's whole textbook for man, and all the information is there. We simply have to check the Bible against the Bible. And then we will come to truth.

Now if we don't obey the Bible's rules, then we can go off in all directions and come up with wrong conclusions and doctrines and practices, and really go haywire. But if we really go to the Bible trusting it is the Word of God, and this is God speaking to me, as we go from page to page, and when we see something

significant checking to see if there's anything else in the Bible that relates to it, slowly on we do come to truth. And I can tell you, it's wonderful. It's really wonderful to know that I'm not faced with hell. I know that God is my Savior. I know that I am free to live a life that is pleasing to God, and I am not afraid of wanting to do the things that the world thinks are important.

You know, when we're unsaved, we really think, "Boy, if could only do this and if I could only do that as much as I want." We think that's great. But the fact is, when you have all that you want of any kind of sin, there really is no ultimate satisfaction. You simply want to go deeper into that sin, or you want to try out another sin. A fellow tries marijuana, and he gets jaded with that, so he tries some opium or some speed, or something else. And if that doesn't help for a while, then maybe he'll try alcohol. You just go from one thing to another, looking for something and never quite getting it. You think for the moment, that you have really found joy, but then the next thing you know it isn't there. And in the meanwhile you find that your life is just falling apart. And your health is failing and you're messing up in every way, and you wonder, "What has happened?" Well that's because you're not doing it God's way. If you do it God's way, God has laid down rules so that we can have maximum happiness.

CALLER: But I went to church a couple of Sundays ago, and the preacher said that all people who want to get rich are going to hell. And I can't see that. If a man sets a goal for himself and goes after that goal and becomes rich, I think that person deserves it. I don't care if there's a God or not.

HC: Let's put it this way. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that we cannot be rich and be a child of God. But we will have priorities in our life. When we have become a child of God, we'll find that getting rich is not the first priority. Oh, God may bless us. I know businessmen who are Christians, and God blesses their business, and they really become very wealthy. But because they are children of God, they have an earnest desire to make that wealth available to send forth the Gospel into the world, because they have a different priority.

Now an unsaved person becomes rich only because he thinks that this is going to make it possible for him to please himself. He can live in the biggest possible house and drive the finest possible car, and have all the other things that money can buy. That is his pursuit. And he'll get a certain pleasure from that. But he'll never be satisfied. He'll go after more riches so he can have more expensive things. And all the time he'll be worrying that somebody is going to take it away from him.

But when you become a child of God, then you realize that money isn't that big a deal. It's nice to have money, but there are more important things than money, and ultimately it doesn't make that much difference what kind of house we live in or what kind of a car we drive, or what kind of clothes we wear, because we've got something that is far more precious, far more wonderful than the things that money can buy.

Now until you are a child of God, of course you can't understand that. And so your question is not, "Shall I become rich or not?" That's not the question you have to face. What you have to face is, "Suppose I died tonight." And remember that you don't have any guarantee that you'll be alive tomorrow morning, anymore than I do, or anyone than anybody else does. And suppose there really is hell. Suppose that the Bible is true. And if you die without Christ, it means that you'll wake up on the last day and you'll have to answer for your sins, and you're going to be removed into eternal damnation.

You can say, "All right, I'll run that risk. But until I die, I'll be able to live the way I want to live." Well all right. Let's examine the kind of bargain that you're getting. You're going to get a few hours or a few days or months or years of doing your own thing. And you're going to trade it for an eternity in hell. Now that to me is a pretty bad bargain. That's pretty awful. And frankly, the more I study the Bible, if I were unsaved I'd be climbing the wall with fear. I don't want to go to hell. I'd be running out of my skin with fear, because hell, according to what I read in the Bible, is certain and sure, and I don't want to go to hell.

But wonderfully, not only does the Bible tell us about hell (and it really does; it's got a lot to say about hell); it also tells us of a way of escape. And it's a wonderful way of escape. And that way of escape is to just recognize the truth, that if I'm unsaved I'm a sinner, I'm under the wrath of God, I'm going to hell, I deserve to go to hell. And the only way is through the Lord Jesus Christ. And I begin to cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me. I'm a sinner. I want to believe in Jesus. I want Him to be my Savior. Oh Lord, help me to believe in Him."

CALLER: Have you ever heard of hope?

HC: Hope for what?

CALLER: I mean, everybody that lives has a hope.

HC: Yes. Everybody that lives has a hope. And what hope do they have? They have a hope, first of all, that they'll just keep living for another day. And they're hoping that they'll live to a ripe old age. They don't want to even think of death.

And they hope that everything is going to be all right on the other side of the grave, that maybe since most of the people are like they are most people can't be wrong, and somehow it's going to be all right.

Well, that can sustain them. But the Bible opens up the picture and tells us whether that hope has any reality. And the first thing the Bible says is, Look, you have no guarantee you'll be alive tomorrow. You can hope you'll be alive tomorrow, but a lot of people are going to die tonight - in an accident or from an illness, or, for unexplained reasons. We can die for a lot of reasons. And so your hope that you're going to live to a ripe old age is on really thin ground.

But when it comes to life after death, the hope that everything is going to be all right has absolutely no basis in fact. That is simply a vain, empty hope. The fact is that it is appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment. And the wages of sin is death. The Bible is absolutely insistent that there is hell to pay. And so that hope is totally empty.

Now on the other hand, when you become a child of God, you have a hope. But it is a hope that is rooted in absolute solid fact. It is the fact that I know my sins have been paid for, that Jesus Christ is my Savior, and therefore I cannot go to hell. Christ has already endured hell on my behalf. It is a hope that is rooted in the fact that when I die I know that I'm going to be with the Lord Jesus in glory, where there's not going to be any more suffering or sorrow. It is a hope that is absolutely certain and sure, and the Bible speaks of it as a hope. But it's an entirely different kind of hope than the hope of the unsaved.

CALLER: I had a friend that thought the Bible was a lie. And he ended up dead a couple weeks ago.

HC: All right. Now imagine that had been you. Just imagine that had been you. That's awful close to home. He thought it was a lie; that's his privilege. That didn't make it a lie, though. The fact is that the Bible is still the Bible. It is still the Word of God. And your friend, if he died unsaved (and according to your testimony, we'd have to assume that this is so) is going to spend eternity

under damnation. And frankly, that's the most awful thing that could have happened to your friend. And except for God's grace, that could have been you, because you have no more reason to be alive today than he had to be alive. I have no idea why he died, whether it was an accident or self-inflicted, or whatever it was. But the fact is, it could have been you. And now you're still alive. And the Bible says, "How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?" And so you can still do something about it. You can face yourself honestly and start crying out to God for His mercy.

CALLER: But don't you think we're going to destroy ourselves anyway in a nuclear war?

HC: Whether man kills off each other by war or not, and whether two people with a pistol kill each other, or whether it's some people killing each other with bows and arrows, or whether they're dropping bombs on each other, or whether it's through a nuclear holocaust, it doesn't make any difference. In every case, when man is dead the next thing that he will face if he's unsaved, is eternal damnation.

And the very fact that we live in a world that is so threatened by war makes it even more imperative that I know that I'm a child of God. Suppose some nation drops a nuclear bomb on us. And that could happen. That certainly could happen. Then none of us would be alive. We'd be dead. But that doesn't change the fact of where we're going. Whether we died of a nuclear bomb or whether we died of old age at the age of 93, or whether we died of an illness when we were 19, we're dead. And there are certain things that follow. And for the unsaved it means eternal damnation. The Bible says that we're going to be resurrected on the last day. And we're going to stand for judgment if we're unsaved. God keeps an account of every idle word that we ever spoke, or every thought that we ever expressed. God keeps accounts of this. And we have to answer for this. And if anything was sinful, it is enough to send us to hell.

CALLER: I have a hard time believing that.

HC: Surely you do. Everything within you doesn't want to believe it. You'd give your eye teeth that it wouldn't be true, because it's too horrible. It's too terrible. But that doesn't change the fact that it is true. But wonderfully, God not only tells us that it's true, but He gives the way of escape. He tells us that if we will cast ourselves on Christ, if we will cry out to Him, if we will entrust our life to Him, we can be saved.

CALLER: Are you saying that God knows everything everybody does, billions and billions of people?

HC: You're saying, how can God know all of this? There are 4.5 billion people approximately in the world, and maybe there have been another 5 to 8 billion who have lived before this time and have subsequently died. Can God know all of this?

Look. Have you ever looked at this world, at how intricate it is? Have you ever looked in a microscope or a telescope? Have you ever noticed that scientists will struggle trying to figure out what life is? Well, God created all this. God is infinite God. He spoke and it came into being. And for God to know and have accounts of all of the lives of 10 or 20 billion people is nothing at all. That's nothing for God. God is God. And remember we're reckoning with God. We can't change that fact. All you have to do is look at this creation to know there is a God, because in no way could animals and plants and mankind have come into existence without a master designer, someone to design them and then make them originally. That's the only way that could have happened. So there's got to be a God. And if there's a God, it means you and I have got to answer to that God.

That's why the evolutionists are so beset with their blind faith in evolution. They're hoping that there is no God. And evolution is set up under the assumption there is no God, that it all happened by blind chance, which is ridiculous. But evolutionists insist on this because they don't want to face up to the fact that there is a God. The moment they recognize there is a God, then they know they've got to answer to that God. And that's unacceptable. They know they're in trouble, because mankind, deep in his heart, knows that he's going to be found guilty, and then judgment is going to come.

CALLER: I used to be a Christian. I know exactly what you've been talking about. And then I went back to my old ways. And it's hard for me to get back to being a Christian. I don't know if it's ego or what.

HC: I'll tell you what the problem is. You were never a Christian. And I say that not judging you. But the Bible says that when we become saved we become a new creature. We are born from above. We are given a brand new soul. And in our new soul, in our new spirit, we never want to sin again. And so had you truly become a child of God, if you had really become born again, then when you started drifting into your old ways, there would have been a violent struggle set up within you.

I'll tell you what experience you had. You had the same experience that many have. You joined up with Christians. You said, "Yes, that makes a lot of sense, to be a believer in Christ." And you joined. And you began to live like a Christian. But it was uphill work, because you had not become saved. And neither in your body nor your soul had you become saved, so pretty soon you got sick and tired of this trying to live like a Christian. And finally you just slipped back into your old ways. And that's why you reluctantly think about trying to live like a Christian again. It's going against your grain, because the heart of an unsaved person doesn't want to obey God. But if you really become a child of God, so that you're really born again, then there is a miracle that has taken place in your life, in your soul existence, that part of you that leaves the body at death and goes to be with Christ. You have experienced the resurrection in your soul. And in that part of your life you never want to sin again. And so when you start drifting into sin there is conflict that develops, and you're not really happy unless you are living obediently before Christ.

But marvelously, even though you are not a Christian, you can become a Christian. But you've got to do it God's way. You've got to look at yourself honestly and cry out to God for His mercy and faith that you might believe in Christ as your Savior. To become a Christian is the moment of truth, when I see myself as a bankrupt, rotten sinner, under the wrath of God, deserving hell. And all I know is I don't want to go to hell. I'm just frightened out of my skin because of hell.

CALLER: Well, I appreciate your time.

HC: All right. I'm very glad you called tonight, because you're making statements that a lot of people would like to make. And I also perceive that you are struggling with this to some degree. Otherwise you wouldn't have taken time to call. But you just reflect on this now. Suppose I die tonight. Your friend died a couple of weeks ago. Suppose that had been you. And remember, every human being dies, unless Christ comes first, at the end of time. And then it's the same as if we died anyway. But every human being dies. And we can die as a young man just as well as an old man, as you know. And remember that no matter what you think about hell, or what your friends think about hell, the fact is, the Bible teaches us that hell is absolutely real. It's absolutely certain. And so as

long as you live unsaved, you're walking a very very dangerous line.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ON SALVATION

Can I Know if I am Saved? (099D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: How can I determine whether I or another person is a born again believer?

HC: The way we can discover whether we're a born again believer is to look at ourselves very very honestly. To be a born again believer is to arrive at the moment of truth, when we dare to face ourselves exactly as we are.

Now first of all, have I been ready to admit that I am the awful sinner that the Bible declares that I am? The Bible says "There is none righteous, no, not one." The Bible says that all of us have gone astray, that our best works are as filthy rags, and that because of our sins we're under the wrath of God. Am I really ready and willing to face this awful, this traumatic truth about myself? As long as we think that there is righteousness within ourselves, that of ourselves we are worthy in any way, then we don't understand really what salvation is all about.

Secondly, as we look at ourselves as honestly as this, do we really find in our hearts a desire to live for Christ? Not because it's going to get us anything, but simply because that is our desire. We want to live for Christ, and the proof of it is that earnestly we are turning away from sin. As we look at our life, is there a positive, definite difference from what it was before we were saved?

And thirdly, do we accept without reservation the biblical truth that our sins have all been forgiven? Are we secure in that trust, that Jesus means what he says?

Now when we can do this honestly, it doesn't mean we've become perfect. But when we can do this honestly, we can know that we're born again believers, because this will only come to born again believers. In 1 John 2:4 we read, "By this we can know Him, if we keep His commandments." And this is keeping His commandments, just by an inner desire that is within us to do this. This is the evidence of being born again.

A born again believer is someone who will have a real desire to be obedient to whatever he finds in the Bible. And he will be ready to accept whatever the Bible teaches. This is one of the hardest pills to swallow, that if Christ is really our Savior and Lord, then we have to be open to everything that the Bible teaches, and it alone is the divine Word for our living.

And this means that from time to time we may have to give up some doctrine or some practice that we here-to-fore thought was perfectly acceptable because certain men, whom we have lots of trust in, have so taught us. The Bible must be the final authority.

CALLER: How does the Lord take sin out of our lives?

HC: The Lord takes sin out of our lives by working through our repentance. We must repent of our sins. If we have a sin in our life that, you're speaking about a specific sin?

CALLER: No. Any of our sins. I just wonder if he works through us as we read the Word, or if we pray and He takes it out that way, just any sin that we might have.

HC: Well, let's start out with a person who is unsaved. He is a sinner. Now by grace he has been saved, and God gives him a new heart. And then there is found in his life an earnest desire to live for Christ. And the evidence of salvation is that he knows that it's wrong to be a drunkard. He knows it's wrong to live in

adultery. He knows it's wrong to steal. And so he stops these things.

But then, as a born again believer, he discovers a sin that is still troubling. Maybe he wasn't really conscious of that other sin before he was saved. Or possibly this sin just began to kind of work up in his life as he grew older. But he becomes conscious of this sin. Now what does he do?

God works through our repentance. We must repent of our sin. We must turn away from it. We must look upon it as rebellion against God, as an act of anarchy against our Savior, and take any steps we can to cut that sin off. And God of course will strengthen us as we do it.

And when we do this, then God will also take the desire for that sin from us. But we can pray and pray and pray for removal of sin. But if we don't repent, the next time the opportunity arises, we'll go right back into that sin. The fact is, if we have not repented, even while we're praying, "Oh Lord, forgive me for that sin, I don't want to sin any more," we know in our heart that tomorrow, when the opportunity arises, we will fall into that same sin again. This is because we have not repented. We aren't really rebelling with ourselves that this is rebellion against God and that this sin has got to go. God works through our repentance.

CALLER: Would it be our conscience? Is that it?

HC: No. Our conscience is the way God works to remind us that we are a sinner, and He keeps us uneasy. But repentance is an act of our will, where we look that sin squarely in the eye. It's sin, dirty, rotten sin. It's spitting in the face of Christ, if you will. It's an act of open rebellion against our Savior. And here I claim to be a child of Christ. And yet time after time I willfully walk into that sin. I willfully do this. Now what kind of business is this? This sin has got to go. And so I can't stand this any longer, that I'm going to be a slave of this sin. "Oh Lord strengthen me as I turn away from it." And ruthlessly I cut off that sin from my life. That is the way God works. And of course obviously I am praying, "Oh Lord, strengthen me. Oh Lord, give me a hatred for this. Oh Father, open my eyes to the awfulness of this sin, so that I'll be so angry at it that I'll never want to do it again."

After I'm Saved, Then What? (114A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I'd like to ask a question. First of all, I just became a Christian. Some people say that they're filled with the Holy Spirit. But I just feel like there's something missing. I've accepted Christ as my Savior but I guess the joy, or something, is missing. It's just not quite right. I was wondering if you knew.

HC: What do you think it means to accept Christ as your Savior?

CALLER: Well, it means that I know that He died for me, for my sins, on the cross.

HC: Okay. What else does it mean?

CALLER: It means eternal life.

HC: Yes. You see, to become born again means that we have entrusted our life to Christ as our Savior, and we have repented of our sins. We have turned away from our sins. We have come face to face with the ugly fact that we're sinners, we're under the wrath of God, we're going to hell because of our sins, and we've had it up to here. We don't want to sin anymore. And in desperation we cry out to God, "Oh Lord, have mercy on me." We discover that Christ made provision for our sins if we'll only trust in Him, and so we go to Him and turn our lives over to Him. This is what salvation is all about.

Now when we know that our sins have been forgiven, when we know that we have become a child of God, now let's think about this a little bit. Before I was saved, I was headed for hell. I was under the wrath of God. I was in deep and terrible trouble. Man, if I would have died tonight, what a terrible thing! I'd spend an eternity in hell. But now, praise God! He saved me. He made me His child. I don't have to face hell anymore.

Do you think that's going to make you very joyful? Do you think that's going to make you very joyful? If you knew that you would have to spend the rest of your natural days in jail, and you knew this, absolutely, and there was no way of escape, and you'd be fussing with this for days and days and days, and weeping about it, and grieved about it, "Come November 1 I've got to go to jail," and it's a terrible jail, no one ever came out of there alive, and then an hour before you went to jail you got a pardon, and you didn't have to go, do you think you'd be happy?

Okay. You see, that's the joy, that's the joy that comes to us when we are born again believers. Now there are lots of people who are talking about some kind of activity that's going to go on after we're saved. After we're saved, we're going to be filled with the Holy Spirit, or after we're saved the Holy Spirit is going to start doing things in our life, and so on. That isn't what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that the whole transaction is wrapped up in salvation. That's the big deal, that I've been taken out of Satan's dominion, and I've been transferred into the kingdom of Christ, that I've become born again, that I have eternal life, that I know that I'm never going to have to face God for my sins. That's salvation. And there's nothing more, except the resurrection of my body, and I can't have that until the Last Day. But that also is guaranteed to be given to me. And the day will come when I will receive my resurrected body, and I can rejoice in the Lord, too, that that's going to be coming.

But now I've got to get busy and walk by faith. Now a lot of books that we read today, a lot of pastors that are preaching today, they make you uneasy. They give you the idea that once you're saved then glorious things are going to be happening in your life. You're going to have this experience and that experience, you're going to be realizing this gift, that gift, and so on, and so on. And when this doesn't happen, we feel like we're second rate Christians. We feel like somehow we've been shortchanged.

But I don't know what kind of a salvation they're talking about. They're not talking about the salvation of the Bible. The Bible teaches that we walk by faith, not by sight. The Bible says, "The just shall live by faith," just trusting that everything we read in the Bible is true. And we walk that way. We walk not seeing Jesus Christ visibly, not seeing signs and wonders. We walk with the sure knowledge that we have experienced the miracle of regeneration, because the Bible says so. We walk with the sure knowledge that we are a child of God because the Bible says so. We walk with the sure knowledge that our sins have all been forgiven, because the Bible says so.

And so now our task is to go out and be a witness. And God qualifies us at the time we are saved by filling us with the Holy Spirit. We're not filled again and again. The language of being filled with the Holy Spirit has to do with being qualified to be a witness.

We are to be busy exercising control over our bodies that are still subject to sin, growing in sanctification, that is, becoming more and more holy by letting Christ's will be seen in our lives. That's the walk of the Christian.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome.

Can You Lose Your Salvation? (197A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: My question about salvation is, once you accept Christ, are you saved forever? This question came up in our house. I said that if you blatantly disregarded Christ and went back into the world, and Christ happened to come that day, you were not saved. Was that the correct answer?

HC: Let me ask you a question, to help you think this out. When you talk about being saved, what are we saved from?

CALLER: We are saved from, now, let's see.

HC: What are we saved from? Are we saved from our misery? Are we saved from our loneliness? What are we saved from?

CALLER: Well, not saved from our loneliness. We're saved so that we can be with Christ.

HC: Yes, but we're saved from something. You know, if someone is drowning in the river, and you jump in, and you save that person, you have saved that person from drowning.

CALLER: We're saved from the devil.

HC: We're saved from the devil. Do you really think that that is all we are saved from?

CALLER: Well, I say that we are saved from all the things that are not good for us, that we will go to live with Christ.

HC: All right. Now let's see if we can expand that a little farther. The Bible teaches that "the wages of sin is death." And it's referring to eternal condemnation by God. And the Bible teaches that all of us are sinners.

Now therefore, the wrath of God abides on us before we're saved. We're under the condemnation of God. We are to spend an eternity in hell for our sins. Now this is what we're saved from. We're saved from hell. We're saved from the wrath of God. We're saved from Judgment Day. And of course we're also saved from Satan. But Satan isn't the biggest threat. The biggest threat is the wrath of God that we have to pay for, although how awful that is, we can't really know. The Bible uses some horribly ugly language, to describe how awful this really is.

All right. Now if in order for Christ to save me it was necessary that He take upon Himself all of my sins, and in fact the Bible says He became sin for me, and He was found guilty and He was punished for my sins (the wrath of God came upon Him - that's what happened when He went to the cross), now all of my sins have been paid for, every one of my sins. When Christ went to the cross, He looked down the corridors of time, and He saw me. And He saw every sin I would ever commit, before I was saved or after I was saved, every single sin. And He took upon Himself all of these sins, and they were all paid for.

CALLER: For the rest of your life?

HC: There is no way that I can ever be threatened by hell. There's no way that I can ever come under condemnation. That's why the Bible says so confidently, in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Or in John 5:24 it says that "those who hear His words and believe on Him have eternal life, and they do not come into judgment. They have passed from death into life."

If you could think of a sin that I could commit that could make me lose this salvation, then it would mean that God is lying to me. Then it would mean that He didn't really become sin for me. He hadn't really paid for all of my sins, because there was one sin He didn't cover.

CALLER: What is the point in our trying to be like Christ and to live like Christ?

HC: The fact is that when we actually have become born again, we have become a brand new creature in our souls. We have experienced the resurrection of our souls. And in that part of our life, which is as real a part of us as our bodies, we're a new person.

Now in our new soul, we never want to sin again. 1 John 3:9 teaches that that which is born of God cannot sin. The only reason we still sin as believers is that our body hasn't been saved yet. And that's also a real part of us. But in our soul we never want to sin again.

First of all, there is an ongoing earnest desire, because I have my new soul, to live for Him. This is the desire of my heart, to live for Christ. It's as natural with me now as it was once natural, with every fiber of my body, to want to live in sin.

Now in my soul I want to live for Christ. In my body I still lust after sin. So there's a conflict going on. So what happens? Let's say that I begin to sin. I tell a lie, or I begin to have lustful thoughts, or whatever. Immediately I feel very uncomfortable. In my soul I'm doing what is contrary to my new nature, and there's a struggle that's going on. And I can't stay with this sin very long before I begin to cry out to God, "Oh God, have mercy on me. Father, help me to get victory over this sin. How can I live this way?"

As a born again believer, I don't want to live in sin. More than that, if I would persist in sin, I must remember that God has bought me by the price of His blood. I am His possession, and He indwells me in the Person of the Holy Spirit. And God has something to say about this. And so He would begin to chastise. He'll begin to deal with me, in order that I'll straighten this matter out. It is not God's program that I am to live in sin.

And I don't want to live in sin, either, even though I am troubled by it because I still have a body that lusts after sin.

You see, the Gospel is not one of fear. A lot of people are led to believe, "Now look. You're saved. But you watch out now. You be sure that you keep all the commandments, because if you don't keep all the commandments, you're going to lose your salvation." Now that isn't what the Bible teaches. We aren't under fear. We're not under duress. We keep the commandments because we love to keep the commandments, because we belong to Christ.

We read the Bible, as a born again believer, if we've really become born again, and it's not a threat to us. We read it knowing that it reveals sin in our lives, and we'll never be perfect. But we're glad that it does. And we have a real desire to be obedient to it as we read it.

CALLER: In other words, what you're saying is that when we really accept Christ, we want to do right, and we can't lose. And if we just blatantly go on, we have just never really accepted Christ.

HC: It means we've never become born again. You see, the language of "accepting Christ" is not really Biblical language. Nowhere does it talk about accepting Christ. It talks about believing in Him. That means trusting Him with our whole life, so that He is Lord of our life, so that He is King over our life, and we trust Him that all of our sins have been forgiven. Our will has become surrendered to Him.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: I hope this will help a little bit.

CALLER: It will help, and with all the passages I'm reading, I'm certain to get a real clear understanding of this. I thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Can God "Give Up" on a Christian? (226C)

CALLER: I'd like to ask a question, and I'll take my answer over the air. You

mentioned to a caller that there is a time when God will give a person up to, I guess, his own sinful nature. Does that also refer to Christians?

HC: I'll try to answer that question.

The question is raised: In the light of the Biblical information that there's a time when God gives a person up, because of his continued sinful desires, can that also refer to Christians?

Now if we're talking about born again believers, of course this could never happen. Let's think about this for a moment. What are we saved from? We're saved from our sins, from the guilt that comes against us because of our sins. Christ became sin for us. He paid for all of our sins. He stood guilty before God on our behalf, for all of our sins, and God poured out His wrath upon Him, so that the penalty was completely paid.

Therefore, there is no way in which a born again believer could ever be given up by God. A born again believer is safe in the hands of God forever. His sins have all been paid for. There is no sin that he could ever commit that would ever estrange him from God. The Bible emphasizes that we have eternal life, we cannot come into judgment, and nothing can separate us from the love of God. No one can snatch us out of His hand. These are all statements that the Bible uses to emphasize the certainty that we will never be given up by God.

Now however, the word Christian frequently is spoken of in a broader sense. Many many people call themselves Christians. And they really believe that they've accepted Christ, and they have a relationship with God through Christ. Therefore they are Christians.

But for everyone who is a born again believer, who has actually become a child of God, there are others who call themselves Christians who never became born again. Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3, "You must be born again."

You have to become a new creature. And the only way this can be is by looking at yourself honestly, that you are a sinner, hopelessly lost. You're under the wrath of God, and there's nothing you can do about your sins. Then you begin to cry out to God for mercy. And you throw yourself on the mercies of God and trust in Christ as your Savior. This is the path to salvation.

But there are many people who have a different idea of what salvation is. They are quite convinced that they are saved. They use the words "blood of Christ" and "the virgin birth" and "the resurrection," and "salvation." All of these terms are used. But to them salvation means to accept Christ as my Savior, whatever that means. We're not really sure what that means. It means that I'm on the bandwagon for Christ. I'm identified with Christ. I am trying to live like a Christian would. I'm trying to study the Bible and do what a Christian does. And I'm really desperately trying to live the good life, so that I will always stand approved before God.

Now such a person would end up in hell, because effectively he is trying to get to God by his own merit, by his good works, by his own personal worthiness. And this kind of a path is not the salvation of the Bible. That is not the path that leads to becoming born again. That does not lead to the path of grace. That's a path of works. That's a salvation that is in the mind of man, not the salvation of the Bible.

And I'm afraid there are going to be many many people on Judgment Day who will say, "I accepted Jesus as my Savior. What am I doing here?" And the reason is, they have never become born again.

The path to becoming born again is the path of first becoming of a broken and a contrite heart, of seeing the ugly, ugly, dismal truth about myself, that I'm a

sinner, and that I'm in terrible trouble with God, and that only in Christ is there a way of escape.

Well, thank you for sharing that question.

Was There Salvation Before the Cross? (227A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I would like to know if you could give me some information about what happened to people prior to Jesus Christ. I know that in the Old Testament they were under the Law, and I know that the Jews also sacrificed. But I was just wondering, did Adam and Eve, when they died, go to hell? You know what I'm talking about?

HC: Your question really is, what kind of salvation did God have for the people before Christ went to the cross? Isn't that really your question?

CALLER: A lot of people say that there were certain dispensations, or whatever you want to call them. I don't really know.

HC: A lot of people say a lot of things, but that doesn't necessarily mean that what they're saying is Biblical. Let me read of Noah. Now Noah lived 3,000 years before Abraham, and he lived about 7,000 years ago. So he's a fairly ancient individual, isn't he?

And in Genesis 6:8 we read, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Now what's that word grace? We're saved by grace, aren't we? Noah was saved exactly as we are saved.

Now let me read from Romans 4, which is going to speak about Abraham. Now Abraham lived over 4,000 years ago, and he lived at least 2,000 years before the cross. And so he's a pretty good example of someone in the Old Testament. And in Romans 4, we read in verse 3, "Abraham believed, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."

And it goes on: "He received circumcision as a sign (this is verse 11) or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, and likewise the father of the circumcised, who are not merely circumcised but also follow the example of the faith which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised."

So Abraham is not only spoken of as the father of all believers, but he is also spoken of as being saved by faith, exactly as you and I are saved. God has only one plan of salvation. There's only one plan of salvation that has been true throughout the ages. God does not have two or three or four plans of salvation. There's only one plan of salvation.

And that plan of salvation is all tied up with the cross, with Christ as the Mediator. Now the Old Testament believers who placed their trust in God anticipated the shed blood of Christ and were saved by the work of Christ on the cross, whereas we look back on the finished work of Christ on the cross and trust in God and are saved.

We look back on the finished work of Christ on the cross, and trust in God, and are saved. So they were saved exactly as we are saved. And the nation of Israel, which really was predominantly the church of the Old Testament, although it was augmented by certain proselytes, like Rahab the Harlot and Ruth the Moabitess, and so on, really had in it only a small percentage who were actually born again believers, exactly as the church is today.

The church today is predominantly composed of people of the Gentile nations, although it's augmented by blood descendants of Abraham, Jews. God does not have one way to the Father

for a Jew and another for the Gentile.

CALLER: All those people went to hell?

HC: Everyone who was not saved went to hell, the same as everyone who is not saved today is going to go to hell.

CALLER: So Adam and Eve probably went to hell.

HC: The likelihood is that they were saved. While there are a couple of suggestions in the Bible, we can only speculate. We know that Abel, their son, certainly was saved. The evidence is very certain about that. We know that Cain was not.

But we know in the days of the Flood, for example, in Noah's day, the world could have been populated by a million people, perhaps. I don't think it was larger than that, guessing from what I can read in the Bible. But there were only eight who were saved at that time.

Just as when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. There were only three or four who were saved – not more than three, actually. For example, when Israel was in the wilderness, the Bible says in Hebrews 3 that Israel perished in the wilderness because of unbelief. And so there were only a handful of believers in that situation, too. The number of those who were saved was just pitifully small.

But there is only one salvation. You see, Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." And so whether they lived in the Old Testament or the New Testament, there was only one salvation.

When Abraham died, who was a saved man, he left his body and went to be with the Lord in Heaven just exactly as you or I will leave our body and go to be with the Lord when we die.

CALLER: They were showing their faith in God by sacrificing these animals, because that was the way that He told them?

HC: The question is, how did the sacrifice of animals really fit into this? Yes, in the sacrifice of the animals God was giving them a word picture of the nature of the sacrifice that would be required by the coming Messiah. Now if they sacrificed the animals thinking that they merited something by this, which was fairly characteristic with the nation of Israel, then it left them without a Savior, because we cannot ever be saved by our works or by personal merit.

But if they sacrificed the animals, like Abel did, because through this they were anticipating the salvation that was to be provided by the Messiah, and they were sacrificing only in obedience to God because they loved God, then of course it was the activity of a born again believer.

What is the Proper Way of Consecration? (244E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: What is the proper way of consecration? Is it just fasting and praying, and getting yourself aside to God? Or can you divide it up?

HC: What is the proper way of consecration? Actually, consecration has to do with looking at myself honestly: Am I really committed to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Now the first thing that we ought to do is get more and more acquainted with the will of God, the God who has saved us. And the only way we can do this is by reading the Bible. The more we read the Bible, the more we're going to know God's will for our lives, the more we're going to know how we are to live. This I would say is the first thing to do, to become as acquainted as we possibly can with God's Word. Because as we read the Word of God, our eyes will be more and more focused on God, on Christ. And this will help us to trust Him more. And thus we will be moving toward consecration.

Now prayer is very helpful. And it's especially helpful if we're reading the Bible. As we see our weaknesses, as we measure ourselves against the standard of God's holiness as revealed in the Bible, we cry out to God, "Oh Lord, strengthen me in this department of my life. Help me to repent of this sin or that sin. Give me a hatred for it." Our prayers become very meaningful you see. They relate right to what we read in the Bible.

Now we can go through all kinds of pious activity, like fasting and lots of other things. But it finally is going to be very meaningless. The important thing is that we honestly recognize that in order for us to become more holy, in order for us to grow in sanctification, we've got to know the will of God. And we can't know the will of God unless we read about it from the Bible. The Bible is the revelation of the will of God.

And once we read about it, and we really mean business that we want to be obedient to it, then we're going to find that we've got a lot of things to pray about.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

What is a Carnal-Minded Christian? (251C)

HC: Good evening Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Could you tell me, what is a carnal-minded Christian? And another thing I would like to know, if a person says he is born again and he has recognizable sin in his life, does he have to repent of that sin and acknowledge it and try to forsake it as the Lord gives him strength? Could you explain that to me please?

HC: All right. Fine. The question is raised concerning a carnal-minded Christian. And what does a Christian do when he finds sin in his life? Is he supposed to forsake that sin and turn away from it.

Now the idea of a carnal-minded Christian really comes from I Corinthians 3. We read there in verse 1, "But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh [and in this passage here we're going to find the word flesh and carnal as being one and the same word - "but as men of the flesh" - that is, as carnal men], as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food. For you were not ready for it. And even yet you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh [that is, you are still carnal]. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh [that is, are you not carnal?] and behaving like ordinary men? For when one says, I belong to Paul" and so on.

Now actually, if we read this very carefully, God is not saying, or the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is not saying that these men are believers, that they are babes in Christ. He's saying that as a babe in Christ you have very little showing of spirituality, if you were a babe in Christ. But as the language goes on, he's indicating that they are in the flesh. They are really not of Christ.

Actually, it is very difficult, in fact, it's a contradiction of terms, to be a carnal-minded Christian. You see, the Bible says in I John 3:9, "That which is born of God cannot sin." Now if we have become a child of God, a real born again believer, then in our soul we have experienced the new birth. We have been born of God. And from now on we will not sin. We don't want to sin, because we are born of God.

Now it's true we still have a body that lusts after sin. And in our body we will think in terms of the flesh. We will be carnal. But what happens in our life if we are a child of God, if we're really a child of God? Let's first of all look at what happens if we're not a child of God. We're simply a Christian, but we've not

become born again. We're not saved. We're a member of the congregation and we're looked upon as a Christian, but we're not saved.

Well, if we begin to live in the flesh, actually, both in body and in soul we like that sin, because we're not born of God. There's nothing in us that is saying, "you can't live that way." Oh, our conscience will bother a little bit. But it doesn't take long to sear our conscience. And as long as we can get away with that sin, as long as we can not come to grief because of that sin, we're going to continue in that sin because that agrees entirely with our old nature which is still present within us, both in our body and our soul.

Now the man in I Corinthians 5 who was living with his father's wife is typical of this. I've heard some say that he actually was saved. Well, that can't be. That can't be. Someone who would be living in this gross fornication in the church, so that it became a matter of public knowledge and the elders of the church undoubtedly were warning him about this, and yet he continued in this grievous sin, is giving evidence of someone who doesn't have any idea of what salvation is. He doesn't have any idea of what it really means to be born again. That man was carnal. He was carnal-minded. But he was not a Christian. He was a Christian only in the nominal sense. He was not a Christian in the born from above, the born again sense.

And unfortunately, our churches have many people like this within them. They are those who believe they are Christians because they do what Christians do, because they have joined the church membership, and so on. And yet they have never become born again, born from above. And so in their practices they live very much like the world. On Sunday they can be sweet and light and happy and wonderful believers. But during the week, in their normal living, you can hardly tell them from the world. They are carnal-minded Christians, but they're not born again. They're not really Christians. They are really carnal-minded.

Now on the other hand, if you become a born again believer, now you've received your resurrected soul, and now you commit a sin. You get into an activity moving toward adultery, let's say. Or you tell a lie, or whatever. Your conscience not only is troubling you, but in your soul you are being violated. And while you may struggle with that sin for a long time, nevertheless every time you become involved in that sin it's not a happy proposition at all. Even though not a soul knows about that sin, even though you can get away with that sin every time you commit it, it's a sore point in your life. Every time you commit it there's the after bite of remorse, the unhappiness, the distress in your soul because in your soul you've been violated. To live this way is antagonistic toward your new soul, your resurrected soul. And this is something you're going to be struggling with God about.

You can say, well, all right, at that time you're being carnal-minded. Well, okay. But it's an altogether different kind of a thing than in the life of the person who is essentially living like the world, and we call him a carnal-minded Christian. It's an altogether different kind of a thing. And this struggle will go on until finally the truth dawns on your mind, and God will chastise because He indwells that born again believer, and He has something to say about that. And finally the truth will dawn on this man, "I've got to repent I've got to turn away from this sin. I can't go on."

Now interestingly enough, if a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, someone who is born from above, is committing gross sin like the man in I Corinthians 5, you can rest assured that if the Pastor or an elder would approach that man and say, "Say, we understand that you've been living

with your father's wife in a sexual relationship," the reaction to that declaration or that revelation would be absolutely predictable. It would not be like the reaction of the man in I Corinthians 5, who arrogantly continued with his sin. Rather it would be the reaction of David, when he was faced by Nathan the prophet, and Nathan said, "Thou art the man," after David had been guilty of adultery and murder.

And then the repentance would come pouring out, "Oh God, against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." And that would be the end of the question. This sin could not continue. That's what would happen in the life of the born again believer.

The born again believer cannot continue in sin. And when he does sin he is grievously troubled by his sin. And that is why his life is altogether different from the so called "carnal-minded Christian," who is one in name only but who is essentially living like the world. He is really not a Christian at all.

Well, I hope this will help.

Do Christians Have to Lead Godly Lives? (285C)

CALLER: I was with a group last night, and we were discussing being Christians, and there was a difference of opinion. So I'd like to know what your opinion is. One person said that he felt that by being a Christian it gave him an obligation to live a godly type of life. And the other person said that he felt that salvation was a gift, that he didn't feel an obligation to God. So I would like to have your opinion on that.

HC: Now the question raised is a very practical question. When we become a born again believer, do we have an obligation to live for Christ, or is it true that inasmuch as salvation is a gift to us, we didn't ask for it, it was just given to us, therefore we are under no obligation to serve Christ?

Well, let's first of all, in answering this, analyze what salvation really is, because only if we understand salvation can we begin to answer this kind of a question. When we talk about salvation, we're not just talking about accepting a way of life, or of aligning ourselves with a cause. All kinds of people throughout history have aligned themselves with this cause or that cause. And then the question of obligation or lack of obligation resulted from this kind of a relationship.

But when we talk about salvation, we must remember that it's a very dynamic experience. It's not a matter of aligning oneself. It's a matter of becoming a brand new person.

Now you see, before we're saved, both in body and soul we lust after sin. We're dead to Christ, we're dead to God, we're in bondage to sin, and we're in bondage to Satan. We've slaves of Satan. That's the dismal place we are in before we are saved.

Now Christ, when He saves us, by virtue of the fact that He became sin on our behalf (He did this for everyone who is being saved), He took all of the guilt that we should have paid for, and He was found guilty before God, when He went to the cross for our sins. He was condemned and He bore our punishment. It wasn't just that He was physically crucified. That wasn't the punishment. That was just the outward aspect of it.

But as He hung on the cross and as He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and as He stood before Pilate, He was paying the equivalent of an eternity in hell for you and me who have become saved. It was a fantastic punishment that He endured. And only because He was God as well as man could God so intensify this punishment that it was paid during the space of three days and three nights.

Now as a gift of God's grace, He saves me. I didn't deserve it at all, I didn't

want that salvation by nature. By nature I was in rebellion against God. This is true of every human being. But He drew me. I came to God as every other born again believer comes to God, because the Father drew me. I was elected by God from before the foundations of the earth, and in His own timetable - some people when they're just babies, others when they're older - He makes us born again.

Now when we become saved, a wonderful thing has occurred in our life. Before we were saved, both in body and in our soul, which is the inner essence of man, the spirit essence of man, just as real a part of man as his body, even as his body is just as real a part of man as his soul, we lust after sin and we're enslaved to sin. And we are in rebellion against God.

But to be saved means that in our soul we have experienced the resurrection. Ephesians 2:1: "You who were dead He has made alive." Verse 5: "By grace you have been saved, and you have been raised with Him," that is, with Christ. Christ experienced the resurrection from the grave, and we've been raised with Him. This did not occur in our body. It occurred in our soul.

We therefore have a brand new personality, in our soul. Now that part which is our soul, therefore, never will sin again, never wants to sin again. We read in I John 3:9, "That which is born of God cannot sin." It's in our soul that we actually have an eternal existence.

Now we'll never die, in our soul. Now our bodies will die. Our bodies are going to go into the grave and return to the dust, because they have not experienced the resurrection as yet. But in our soul we have experienced the resurrection. We are a brand new personality. This, you can see, is entirely different from being aligned with a cause, or being on the bandwagon for Christ, or accepting Christ in some intellectual or emotional way.

This means we have become a new creature. That's exactly the language the Bible uses. We are a new creature. That's why the Bible says we're born again. In our soul it's as if we have died, and we're a brand new personality. On the Last Day, of course, we'll also receive the resurrection of our bodies. And then our new personality will be complete in every sense of the word.

Now, by virtue of the fact that we have soul now that loves God with all of our heart, we're going to find an ongoing, earnest desire to live for Christ. Not out of obligation, because we're not obliged to do anything; we're not paying for anything. But this will be the natural intent of our heart. This will be the new desire of our soul. We want to live for Him, because we have been made perfect in our soul. We have become aligned completely to God's purpose and plan. Sin is anathema to us. Sin is an offense to us.

Now only because we still have a body that has not been saved as yet, do we still tinker with sin, are we still troubled with sin. And if we take our eyes off Christ, then we let our body gain control, and we begin to fall into sin again. But we can't do it very long, because in our soul we're troubled. And we can't wait to get right with God. We can't wait to get this matter straightened out. As a born again believer, we don't want to sin. Sin is troublesome. Sin is a real pain. And any of us who have been born again know that after we have sinned, particularly an offensive sin, oh, the remorse and the "icky" feeling we have in our life, that we did this again.

We earnestly desire that we don't want to sin. Now the evidence, therefore, of a born again believer is that he wants to do God's will, not of obligation, not because we're trying to prove we're worthy, not because we're trying to gain any merit. The moment we do it for that reason, then we're back under the Law, and we're

denying the salvation that God talks about in the Bible.

The moment we try to merit anything by our life, if you desperately are trying to make points with Christ, forget it. We're living then under the Law. We're under the curse of the Law. We're denying what salvation is all about. We obey God's commandments because this is the natural intent of our new soul.

Now we read in I John 5:2: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." Now in our new soul we desperately love God, because He loved us first. And He gave us this natural affinity to want to be right with God. And so we will keep His commandments.

We read in I John 2:4: "He who says, I know Him," Or let's read verse 3: "And by this we may be sure that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." Now if we're keeping His commandments to prove that we're worthy, then we're going beyond what this verse is saying. Then we're back under the Law, according to other verses in the Bible.

But if we keep His commandments because this is the result of our love for God, and the natural desire of our new soul, then it is evidence that we know Him, that we belong to Him. It goes on, "He who says I know Him, but disobeys His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." And so there is no obligation to live for Christ. There is the natural desire to live for Him.

And as we search the Bible, we find that God says, "Crucify the flesh and its desires." The Bible says, "Exercise control over your body," and so on. And because God has commanded this, therefore we want to do it. God has said it, and His wish is our command, because Christ has given us this new soul.

More than that, God Himself lives within our hearts. The Holy Spirit indwells us. And therefore we are going to be motivated just because of the presence of God in our life.

Well, I hope this helps just a little bit.

Can We Know the Date of Our Salvation? (288A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Can every believer remember a specific date that he was regenerated? I can recall such a date on which I would like to think that I was saved, but the thing is, between that date and just a very few months ago, looking between those two points in time, I see some things that should not be in a Christian's life, various sins. I realize that a person who had been saved, his body still has not been saved. You still have that lust after sin in the old nature. But the thing I'm concerned about now is that among these things there is a recurrent problem, and I'm beginning to have serious doubt whether between that time and just a few months ago, as I've been listening to your program and reading the Word of God, whether I was really regenerated. Could you speak to this?

HC: Our caller has raised some very practical questions. The first question is, Can every believer know a specific point in time when he became born again? Do we know the date of our salvation?

Well, there are some folk who are quite convinced that they know the particular date upon which they were saved. And this may be possible. Occasionally, God will save someone in a fairly dramatic fashion. That is, one day there is a tremendous lusting after sin, and that night they hear a Gospel message, and it really strikes home, and the next day they are quite sure that they are right with God.

Many times, however, these dates that we have are not necessarily the dates when we became born again. How many are there, as is suggested by our caller's question, who remember the day when the evangelist was in town, and they were convinced they gave their heart to the Lord, they went down to the front with tears pouring from their eyes, and they said, "I accept Jesus as my Savior."

And then, maybe after a couple of years, they forgot all about that particular confession, and for the next five years or ten years they lived in the world, with hardly any regard at all for Christ as Savior. And yet if you asked them, "Do you know when you were saved?" they say, "Of course, I know precisely the day I was saved." And they can go into great detail concerning that day.

Well, the evidence of their lives would be that they were not saved at that point, because had they been saved at that point, then there would have been an ongoing desire to live for Christ. And they never could have lived again like the world on a sustained basis.

Now that doesn't mean, of course, that they couldn't be saved later on, or that they aren't saved today. But I think that we make all too much of this idea that I know the date when I became born again. We must remember that the work of being born again is God's work, and it's a very mysterious thing that goes on in our hearts.

I would say that more usually it goes this way. Either we are saved probably as a youngster, as you've heard me say before, I'm sure, most of the people listening to this program, who are born again believers, have parents, one or both of whom, or grandparents, who are also born again believers. You grew up in a Christian home. And many people who have had Christian parents were saved as infants, because God promises it this way, "I will be a God to you and your children."

This happens to be the case in my life. I never knew a day when I was not saved. And I don't think this is uncommon at all. I think that lots of people can testify to this, even as John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, indicating that he was saved from the time he was an infant.

Now if we are saved as an infant, as we grow older we become increasingly aware of the fact that we are saved, that we belong to Christ. We become aware, as we identify with the things of the Bible, as we find that we don't want to sin, and as we go to God for forgiveness for our sins when we do. And we find that we feel most comfortable when we are doing it God's way.

On the other hand, a very typical situation is where someone has not been saved as an infant at all. Perhaps their parents weren't saved. They come out of a totally unsaved family relationship. Or maybe they did grow up in a family relationship where there was salvation, but in their life there was clear evidence that there was no born again relationship. And so as a young person, out of high school or college, they sowed their wild oats and lived in the world as wickedly as anyone else.

But then, in middle age, or at some point in their life, they began to become very uneasy somehow. And they began to look for answers. And they began to look in this direction, at this particular gospel or that cult, or the other religion, trying to find some answers.

And finally they came in contact with the true Gospel. And maybe they had grown up in Sunday School. They had contact with the true Gospel many many years of their life. But it had never registered really. But now they find that it's beginning to register. They find that there's a real interest in their life for it. And it's beginning to become meaningful.

And so finally they realize that they have become born again. Now this transition may have encompassed a period of several months, or even a couple of years, becoming more and more interested. And they can never really pinpoint the precise day when they became born again, because they don't know. All they know is that at some point they became aware of the fact that they had really come to believe that Jesus Christ was their Savior and Lord, that they were sinners under the wrath of God and now they had placed their trust altogether in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so this, I think, is a far more usual situation. I think that many people who can pinpoint a day (and some of them indeed might be able to pinpoint an exact day) are really pinpointing the day when they became aware of the fact that they had become saved. Or they pinpointed a day when they first became intensely interested in Christ. But true salvation may not have come for several days or weeks or months or years later.

Let me cite one illustration from the Bible. The apostle Paul was a very wicked man, although a very religious man. And he was persecuting the church. And on the road to Damascus God arrested him, and blinded him, and struck him down, so that he was led blind into Damascus. And God spoke to him on that road to Damascus and said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou Me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks." And Saul cried out in his terror and in his fear, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And the answer came back, "This is Jesus, whom thou persecutest."

Well now, we could easily then say that Paul was saved on the road to Damascus, when he heard that voice from Heaven. No one has had any more dramatic salvation than Paul has. But the truth is, when we study his life really carefully, we find that that was not the moment he became born again.

Three days later, after he had been praying for three days and three nights, and the preacher Ananias came from Damascus to talk to Paul, that was really the date of his salvation, because in Acts 22 we read where Ananias said to him, "Paul, rise up and be baptized, and wash away your sins," the implication being, therefore, that up until that moment he was still an unsaved man. And even then we don't know that it was that same day that he became saved. It may have been the next day, or whatever. It's very hard to pinpoint the exact point, the exact time.

But now having said all this, really, what's so important about knowing the date when I was saved? Let's think about that a minute. What really is important about that? Is it important to know that I have been saved for ten years and nine months, or whether I have been saved for forty years, or for two years? It doesn't really mean anything, does it? The big question is, "Am I saved? Am I born again?" That's the big question. And whether I was saved when I thought I was, when I went down to the front because an evangelist was in town and I was so emotionally stirred, or whether it was actually twenty years later, when I became more and more aware of my sinful condition and my need of repentance, whether the latter date was the date or the earlier date was the date is really unimportant. The important question is, "Am I saved today?"

Now lots of people, unfortunately, place a lot of credence in the doctrine that once we are saved we are always saved. And incidentally, that's a very true Biblical doctrine. But they misuse that doctrine. They say, "Well now, I remember, when I was a youngster (or an older person, whatever the time was), when I was saved, when I accepted Christ, I went down to the front," and so on and so on. "And because I know I was saved then, and because I know the Bible teaches that once saved, always

saved, therefore I know I'm saved today."

Now that is not trustworthy reasoning, because you don't know for sure whether you were saved then. You may have thought you were saved. But you see, the proof of salvation is that we have an ongoing, earnest desire to live by God's commandments. And if that has not been constant in our life since the day we thought we were saved, the probability is that that was not a salvation experience. That was simply an emotional experience, where we emotionally or intellectually got on the bandwagon for Christ, but we actually didn't know what salvation was at the time. Nor were we saved at the time.

But the important question is, not what happened then, but "Am I born again today?" And I can know whether I am born again today. I can know whether my will has been surrendered to Christ. So can you.

Now the question has to be answered very honestly. We can kid ourselves. Oh, how we kid ourselves. So many people walk around with rose-colored glasses, trying to make their situation or the world much more appealing than it really is. And that's one way to walk, I suppose, in order to face life.

But when we come to the question of salvation, my eternal relationship with Christ, this is the moment of truth. This is the moment when we've got to take off the rose-colored glasses. We've got to quit kidding ourselves, we've got to quit deceiving ourselves, and we've got to look at ourselves bluntly and honestly. "What is my relationship to Christ? Where is my will? When the chips are down, and I'm faced with the decision, which way do I go? Do I serve myself first and then Christ? Or am I ordinarily ready to serve Christ first? When I really look at myself honestly, can I really know that my will has been given over to Christ? I want Christ to be Number One in my life, and I know that I want Christ to be Number One. Even though sometimes I'm troubled in making Him Number One, nevertheless that is my heartfelt, earnest desire."

And if I can say that honestly, that I've placed my trust in Christ as my Savior, and I want to serve Him as my Lord, and when I look at my life, it is a life where I am beginning to live more and more in His way, then I can know that I am saved, that I am born again. And if I can't see these factors in my life, then the sad fact is, I'm not born again, even though I like to believe I was.

Now of course, if I discover tonight that I'm not born again, that isn't fatal. That doesn't mean that now I am lost, that now all hope is gone, because, praise God, I discovered it while I am still alive, and I can still do something about it. I can cry out to God for mercy, and I can quit kidding myself and I can admit to myself and to God that I'm a sinner, and that I'm under the wrath of God, and that I'm headed for hell, and that I can't do anything about it in myself at all. And I can begin to cry out for His mercy. I can begin to cry out for a hatred for my sins, and I can take action to begin to repent, to turn away from my sins. And I can begin to rest in the Lord Jesus as my Savior and my Lord.

That's the question that we have to face, not when I was saved, that's not the question. The question is, am I saved today? Am I now a saved, a born again individual? Can I say that with certainty? Not because of something that happened twenty years ago in my life, but can I know that because of the way that I relate to God's Word tonight?

The Jewish Misunderstanding Concerning Salvation (317A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. I was talking with a Rabbi the other day, a Jewish Rabbi. He

is not a Christian. And we got to talking about the Old Testament. And one of the things that he mentioned, well, I mentioned blood atonement and the centrality of blood atonement in the Old Testament, but he pointed out that in the Book of Leviticus the statement that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins in Leviticus 17:11 is a mere detail in a whole worship system that is taught in the Old Testament. In other words, the sacrifice is important, but it's part of a whole cluster of things that are necessary for Old Testament worship.

Now I didn't have a ready answer for this. The only thing I could think of was that Jesus Himself was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem, outside the camp, just as the Old Testament sacrifice. And in that wonderful, astonishing way, He fulfilled the very thing that this Rabbi is pointing out. But of course that doesn't constitute valid evidence for him, from his own presupposition. And I was wondering if you have any further insight into the objection to this Christian understanding of the Bible that he's mentioning.

HC: You see, the fundamental question that must be faced by anyone, whether he's a Jew or a Greek or Italian, or whatever, regardless of the religion we belong to of the gospel we hold, the fundamental question is, what is the basis of our salvation? Now the Jews of Jesus' day to a high degree, not all the way, we must remember that the first believers we read about in the New Testament were Jews, just as Jewish as any Jewish person today. The disciples were Jews, Mary Magdalene was a Jew, and Mary and Martha and Lazarus were Jews. So when we talk about the Jewish people we're not talking about the last man. We're talking about a major part, who held one position and a minor part, a remnant chosen by grace, who did hold the Biblical truth.

The problem was that the major part of the Jewish nation believed that because they engaged in these Old Testament worship activities very faithfully, which included the offering of sacrifices and the circumcision, and all of these things, that in this act they received remission of their sins. They were God's chosen people, they had been taken in a great and marvelous way out of the land of Egypt and brought into the land of Canaan by great signs and wonders. And whatever was required to make them right before God was abundantly taken care of in the act of the sacrifices and offerings. They were not understanding at all that these sacrifices were merely types or shadows pointing to a Messiah who would come.

Isaiah 53, for example, speaks about the coming of the Messiah. He is despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. Now this is talking about a person, you notice. "And we hid as it were our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not." Notice what the Bible says about this Messiah. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." And it goes on to describe in this kind of detail the coming Messiah.

But this was foreign to the major Jewish position that their sins were already taken care of by virtue of the fact that they had offered their sacrifices, they had engaged in this Old Testament worship. And therefore this passage made no impact on them.

Or again, they failed to read a passage like Ezekiel 34, where God is speaking in verse 11, "For thus saith the Lord

God, Behold, I even I will both search My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out My sheep and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloud and dark day. I will bring them out from the people and gather them from the countries and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be. There shall they lie in a good fold and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord. I will seek that which was lost and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken and will strengthen that which was sick," and so on.

In other words, God is going to be the Shepherd. And tying that back to Isaiah 53, we immediately see that God is going to come as a man, as the Redeemer. Now the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled these passages dramatically. He says of Himself in John 10, "I am the Good Shepherd. I lay down My life for the sheep." He identified with Ezekiel 34. He is the one who did make His grave with the wicked. He is the one who was not esteemed. He was rejected by men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He is the one that God did pour His wrath out upon. And therefore Christ is, in a beautiful way and in a marvelous way, the fulfillment of all of these passages.

But we have to begin with the point that we are not saved by what we do. We are saved by what the Messiah would do in bearing our sins. The Jewish religion as it was practiced by the major part of the Jews of Jesus' day was a religion of good works. It was a religion based upon partaking in the Old Testament worship. Thereby they decided they became worthy before God. And that will never save anyone.

That same idea holds through right to today. It's exactly the problem today with those who are not Christians.

CALLER: It seems, as I talked to this Rabbi, he did have what seemed to me far to light a view of sin as it works itself out in the individual and in the national life of the Jewish community. And I have here with me a book by a Rabbi named Morris Adler, called "The World of the Talmud." And Morris Adler is a Jew, writing for Jews. And he makes the statement in this, "A Christian scholar, Dr. James Parker, summarizes the contrast between Judaism and Christianity in this respect, when he writes, 'In Judaism God says to man, Fulfill My plan for creation. And man replies, I will. In Christianity man returns to God to say, Fulfill Thy part in creation, which I cannot, because I am foolish and sinful. And God replies, I will.'"

HC: That's a very excellent statement. It puts it exactly where it is. Now you mentioned the Talmud, and that of course is what happened to Judaism. They started out with the Bible, and then they added the commentaries of their holy men down through the ages to the Bible, so that the whole mass of writings became sacred writings. And thus the Bible no longer was the final authority. It was the Bible plus what others had said.

Incidentally, the Christian church to some degree is guilty of the very same thing. We start with the Bible and then we add to it the writings of certain theologians. And before we read the Bible or understand the Bible, we first see what our friendly theologian says, and that's it. In other words, we actually inadvertently place the authority of that theologian on a par with the Bible. And

we must not do this.

CALLER: Another thing I wanted to ask you, which may or may not be exactly related to what we're talking about now. What is, very simply, dispensationalism? I have a somewhat imprecise notion of what this is. In other words, I've come across an author this last week who does say that, for instance, there are certain things in the Old Testament which are not applicable to the children of God today, such things as exterminating the Canaanites or going to war at all. He feels that this is part of an Old Testament dispensation. And the New Testament dispensation is one where, for instance, Jesus says to Peter, "Put up thy sword into thy sheath." And for instance, James and John wanted to call down thunder on one of the cities that would not accept Christ and they appealed to Elias and said, "Shall we do it even as Elias did?" And this author was at pains to indicate that it was appropriate for Elias to have done that, but it was not appropriate for James and John to have done that.

Now my concern is not with these specific issues, namely war or militancy, or anything of that nature. That's not what I'm asking, but simply, as these indicate some kind of difference between an Old Testament economy and a New Testament economy. Do you see it this way? And if you do, what are the difference strata of scripture that you see?

HC: Actually, I see only one program that God has set forth, the program for the redemption of all whom He elected from before the foundations of the earth. Now in the development of this program, there are states in it. In the Old Testament God particularly focused attention on the nation of Israel, because it was out of the nation of Israel that the Christ was to come. It was the nation of Israel that would become effectively a historical parable of the nature of salvation. Israel and Jerusalem and many of the historical experiences that we read about in connection with the nation of Israel were really figures or types of aspects of salvation, even as when Christ came doing miracles the miracles, effectively became historical parables of what salvation is.

Finally, in the course of time God actually became man and went to the cross. This had to happen at some point in history. The precise point made no impact at all on the nature of salvation. The Old Testament believer was saved exactly as the New Testament believer. But it did signal the time when salvation would be aggressively made available to the whole world, because immediately following the cross comes Pentecost, when God began His program to evangelize the whole world. This was always anticipated by God. It is spoken of in hundreds of ways in the Old Testament, that the time would come when the world would be evangelized. And then this would be followed by the end, or Judgment Day itself.

It's all one plan. There are various steps and stages in the development of the plan, but there is only one plan. Noah, for example, who lived 7000 years ago, we read of him in Genesis 6 that he found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Now that's New Testament language. Abraham, who lived 4000 years ago (and who is really in actuality the beginning of the nation of Israel, and because they were blood descendants of Abraham they called themselves Jews and prided themselves that they are Jews), he is spoken of in the New Testament as being the father of all believers, both Gentiles and Jews. And his faith is set forth as the example of the faith of the believers. Abraham's faith was reckoned unto him as righteousness.

There is a cohesiveness, you see, in the Bible that sets aside altogether any possibility that God has two kinds of salvation, or two programs, or whatever.

It just happens that in the Old Testament there were only a small number who were being saved, because God had not begun His plan to evangelize the whole world, and He was dealing particularly through the nation of Israel because through them the Bible was being developed, through them we have all of these historical parables that are set forth in the Bible, and through their blood line Christ would actually come forth.

But once all this was done, the Bible was completed, the Bible was ended, now this marvelous salvation is made available to the whole world.

CALLER: You yourself are at pains often to indicate that the gift of tongues is limited to a particular historical period.

HC: Yes.

CALLER: Now again, my concern is not with that particular issue in this discussion, but simply as an illustration that although there's this unifying principle, yet there are these ways in which the Christian life, the behavioral pattern of the believers differs from one phase to another.

HC: Not the behavioral pattern. The difference is in the revelation of God. God did not reveal Himself, for example, in an articulated way so that it could be part of the written Word before the time of Moses. Moses is described in the Bible as the one who has given us the first five books. That doesn't mean that some of that which we find in Genesis might not have been in certain written places, but it did not officially become a part of the Bible until Moses wrote it.

When Jesus was on earth He made reference to Moses and the prophets and the writings. Now the Bible had been expanded to that point. Finally, the Bible is completed. God's revelation is completed, and that's the end. When Jesus was on earth, He had certain things to say, and then the Holy Spirit was poured out, and certain things happened. There were changes in God's plan as He is developing His program to evangelize the world.

This does not change the behavioral pattern of the believer, however, in any sense. The only thing it changes is God's revelation. There were 400 years, for example, between the last of the minor prophets and the birth of John the Baptist, when there was no statement from God at all. There was no penetration of the world from the supernatural to the natural. There was complete silence. This happened to be God's program for that time.

CALLER: Well, perhaps I'm not using the correct term. But don't you see a difference in behavior between, say, circumcision and the lack of circumcision, or let's say, blood sacrifice in the Old Testament and a bloodless sacrifice that we're supposed to offer every day, in our own lives as Christians? In what sense how would you term these differences?

HC: I see the differences only in that in the Old Testament they did not have the written Word. So God gave them certain additional assists, to begin to get an idea of the nature of the Messiah. And so God talked about blood sacrifices and burnt offerings, and what have you. In the New Testament we have the advantage of having the historical record of the coming of the Messiah. We can read in black and white exactly what happened. And so these assists no longer are necessary.

But God does give us a little bit of assistance in that He still leaves with us two signs that we follow, namely, the Lord's Supper and water baptism, which are reminiscent of the Passover and circumcision of the Old Testament, or the Passover and the water ablutions of the Old Testament, if you will. But most of them He has taken away, because we have the historical record of Christ.

CALLER: The Sermon on the Mount is to be obeyed, or to be realized in our life today? Or do you believe that's something that is yet future, the ethics for a full Kingdom of God on earth? Or is that something that truly could be lived out by the believers in the midst of a world that is crooked and perverse?

HC: Now that's a good question. Is the Sermon on the Mount, which we find in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, relevant today? You see, the Bible is the revealed Word of God. When I say the Bible, I mean the whole Bible – Genesis, Matthew, 5, 6 and 7, Revelation, Ezekiel, Leviticus – wherever we find it. The Bible is God's revelation to mankind. It is the law of God. It is the statement of the command of God.

Now insofar as mankind is concerned, any place where they violate the law of God, anything they do that violates anything that is stated in the Bible, they stand guilty of judgment and hell. For the believer of course that penalty has been taken care of by Christ. And therefore we're not under the threat of hell. But the Bible still remains as the law-book of the Kingdom. It remains the book that we are to trust in and follow and be obedient to.

So the Sermon on the Mount is absolutely relevant for us today, just as much as it was relevant to the Jews that Jesus was talking to when He was on earth. Every part of the Bible is relevant. However, if there were a statement in the Sermon on the Mount that was later negated by something in Revelation or Ephesians or wherever, then we know that that particular command was neutralized, even as the Old Testament ceremonial laws, which were commanded in Leviticus, were neutralized by the statements of Galatians 5 and the Book of Hebrews, where God teaches that the ceremonial laws were completed in Christ.

We examine any part of the Bible, and check everything that the Bible offers concerning that, and then we know that we have what is left to be obedient to. That is, when we synthesize all that God gives, we know what we have to be obedient to. And this of course sets aside the ceremonial law, because that is set aside by the Bible itself. This sets aside the possibility of revelation coming today in visions and dreams and tongues, because God indicates that we aren't to add to the words of this book, and so on.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

What Can One Do to Get a Reward in Heaven? (346D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, my first question is: what can a Christian do to get a reward in Heaven? When Christ comes back again He says He will have His rewards with Him. Now what can you do to get one of these rewards?

HC: All right. That's a very good practical question. Christ does say that when He returns He will have His rewards with Him. What do we have to do to obtain one of those rewards?

Actually, the way we have to obtain one of the rewards is to become born again. Only when we are born again will we receive everlasting life. And the reward that we receive is not a reward of merit. It's not because we have done something. It isn't that Christ is paying us off. But actually, it is a gift of God's grace. It's the reward of eternal life. It's the crown of life, if you will. It's the crown of Christ's glory, which is a gift of God. It is what salvation is all about.

There are those who teach that once we're saved we then can work and obtain certain rewards, that we can earn certain rewards. Now this I'm afraid is not what the Gospel of grace is all about. Jesus did say in Luke 18 that those who have left

father and mother and home, and so on, for His sake, shall not only receive manifold more in the present time, but in the age to come, eternal life.

As we are faithful to the Lord in this life, as we are obedient to Him, we receive the blessings that come from such obedience. We have the blessing of knowing that we're in the will of God. We have the blessing of living in accordance with God's rules, which brings its own blessing. But the reward we receive beyond the grave is the gift of eternal life.

Do you remember the parable of the man who needed laborers in his vineyard? And so some worked eleven hours, some worked six hours, some three hours, some one hour. Now they all received precisely the same pay. Did they not?

CALLER: That's right.

HC: One denarius. And that was a figure of the pay that we all receive. It's not pay for labor rendered. It is a gift of God's grace. It is eternal life.

CALLER: That answers it very nicely.

Does God Promise Physical Blessings? (370E)

CALLER: Is there any promise in God's Word of God's provision for those who continue to abide in their calling, as it's been confirmed?

HC: Is there any provision in the Bible that God will provide financially for those who are faithful to the Word of God?

Let's assume that you were in a concentration camp in Siberia. And you were condemned to stay there for the next ten years. Can you faithfully walk in God's way in this concentration camp? And supposing that there was a promise in the Bible that promised something financially? It would be hollow mockery, wouldn't it? Because there wouldn't be any possibility of getting out of that concentration camp.

As a matter of fact, God does not promise financial prosperity, or physical prosperity. These blessings may come, but there's no promise that they will come. The Bible simply says that we are to be content with our lot, whatever it is.

The Bible indicates that we are strangers and pilgrims here. The Bible does use Israel as an Old Testament example of God's blessing, indicating their riches, and so on, as an evidence of God's blessing. But when we look at salvation, and look at the true nature of God's blessing, the ultimate nature of God's blessing, it does not rest with the physical. It rests with a relationship to Christ, a knowledge that our sins have been forgiven, a knowledge that we belong to Him, eternally. That's where it all is.

CALLER: So the physical blessings are just extra things? They don't necessarily come, according to His Word? They're just kind of a bonus.

HC: Yes. They may not even be a blessing. They may be a curse. God may be testing us with physical blessings. He may give us extra income to see what we're going to do with this. Are we going to use it to God's glory, or are we going to use it in the pursuit of pleasure, so that we are increasingly taking our eyes off Christ?

Physical wherewithal is not necessarily a blessing. It depends on what we do with it. On the other hand, God may be sending severe deprivation into our life. He may take our job away. He may strike us down with an illness so that we can't work. He may send a drought, in order to remind us of more important things. Drought, if it is very severe, can be an exceedingly wonderful blessing, if there are those who are exercised by it, so that they will indeed return to Christ.

CALLER: There is a spiritual likeness to spiritual drought, is there not?

HC: The Bible speaks of the Old Testament days as being a time when the ground was parched, when the world was a desert. And it speaks of the days when Christ would come, and the Holy Spirit would be poured out, as the wilderness bringing forth abundantly and running with water, because you see, the Gospel is like water. Whatever it goes, it brings life, life to those who are being exercised by it, so that they become saved.

CALLER: Do you have any scriptural references to the stream in the desert?

HC: Isaiah 35, I think, is such a reference. Let me turn to that a moment. In Isaiah 35:1 we read, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing." There are a number of statements like this, and a number of them are in Isaiah.

Isaiah 32:15 & 16 & 17. It's speaking there about the Holy Spirit being poured out from on high, and the wilderness becoming a fruitful field.

Isaiah 44:3: "I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground. I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessings on your offspring. And they shall spring up like grass amid water, like willows by flowing streams."

These are a few of these kind of references.

CALLER: With that I would like to thank you very much for your ministry, and for Family Radio.

HC: Thank you so much for calling. Good night.

Can a Person Who Suicides Enter Heaven? (574A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, if somebody commits suicide, can he enter the Kingdom of Heaven?

HC: The question is, if someone takes his life in suicide, which would be self-murder, is it still possible that he died a saved person?

It is possible that he still died a saved person, although it would not be usual for a believer to commit suicide. You see, when we are saved, all of our sins have been paid for, past, present and future. And of course when we're saved we've learned to place our trust in Christ, and we go to Him for our strength. It is in the world, those amongst the unsaved, who have no place to turn to, that therefore they frequently think that by taking their own life they can end their misery. And so this is easily done.

But for the believer, ordinarily he would not do this. However, let's say he was crossing a bridge, and in a moment of depression he flung himself over the railing. And of course he couldn't change his mind then, and he committed suicide. If he were truly a born again believer, it would not affect his entrance into the Kingdom of God at all.

CALLER: Thank you, Brother Camping.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Can a Homosexual be Saved? (852C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I have a question I would like to ask you. I've asked several other ministers, and I happen to be a minister myself. But the question that I have is found in Romans 1:28. The question is this, if a person has been a homosexual, and he wishes to change, and God is beginning to move in his life, and he begins to wonder about salvation, can that person be saved?

HC: The question is, in the light of

Romans 1:27-28, where God is talking about God giving up men to homosexuality, and God giving them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient, that is, which are not right, can such a person become saved? And the answer is, absolutely yes. In I Corinthians 6 we read in verse 9, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind [that would be a homosexual], nor thieves, nor covetous, nor covetous, nor revilers nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Now that's very emphatic: they shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And yet verse 11, the next verse, offers the grace of God: "And such were some of you. But you are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

In other words, as long as the Gospel goes into the world, and it's God's plan to save people – and that will continue until the last of the elect are saved – anyone, regardless of how deep in sin they may be, regardless of how terrible their situation is, if they cry out to God for mercy, God guarantees that He will save them.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you, Brother Camping. Keep up the good work.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

SALVATION FOR OTHERS

Will God Save Someone if I Pray For Them? (100A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: What if you are praying for an unsaved person, and you claim the promise of John 14:13, believing that the Father will be glorified through someone's salvation, and so you stand on that promise and pray for the person, and witness to the person, and you really claim that promise from the Lord. Now if predestination is so, and God has promised that we will have anything that we ask in His Name that will glorify the Father, would this mean that the person that you're praying for, as long as he's a burden upon your heart, will be saved? The only thing I want to know is: Can I stand on that promise? Okay? Thank you very much.

HC: Yes You're welcome. Good night.

This is a very fair question. It's a question that has puzzled many people. When we read in John 14:13: "Whatever you ask in My Name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son," and we are told to be a witness, we are told to practice our priestly office of intercession, when we pray for someone who is unsaved, and diligently bring that person to God in prayer, have we assurance therefore that this person will be saved? Can we believe that we are actually being motivated to pray for that person simply because God has predestinated that person to be saved, and He's using us as a vehicle?

Now we have to begin our answer by getting a little bit more commentary on John 14:13. In John 15:7 we have a very similar promise, but there's another condition added to it. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you."

Now this simply means that we, as born again believers, regardless of how serious believers we may be, how faithful we may be, cannot promiscuously ask God for this and for that. But maybe that's too big a word. Maybe that's too unwise a word to use. But the fact is that there are some things that we cannot know the will of God concerning.

We, for example, cannot know the will of God concerning whether a person is going to become well again who is afflicted in some way. There are so many things we can't know the will of God about. And one of the things we cannot know the will of God about is whether the person we are praying for has been predestinated or not, whether he is one of God's elect or not. That is God's hidden will, His hidden counsel. It's not for us to know.

And we know this from the Bible. We know that God is sovereign. He saves whom He will. And if we are abiding in Christ and His words abiding in us, then we are aware of this, that there are those who are elect, who will be saved, and there are those who will never want to be saved, and God will make no move to save them. Now we don't know who these individuals are. That is God's program and not our program.

And so when we pray for someone who is unsaved (and what Christian of us has not done this?), with great zeal and with great fervor and with great beseeching of the Lord, we still must condition our prayer, recognizing that we don't know God's will in this matter. We know it's God's will that we are to witness to this person. That we know absolutely, that we are witnesses. We know it's God's will that we are to pray for this person, that we are to intercede on behalf of this person. That we know absolutely. We never have to wonder about that. But we cannot know whether it's God's program to save that person.

And so we beseech the Lord, and we ask, if it is God's will, could it be possible that this person might be saved? Because, after all, God can save that person. There's nobody that could remain unsaved if God decides to save them. The Bible is very clear about that. But we don't know what God's will is.

We simply know that God has commanded us to faithfully witness, to faithfully pray, and to patiently wait upon the Lord to act. But whether the Lord will act in a specific case or not, we won't know until that person dies. And even then we might not know, because there is always the possibility of a death bed conversion, even though there has been no outward sign before that time.

And so this is the nature of our prayers when we pray to God on behalf of those who are unsaved. I empathize with this question, and I'd like to give a very personal testimony concerning this. I don't ordinarily do this, but there was a time in my life when I convinced myself, as I was reading the Bible, that it was God's will to save people, it was God who was motivating me to witness to someone, and so on. And therefore, if I really felt a heavy burden for someone, then definitely I could believe that God was going to bring salvation, that there was any question I was really reasoning this out without really understanding everything the Bible offers.

And so I became involved with this person whom I met, an elderly lady, whom I met in a hospital when a loved one of my own was ill. And I began to witness to her and to her husband. I began to pray for her. And I made a real effort, a real effort, to bring the Gospel to this family. There followed many many visits, and much much prayer. I can never remember when I was more interested in seeing a person saved. I really was challenged by this.

And I was quite convinced that God was going to save. This lady eventually ended up in a mental institution, and I began to visit her there as I was able to, because she had begun to become somewhat senile. And this was in the days before there were nursing homes. And so frequently such patients ended up in a mental institution.

I began to visit her there, as I was able to. And again, I continued to pray deliberately and faithfully for her. Then

one time I visited with her, and her mind was gone. In the meanwhile, before this occurred, there had been not the slightest opening, not the slightest indication at any time that there was any awareness of what the true Gospel was. The blindness continued as black as it had been from the beginning.

And when I met with her this last time and found that her mind had gone, that she was still living but she was a vegetable, insofar as her mind was concerned, I was truly in a state of shock for a little while. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. Here was a person who had not died, and yet there was no possibility of salvation.

Now I don't believe in learning doctrine from experience. That is not the way that we find what God teaches, because experience is very frail. It's very faulty. It's possible, in the closing moments of this person's mental ability, while she still had mental ability, that she might have been saved. All the evidence is to the contrary, however.

But I must say that, having gone through this, I was forced to reexamine Scripture very carefully, and then I realized that God is sovereign. Now God had put me through a very wonderful exercise, of being concerned about someone, of having compassion for someone, of faithfully being a witness, even though it did not result in salvation. Now that I thank God for. But also, through this all, God brought me to study the Scriptures more carefully.

And so when I pray, and I think when any believer prays, for someone who is unsaved (and we all do this), we pray, we beseech the Lord, we claim whatever promises we can from God's Word, but we cannot know, absolutely certain, that God will save, because we don't know what God's ultimate program is. That is part of God's hidden will, His hidden counsel.

Are We to Pray for Unbelievers? (196D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: A friend of mine, whom I am in a Bible study with, is distressed about this, and I hadn't ever really thought about it before. I've been searching the Bible and haven't really found anything positive about it. But every time we would pray together before we begin our Bible study, she would pray for a total cleansing, for our hearts and souls. And she feels that this prayer is only for believers, that we can't pray for non-believers. And I think that this is our Christian duty, that we should pray for other people, that they might come to know Christ.

HC: The question is raised, and it's a very good question: When we pray, are we to pray for unbelievers? Are we to pray that God's blessing would be upon them? Are we to pray that their sins might be forgiven? Are we to pray for other mercies upon them? Or are we only to pray for born again believers?

Actually, God gives us the priestly office of intercession. We are a holy priesthood. Now a priest is one who intercedes on behalf of those who would come to God. The unsaved person has no reason to believe that God is going to hear his prayer. He may not even feel like praying. But if he does, unless he is praying for salvation, with a broken and contrite heart, he has absolutely no basis at all to believe that God will hear him. He is an enemy of God. He is estranged from God altogether.

Now as born again believers we do have an open line to the throne room of God. We can come to Him at any moment with every request. And we definitely are to intercede for our unsaved loved ones and friends. We definitely are to implore God's blessing on them, and God's mercies upon them, and above all, that

God might open their hearts and show them the way of salvation. This is what God expects of us.

The Bible says in the New Testament, "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

CALLER: And prayer changes things.

HC: Yes. Prayer changes things in the sense that God works through our prayers, to accomplish His purposes, even as He works through our witnessing to accomplish His purposes.

I think the verse that your friend was troubled by, and the one that comes to my mind, is John 17, the High Priestly Prayer of Christ. Now when He prayed, He said, "I pray not for the world." And that's very interesting language. We read in verse 9 of John 17, "I am praying for them [that is, those whom Thou has given Me]. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given Me. They are Thine. All Mine are Thine. And I am glorified in them." But you see, the Lord Jesus was Eternal God, and He knew whom the Father had given to Him. And He knew the ones that would not be saved. And so Christ did not have to pray for them. He is Eternal God Himself.

But when we pray, we're not God. We don't know what God's will is, concerning this one or that one. We pray because only in God can we find any answers. And so we read in Hebrews 4:16, "Let us then with confidence (or with boldness) draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Or we read in verse 16 of James 5: "Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for another, that you may be healed." And the healing that's in view here is spiritual healing, that you might be healed of your spiritual diseases. And in that context it goes right on and says, "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Thank you. Good night.

Can Our Pious Actions Save Others? (391A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. A friend and I were discussing the way of God, and she was telling me about the Lady of Fatima. And she said that if people didn't gather together and pray the Rosary, then the world wouldn't be saved. Would you give me your opinion of this? I'll take it over the air.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you.

The question that is posed is really of this nature. Is there something that we can do in order to save the world? In other words, is there a certain action that we can take that will save the world, some work that we can do, whether it has to do with the Rosary or whether it has to do with the steps to the altar, or whether it has to do with candlesticks, or whether it has to do with any other thing that we might consider to be holy, whether it has to do with being baptized or whether it has to do with partaking of Communion, or whether it has to do with anything at all? Is there something that we can do to guarantee the salvation of the world?

And of course the answer must be no, absolutely nothing can we do. The work of saving the world, or saving those in the world that God intends to save, is God's work altogether. It is God's work. He is the one who does the saving. Now His method of saving happens to be working through those who are children of God, those who faithfully bring the Gospel. If I, however, don't bring the true Gospel, God isn't going to be frustrated in His work to save those whom He plans to save. He'll raise somebody else up. God is not going to be frustrated by any human being. Those who are to be saved, whom God has elected from

before the foundations of the world, will be saved. That's guaranteed in the Bible.

So it doesn't depend upon our work. There are those who say we ought to really begin to pray for revival. Well, that's a notable idea. It would be far better if we would pray that individually, not looking at the other person, not looking "out there" or at that other congregation, or whatever, but that we would begin to pray and repent in our own life that we would be more faithful to the Word of God, that we would examine our priorities insofar as what is the authority of the Word of God, that we would examine our priorities insofar as the time that we spend in the Word of God, and so on. This is where repentance has to begin. This is where prayer has to begin. It's right with me.

And if someone else is going to do it, so that there are two of us, wonderful! Then there are two of us doing it. And if this might rub off on a third person, so that three of us are doing it, wonderful! But let's let it begin with me. This is where there is going to be a change.

Unfortunately, we are living in a time in which we're very near the end of time, I believe. And I say "unfortunately" only in this sense: that the Bible teaches that as we approach the end apostasy will increase and rebellion against God will magnify, and the church will grow cold. "Most men's love will grow cold." And so we can pray and pray and pray and God's program will not change.

Now that doesn't mean our prayers are fruitless. God wants us to pray. God tells us that we are to pray. But we're always going to pray, "Lord, Thy will be done." And if it happens to be that His will is that we're near the end and the Gospel is gradually going to be pinched off, and God is going to let the church grow increasingly apostate, then so be it. We have to live with that, because this may be God's program. And according to the Bible, this is God's program, if indeed we're right near the end of time.

So we pray principally that we, individually, personally, might stand firm in the faith, that I might stand faithful, as the towers fall all around me. If the pillars of the church finally begin to show up as being not quite as solidly built upon a foundation as they might be, so that many of them fall for other gospels and so on, that's a tragedy. That's terrible. But that is something that they have to talk to God about. I have to make sure that in my life I am remaining faithful. This is where we really have to make the examination. Don't you think?

FAITH, TRUTH & FEARING THE LORD

What is Truth? (141A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hello. The question I have is: Is the truth one? The truth about humankind, what makes the human race tick, what makes it go. What are the principles that operate in us as a total 400 billion person humankind? What makes this thing go? The Christian religion is one of the pieces of that big thing that is going on in the planet. It isn't all there is, but it's a piece of it. At least that's what anthropology says. And that's the truth.

So, my question is, How does one look at truth? Does one look at truth as one thing, where it's all true? Or does he say that only the Bible is true, and every other truth isn't true? How do you answer that?

HC: The question is, What is truth? Is it just the Bible, or can other things be true? Actually, of course, the only place of absolute truth, that is, the only place where there is truth that has no possibility of error, is the Bible, because the Bible is the infallible Word of God.

CALLER: The infallible Word of God. No possibility of error. The infallible Word of God. Therefore it has to be true.

HC: It has to be true. We may not always understand it, and there's a lot we don't.

CALLER: Okay. I'm just trying to get your words, because that's in Anthropology class, too. You learn how words are used. Go ahead.

HC: Incidentally, you know, Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." Now Jesus Himself identified with the Word of God by saying that He was the Word. So intimately we find this relationship, you see, between the Word and Christ. He says He is the Word, and He says He is the Truth. And so, therefore, the Word is the truth. That's the Word of God.

Okay. Now mankind searches for truth. He searches for this ultimate answer, this ultimate foundation upon which he can rest in order to build anything else. And of course he can only start building a successful structure if he is on absolute truth.

CALLER: That's what you rest everything on. You build this big logical house of cards about what the universe is, and you rest this on, whatever the truth is.

HC: Yes. But unfortunately, natural man disregards the Bible. And therefore he never finds absolute truth.

CALLER: Natural man disregards the Bible. Now if an anthropologist does not disregard the Bible, and pays attention to it, as well as everything else in his anthropological study, will he then get the truth?

HC: Yes. Then he is head and shoulders above everyone else. For example, if he starts with the Word of God, he knows that man did not evolve from a lower creature and is getting better and better. He knows that exactly the reverse is true, that man was created in the image of God as a perfect being. And if anything, there is a degeneration in man. Now that is absolute truth that is totally contrary to the foundation upon which the average anthropologist would build his idea of mankind.

CALLER: That is quite a bit different, because they come from a more generalized experience from other cultures, cultures besides the one that the Bible came from. The Bible grew up in a particular mix of cultures, early along in the human race, and as it increased its consciousness, the Bible had its impact on those cultures that it was amenable to. But a lot of other cultures, like the Chinese, Japanese, South Sea Islands, India, Persia, Africa, and a lot of those, didn't grow up with the Christian idea. The Christian idea, in its cultural bent, picked up a lot of the value systems of other cultures along the way and discarded other things, and just generally did what a cultural religious ideology does. But meanwhile, all those others grew up without it.

Okay. Then our Christian ideology goes over to the Chinese and to the Indians, and to the people of other parts of the world, and says, "Hey! Here's the truth." Your Word of God is no better than my Word of God. The Sufis, for example, say that the Christian ideology is fine, but so also are all the others.

HC: Yes. Well now, you see, when you look outside of the Bible, you will find that there are many common denominators out in the world, regardless of whether you start with an Indian culture or whether you start with a Babylonian culture or an African culture, or whatever it is.

And those common denominators are, first of all, that man somehow can find answers for himself, that man can do something about his eternal destiny, about his relationship with God. He can work out a program whereby he can be acceptable to God. More than that, he will concoct some kind of an idea, just

searching his own mind for it, as to where man came from. And in one culture it may be one idea, and in another culture another idea. But there will be a certain similarity in all of these, at least general similarities.

But when we come to the Bible, there we have precise truth. We know exactly where we came from. Now the Bible is not just a Western culture. The Bible is cast actually in Babylon, in Africa, in Egypt, in Palestine. And portions of the Bible have been in Persia. And the Christian Gospel has been in Africa. And so these cultures, many of them, have had an impact on the Scriptures.

But when we're going to look at truth, if we reject the Bible, then we have to make a set of assumptions. And we have to use that as our foundation. And then we build our structure, and we leave our structure there for a while, until somebody comes along with a better idea, and we discard the whole structure and start all over again. And so man wastes his time, drifting from one structure which he thinks makes sense, to another. He knows that he's not going to find absolute truth. He doesn't even believe there is such a thing as absolute truth.

CALLER: You build up hypotheses as far as you can, but always recognizing that it could be different, if more facts come on the scene.

HC: But when we start with the Bible, then we have absolute truth to begin with, and we can build on that. And we can build a lot more solid structure, and we can build one that's unshakable.

CALLER: What if the anthropologist says to you, though, that so also do the other religions say, you know, if you just believe in our religion, then you've got the truth and you can go from there, and you don't have to worry about the Bible and those other things?

It seems like an anthropologist would generalize, looking over the cultures of four billion people, that these Scriptures all seem to exclude each other. They say, "We've got the Word and you don't. And the only way you can come to the final light, to truth, is to reject your error and join us, and believe as we do." And the anthropologist says, "That's the real hassle going on all over the world. The Moslems fight the Christians, and the Protestants fight the Catholics, and the Catholics fight the . . ."

HC: Well, as a matter of fact, everyone in the world ultimately has joined some kind of a religion, whether it's a religion of atheism or a religion of agnosticism, or a religion of Mohammedanism, or whatever. And any religion worth its salt, or anyone who follows a religion and is worth his salt, is going to believe sincerely that he has the right one. That is to be expected.

But the fact is that the Christian religion is the only one, the only one, that has an answer to man's sin problem. There's no other religion that has an answer. All the other religions are just guessing games.

CALLER: Zen Buddhism has an answer for that. It has a real good answer.

HC: No. It has an answer, but it's not an answer that is acceptable.

CALLER: Buddhists say that all life is a misery, and that's just the way it is, folks. Get used to it. Do the best you can while you're here. And then the Zens, of course, are somewhat like that. They say that if you just note what reality is, where everything comes from, you don't have any hassles. You can't possibly experience sin. Whatever happens to you is whatever happens. There's no sin. There's no good. It's all just one.

HC: But you see, these philosophies that you speak of, or these religions that you speak about, they fail to recognize, first of all, that there is a God who created man in the image of God. They fail to recognize that to rebel against God's Law, or break God's Law, which all men

do, has got to be answered to before God. It's got to be paid for.

Now the Bible is the only book that really shows us the total sad situation, that the wages of sin is death, that we're under the wrath of God because of our sins. Other religions, some say there is no sin. Others say, well, we'll live a good moral life, and thereby we'll pay for our sins.

CALLER: Cultists have their interpretation, too. That's a different interpretation.

HC: They all have their interpretations. But the Bible comes to grips with the question and says: Okay, now let's look at it very candidly. Man is a sinner. Man is under the wrath of God, but the Bible also offers a way of escape whereby God's justice absolutely remains intact. In other words, there is no shortcut. There's no violation of God's justice, as He provides salvation for us. And no other religion has that kind of an answer. Only the Bible has that kind of an answer. And that answer of course is through the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God Himself, who took upon Himself our sins, if we place our trust in Him, who satisfied the justice of God on our behalf.

There's no other religion that has an answer like this. Now this answer is cast in the environment of a book that is loaded with truth, as God has prophesied many of the events that are happening today, as God has prophesied hundreds of years before events happened in the past. And so God has given abundant evidence of the genuineness and the trustworthiness of the Word of God, as He presents the true answer to man's dilemma. There is no other religion that can hold a candle to the true Gospel.

And this is what separates the true Gospel from anything at all. And this is why we can know that the Bible is absolutely true.

CALLER: So you believe it because you think it's true. And you think it's true because you believe it, and you believe it because, you know, you just get one of these elliptical strings. The one ties in with the other. How can you answer an anthropologist, when you do that?

HC: Well, first of all, when we study the Bible we find, for example, that the Bible tells us that Babylon was going to be destroyed years and years before it was destroyed. The Bible predicted that a king named Cyrus would rise among the Medes and the Persians, a couple of hundred years before he arose. The Bible predicted the destruction of Jerusalem. And incidentally, it also predicted the fact that Israel would be a nation again.

The Bible has predicted all kinds of things with tremendous accuracy. The Bible is the only book that gives us a solid and straight answer as to how it all began. The Bible, for example, lays out for us the message of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. There are all kinds of people who live today who have had their lives transformed because they have placed their trust in Him, because they have taken God at His Word. There are literally hundreds of thousands of people in the world who had this experience.

And so all of this evidence is there to indicate to us that there is an answer. Now the one thing the Bible demands is absolute faith, or absolute trust, where we abandon ourselves to the Bible. And anyone who goes to the Bible simply looking upon it as a book, along with other books, is not going to find his answer. Or putting it in another way, without accepting the Bible as the Word of God, man remains without a way of salvation, a way of getting to God, because Jesus insists, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." Jesus said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." The Bible says, "There is no other name given among men whereby men may be saved." The Bible is very insistent.

CALLER: It is consistent. It holds to that pretty well, all through the New Testament. I agree. So we've got to say that Jesus did say it. It's not as if, some people could say that Jesus hedged on it and said, "I'm one of the ways," or "I point the way," or all of these other things, like the gurus seem to say, and the other religions, and you might say the wise folks of the anthropological world. They point the way. But Jesus says, "None of that. I am the Way, and I am the Truth," which makes Him different than the other people.

HC: Yes. And more than that, He declared that He was God.

CALLER: "Before Abraham was, I AM."

HC: Yes. And those who have placed their trust in Him have found that this answers all the questions. Now I personally have done lots of work in the Bible, and I have found that it's exquisitely accurate when it comes to history, when it comes to the origins of the world. Do you take the National Geographic?

CALLER: I did at one time.

HC: Well, in December there was a series of articles concerning the Mayan culture, in Central America. Now I have worked through the calendars of Genesis 5 and Genesis 11. And in Genesis 10 it says that in the days of Peleg, the earth was divided. Now that's a surprising statement. But scientists have discovered that at one time, indeed there was one huge continent, and that it was divided. Of course scientists say that this was divided over a period of 150 million years, because they don't trust the Bible at all.

But in the Bible it says that it was in the days of Peleg. Now Peleg, according to the biblical chronology, was born in the year 3153 BC, and he died in the year 2914 BC. Now I can say that very categorically because the language of the Bible is so very careful. All of these ages and relationships are so very carefully identified in the Bible.

Now in the Mayan culture, the archaeologists find that they flourished around 1500 years ago. And when they built their temples and built their important places, they would put a calendar on the outside, to indicate the date that this dedication took place. And archaeologists have been able to decipher these calendars. They find that the Mayan people were as accurate in calendar keeping as we are today. They were just absolutely geniuses in this whole matter of the calendar and the passage of time.

Now the interesting thing is that the Mayan calendar, in every calendar that they look at, has one foundation date as the beginning of their calendar, and that is the year 3114 BC. And so the archaeologists puzzle over this. Why 3114 BC? But I see in this a tremendous corroboration of the biblical statement. Peleg was 39 years old in the year 3114 BC. In his days the earth was divided.

Now to imagine that the one large continent that then existed was suddenly split and moved across the floor of the ocean so that we have the continents as they exist today, insofar as the nomads what were on that section of the continent, which later on became North and South America, and Central America, it was the beginning of time for them. It was a brand new day. And I can see very reasonably why the Maya calendar begins with a foundation date of 3114 BC. I believe that was probably the year the earth was divided.

CALLER: Praise God!

HC: That's a very interesting possibility, isn't it? Well, thank you so much for calling.

CALLER: I've enjoyed talking to you. And I hope that the rest of the people who are listening could think about that anthropology and religion thing, because

it's probably going to be the very big problem in the future, in the next ten years. If the world is going to go any place, it's going to have to figure out what makes us tick, from a scientific viewpoint, and also from a transcendental or religious viewpoint.

Well, anyway, thank you. Good-bye.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

What Does it Mean to "Fear the Lord"? (142D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I've been reading in the Old Testament, and there's so much in it about the fear of the Lord. And you hear so little today about it. And what I've heard is often conflicting. And I wondered if you could spend a few minutes on it. And I'll take the answer on the air. How should we regard the phrase? What does it really mean to us?

HC: All right. I'll speak to that. The question is raised concerning the phrase, "the fear of the Lord." What does the Bible mean by this?

Now in the Old Testament we read, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." And then we also read that "the fear of the Lord is to depart from evil." The word fear is used in two senses in the Bible. But ultimately it is pointing to the same total conclusion.

We are to realize that the Lord is Eternal God, that He is His Divine Majesty, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and that we must answer to Him for all that we do. Now before we are saved, we ought to be in abject fear. We ought to be in terror of Him, because the Bible says that we are going to be condemned for our sins. We are going to come into the hands of an angry God and be cast into hell because of our sins. And so an unsaved person ought to really be in terror of Him.

Now God draws the curtain aside and gives us a look at Judgment Day, when Christ comes. And in Revelation 6 you see that the rich and the poor and the slaves and the free, and all men are calling to the rocks to crush them, and for the hills to hide them, because the day of God's wrath has come. The day of the wrath of the Lamb has come. They are in abject terror of God. They never showed any fear of God while they were living, because they disdained God. They were in rebellion against God. They would not recognize God. But ultimately they must recognize Him. And then that fear will be a horrible fear, because God's wrath will be poured out upon them.

Now this is the way that mankind ought to look at God, with just great fear and trembling, because of the fact that we have repudiated Him. We have disobeyed Him. We've rebelled against Him. And rightly we deserve His wrath. But God in His mercy, while He comes as a wrathful God, and His wrath is upon the unsaved, He also comes with a message of love, that whosoever will cry out to God in their spiritual bankruptcy, will admit their total inability to do right, and will repent of their sins and believe in God, that there is a way, through the Lord Jesus Christ, to have forgiveness.

Then we can know God's love, and we can know that the wrath of God has all been taken care of in our lives. Now the fear of the Lord, which before we were saved could have been one of abject terror, now is one of love and of friendship, but still of honor and respect incidentally, even before we're saved, the fear of the Lord ought to include these qualities of fear and respect and reverence. But of course, in the unsaved, this is not found, either.

But now that we are saved, there is this honor and this respect and this high regard for the holiness of God, for the person of His Majesty. But it is not the fear of God's wrath. That has all been taken away. We read in Romans 8:15:

"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery, to fall back into fear. But you have received the spirit of sonship, when we cry, Abba, Father. It is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God." The terror is gone. The insecurity, the terrible feeling that something awful is going to happen should all be gone.

Now we are secure in Christ. But we still have the fear of the Lord in the sense that it is the beginning of wisdom. We have the desire to depart from evil. We have the desire to live God's way, because He is our King, and He is our Lord. Our fear has had eliminated from it all that is terror, all that is trauma. But that which is honor and respect and regard still remains.

I hope that this is at least somewhat of an outline of how the Bible looks at this question of the fear of the Lord.

How are We to Understand Faith? (151A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Good evening. I'd like to ask you a question regarding biblical faith as it applies to the believer. The Scriptures say, "The just shall live by faith. . . Faith without works is dead." And in Hebrews 11, we're given a series of illustrations of faith. Specifically, in the sixth verse it says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." And I was wondering if you would define or tell what the Bible means by faith, in the context of these verses, or some helpful comments on this as to the exercise of faith.

HC: All right. Fine. Thank you. The question is raised concerning faith. What is it? Just exactly how are we to understand faith?

Now in Hebrews 11:1 we have a definition: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Putting it in another way, we could say that faith is a childlike, naive trust in God, that what He says is as certain and true and dependable and accurate as if we could see it before our very eyes, taking place. In other words, when God says that "the wages of sin is death," we don't really see an immediate connection between sin and death. We know that death is all around, but we can't really connect it to sin. Faith is that attitude toward God where we say, "Well now, God says that death is the wages of sin. And therefore, because God says it to be so, it is absolutely true and trustworthy."

Or again, the Bible says that the wrath of God abides on the unsaved (on the unbelievers) such that mankind outside Christ, because of his sins, is subject to hell, and that hell goes on for eternity. Now there's no one that can see this anywhere as an actual fact. But faith declares it to be an actual fact. We are ready to hang our whole life on the truth of these statements of the Bible, that what God has declared is really so; that is, is dependable and certain, as if it had already happened. The Bible says that if we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, if we hang our life on Him and repent of our sins, we can have eternal life. Now we can't see this with our physical eye. We can't see Christ with our physical eye. We can't feel the forgiveness of our sins. But because the Bible declares it to be so, by faith we are absolutely convinced that it is so. It is as if it was something that we could really take hold of and see with our eyes. We know that it is absolutely so.

Now this is faith. Incidentally, everybody has faith. We mustn't think that faith is a word that is related only to the believers in the Bible. The secular scientist has faith that mankind evolved from some lower creature. He has faith that this world began without an omnipotent power of some kind. He has no way of proving that this is so, but by faith he

says this is so. He's putting his trust in what someone has told him, or what his own mind declares to him.

When you walk into a building, you have faith that that roof is not going to collapse. You aren't worried about your safety at all. You trust that the builder of that building was a good builder, and that it is structurally sound. Everything we do is related to faith in something or another.

Now the sixty-four dollar question is, do we have faith in these precepts and rules that God has laid down for us in the Word of God? And right at this point there is a vast problem that arises. And the problem is this: mankind has been deceived into thinking by his own mind, by his master Satan, that he himself is the master of his own fate. He has been deceived into believing that he himself is the captain of his own soul. He has been deceived into believing, into having faith, that the pleasures of sin, the pleasures of doing his own thing, are the greatest and highest pleasures that one can have.

And so when the Gospel comes to this individual, he has to make a choice. Is he going to give up his trust in what he believes to be true, in his sin-darkened mind, particularly those things that seem so tangible? After all, the joy of sin is right here and now. The security that he finds in the creation is right here and now. This is something that is tangible, much more tangible than a faith in a God that he cannot see, in a salvation that cannot be displayed before his very eyes, faith in what the Bible says about something that happened 2,000 years ago.

But unless we abandon ourselves to the teachings of the Bible as being entirely true and trustworthy (and this is what faith is), we are going to remain in our unbelief. You know, I might also add one other thought here, and that is that there are two kinds of believing. Jesus spoke about one kind in Luke 8, where He talked about the Parable of the Sower. There were those who were like the seed that fell on rocky soil, the seed being the Word of God, the rocky soil being the hearts of these. And the seed began to grow, and then, because there was no good soil there, it soon died. And Christ likened this to the Gospel that is sown in the hearts of those who believe for a while. But because there is no root, when the temptations of the world come, they fall away.

Now we might call this intellectual or miraculous faith. It's the kind of faith where we place our trust in Christ because it makes sense or because it is going to do something for me. I expect a miracle from God, or whatever. It's that kind of a faith. It's emotional, or it's intellectual. It is not faith that is of a nature where we have abandoned ourselves to Christ, where we are ready to be obedient to Him, come what may, because we have entrusted ourselves altogether to Christ.

Only if we are born again will we actually entrust ourselves altogether to Christ. Only then will we have true saving faith. Only then will it be of an eternal variety. And of course salvation is eternal. The kingdom that we enter into is an eternal kingdom. Now the evidence of this faith is that there is an ongoing earnest desire to be obedient to what we read in the Bible. We not only read it and trust in it with our minds, but we trust in it with our whole being, with our whole will. We want to be obedient to it because our whole life is hung on this. We've abandoned ourselves to Christ and what He teaches. We know that regardless of anything else, we can depend on what the Bible says, and we're going to stick with that through thick and thin. And this will only occur when we have become born again. That is true saving faith.

The Difference Between Fearing the Lord and Loving Him (324B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Brother Camping. I'd like you to explain something, and I'm going to hang up and listen to you. Would you please explain to us the difference between fear of the Lord and love for the Lord? It's commanded in certain Scriptures to fear the Lord, and it's commanded in other Scriptures to love the Lord. How can we love someone that we fear?

HC: A very good question is raised. What is the difference between our love for the Lord and our fear of the Lord? Let's first of all talk about an unsaved person, and then let's talk about a saved person. In talking about an unsaved person, he ought to have a fantastic fear of the Lord, because he is under the judgment of God because of his sins. He is subject to the wrath of God, and he's going to spend eternity in hell because of his sins. Therefore he ought to really be cringing in abject terror and fear of God. God is the sovereign Creator, who has created him in the image of God to have fellowship with God. And man of his own volition, right down to the last human being, has rebelled against God and deliberately has gone his own way. And so he ought to be in total fear.

Now as a matter of fact, he has no fear. The Bible speaks of this. There is no fear of God. Arrogantly he thinks that he can live any kind of a life that he wants to, and that he doesn't have to fear God. And people say to me, "If there is a God that I have to worry about, let Him strike me dead," or whatever, arrogantly saying, "Look, I'm not a bit afraid of God." Well, the Bible teaches in Revelation 6 that when Christ comes again and they see God as He is, as He comes on the clouds of glory, they're going to be calling to the rocks to crush them, to kill them, and the mountains to fall on them, because they will recognize that they have to do with God. And that fear will become very intense and very real, and rightly so, because it will be the time of judgment.

Also, in the case of the unsaved, there is of course no love of God. The essence of love for God is to be obedient to God. Love for God is not some kind of a namby-pamby kind of a thing that has no real substance or that we can't quite get our hands on; it's here but it's not quite there, kind of ephemeral, we don't know really how to get it down in concrete terms. It isn't anything like that at all. The love of God is to keep His commandments. And the unsaved person has absolutely no desire whatsoever to keep the commandments of God. If he does keep the commandments in any sense, it's because he's trying to design his own salvation program, his own way to get back to God, and he feels that part of that way of getting back to God means that he has to keep certain of God's commandments. But he will pick and choose which ones he wants to keep.

That's the condition of the unsaved person. When we become saved, however, there is a vast change in both of these departments. Whereas before we're saved we should be in abject terror of God, and yet we actually have no fear of any kind of God, now that we are saved we have absolutely no reason to be in abject terror of Him, because the wrath of God will never come against us. But on the other hand, we have a very healthy, a very righteous respect for the holiness of God, for who He is, that He is the eternal majesty who created us and the world, and who upholds the world by His power and who did ransom us from death.

And so the fear that we should have had before, and which we did not have at all before we were saved, now becomes a fear that is one of reverence, of respect, of honor. Now to be very specific, the born again believer who is really

conscious of who God is will always be very careful with the Word of God. He's not going to tell jokes utilizing the Word of God. Have you ever heard Christians make jokes quoting from the Bible in order to form the basis for their jokes? Oh, I've been guilty of that in the past. What a terrible thing to do! The Word of God is identified with holy God. And in our fear of Him, not the fear that He's going to strike us down dead or send us to hell, but because we know now that He is sovereign Lord, He is the divine Creator of the world, He is King of kings and Lord of lords, He is our King, He is our Lord, we would never want to, we would never dare make light of the Word of God. Perish the thought that we would use the things of the Bible in order to make flippant remarks or jokes. How many of us have been guilty of that? What an awful thing.

Or when it comes to the Bible and its translation, we would never take liberties in translating the Bible. We want to be just as careful as possible trying to stay as close as possible to exactly what the Word of God is, because we understand how holy the Word of God is.

Or when we talk about the church or His body, or anything that is holy, anything that is related to holy God, there's going to be a spirit of holy awe, of holy reverence. That is the fear of God that ought to be inspired within our lives. And we must get over this idea that in our joy of being a believer, by all means that joy ought to show, but we ought to get over this idea that in our joy we're going to treat the holy things as if they're just so much "show-biz" or so much comedy. If we want to engage in that kind of activity, we have a world all around us that we can pick and choose from to make the butt of our jokes. We can talk about trees or animals, or whatever, but not holy things in any way.

The same thing when it comes to prayer, the same thing when it comes to witnessing. There's always that environment, that sensitivity to the holiness of God, the wonder of who God is, and that poor wretched sinners such as we are, saved by grace, that we might relate to this holy God. And this is the feat that ought to encompass us.

Now with this there is an ongoing love for God. There is a deep-rooted desire to be obedient to the commandments of God. One of the greatest joys that I experience is talking with individuals from time to time, when they speak to me for counseling, or whatever, and I sense in their question, "Would you please tell me from the Word, what must I do?" And I know from their question that they earnestly want to do what the Word says, even though it may hurt them at the moment. And oh, what a joy this is to meet this kind of a person, because I know there is burning in that heart, in the heart of that person, a deep and reverential fear of God, but also a marvelous love for God, because he wants to keep the commandments of the Lord.

Fear does not have to do with a cudgel, to make us keep His commandments. "I better do this because God is going to do something to me." That is not the fear of the Lord. The fear of God is a holy, reverential respect, awe, sense of honor, for who God is. The love of God has to do with the keeping of the commandments. We do the law of God out of our love for Him. The fear of God has to do with an attitude, the way we approach God, the way we think about His things, the way our posture is toward God. The love of God has to do with our good works, with keeping His commandments, out of a heart of love. Because we love Him we want to do His will.

What Does it Mean to "Believe in Christ"? (338D)

CALLER: I believe what the Bible says, that God is love and that if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you will be saved, believing even on His Name. There are a lot of people I come in contact with in my lifetime in whom I feel a spirit that is not really right with the Lord. But yet I'm not one to judge them. I ask them if they know the Lord Jesus as their personal Savior, and they just kind of nod, and they say, "Yes, I know Him." But my spirit is troubled, seeing that I know the Savior and yet I have a burden for these people. These people, if they believe on His Name, do you believe that they will be saved?

HC: The question is raised concerning what is salvation? What does it mean to believe on His Name? What does it mean to believe in Christ? We read in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What does it mean to believe?

Satan believes that Christ is God. Satan believes that Christ is going to judge him and cast him into hell. Satan believes that Christ came in the flesh and rose from the grave. Satan believes all these things, and yet he's not saved. There are all kinds of people who believe all these things. They believe the Bible is true, they believe that Christ rose from the grave, they believe they're sinners, they believe Christ came to die for sinners. They believe that the blood of Christ is required to free them from sin. They believe all these things, and yet they're going to end up in hell.

What does it mean to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? It means that I have hung my whole life on Christ. I have accepted as a fact everything that the Bible declares, even though I may not understand large portions of it. I have accepted it as a fact, and I am ready to cast my eternal lot with what I read in the Bible. I've hung my whole life on the Lord Jesus Christ. I've entrusted myself to Him.

Now Satan has not entrusted himself to Christ. There are all kinds of intellectual people who believe intellectually all these things about Christ, but they haven't hung their life on this. They go about their own path of trying to live out their lives to satisfy the self. They're not ready to surrender their wills to Him.

The evidence of salvation is repentance. The evidence of salvation is a childlike trust in Him. The evidence of salvation is that we read the Bible with a view to being obedient to what we find there, not because we're trying to get rewards, not because we're looking for some kind of wages. That is antithetical to salvation. We are obedient because this is the desire of our heart. This is the earnest desire of our life because we have become born again. This is believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you so much for that good call. Good night.

What Does it Mean to Believe? (516A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, Mr. Camping. My question pertains to what you have to do in order to be saved. In Galatians 5:19-21 says that adulterers and so on will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Now just to believe in the Bible but not know what the Bible has to say, is this going to save us?

HC: The question really is this. What does it mean to believe? Can a man believe in the Bible and still go to hell? And of course he can. You can believe that the Bible is the Word of God. You can believe that Christ came for sinners. You can believe that you are a sinner, or

that all mankind have sinned. You can believe that God means what He says, that the unsaved will be cast into hell. You can believe that Christ rose again on the third day. You can trust God altogether that Christ is Eternal God, who paid for the sins of those who believe on Him. You can believe all of these things and still end up in hell.

The fact is that belief has to be more than just an intellectual knowledge of something, or even an emotional knowledge of something. It has to be a commitment to what we believe or to what we read about in the Bible. Now let me illustrate. The Bible teaches that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Okay. We can believe that that's a true statement, that's a trustworthy statement.

But am I ready to say of myself, I too am a sinner and have come short of the glory of God. That's saying it a little differently, you see. The Bible says that because the wages of sin is death, and the Bible holds that the death that God has in view is eternal damnation, I can believe that. But am I ready to say I am a sinner, and because of my sins I am going to hell. I am in deep and terrible trouble. That's saying it a little differently, isn't it?

Real trust, real belief is where I have committed my life to this. Now let me use an illustration that I've used many times, but it still is applicable. Let's say that you were standing outside of a great gorge, on the side of a great gorge, like the Niagara Falls, or some other great gorge that you want to name. And there's a tightrope across this. And this tightrope is hundreds and hundreds of feet above the bottom of the canyon, so that anyone on this tightrope who would fall off would fall to his death for sure. And this tightrope stretches out for hundreds of feet.

And now a man comes along, and he claims that he is a very accomplished tightrope walker. And to prove it he walks out on this wire, right out to the middle of this chasm, and he certainly is very proficient in what he is doing. And so he walks back on the tightrope to where you are standing, and he says to you, "Do you believe that I can walk out on that tightrope with a man on my back?" And you reflect for a moment, and you think about how proficient that he was as he walked out on that tightrope, and you say, "Well yes, yes, I believe that you could certainly do that. I've never seen a man who was as proficient in tightrope walking as you are. And I certainly believe that you can walk out there with a man on your back."

Well, by this time a crowd is gathering, and so he says to you, "Now look. Let's show this crowd here that I am really able to do it. You get on my back, and I'm going to walk out there on that tightrope." Now that's a different story, isn't it? Right at that point your belief is not quite what you thought it was. You thought you believed that he could do it, but you by no means were ready to hang your life on that belief. And so you begin to stutter and back away and say, "Now wait a minute. Wait a minute. I'm sure you can do it, but you're not going to try it with me." In other words, you haven't really believed that he could do it. You just kind of guessed that he could.

Now this is the way a lot of people approach salvation. They believe with their minds that all that the Bible says is true. But they don't hang their life on that. They don't commit themselves to this so that they are ready to face God and face Heaven or hell based upon what they read in the Bible. And so even though they believe with their minds all of these things of the Bible, they still end up in hell.

CALLER: Okay. How about believing without knowing what the Bible has to say, or knowing what is expected of the believer? Let's say I was to accept Christ,

and then I say, "Well, I'm not going to open the Bible because I'm afraid I might find something in there that's going to hurt me." And there are people like that, that don't know one end of the Bible from the other. And I was one of them for a long time myself. How about that?

HC: The question is, if a man accepts Christ and now he says, "I don't dare open the Bible for fear that I might find something there that will hurt me," what does this mean?

You see, if we say we accept Christ and we do not understand the Bible to be the Word of God for our lives, if we're not ready to read the Bible if we're able to, now some people don't have Bibles to read. Some people are blind, and they can't read, or they don't have the intellectual capacity to read. That's a different matter.

But if we are able to read the Bible and we say, "I don't want to read it, because I might find something that hurts me there," then effectively we're saying, "I don't trust You, God. I don't trust You at all. I accept Jesus as my Savior because I've been told about Him, but I don't trust the Bible." And that's the evidence of unbelief. The Bible is the Word of God. The Bible is the book that tells us about the Lord Jesus. If we do not accept the Bible as the Word of God, we're not saved.

Accepting the Lord Jesus Christ does not save us. The fact is, the Bible doesn't even use the language "accept the Lord Jesus Christ." That is language that is not found in the Bible. The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." That is, hang your whole life on Him. Commit yourself to Him.

And because we have become born again, we're going to have a very deep desire to know what is in the Bible, because we know that the Bible tells us of our salvation. It tells us of God our Father. It will be the book that we will cherish most highly.

CALLER: Okay. Then in order to be a Christian I'd have to believe, for example, that Moses opened the Red Sea and the people walked through.

HC: The question is, then in order to be a Christian, if the Bible says that Moses walked through the Red Sea or opened the Red Sea, or God opened the Red Sea so Moses and the children of Israel walked through it and the water stood as a wall on either side, do I have to believe that because the Bible says so? Absolutely. If you would read that in the Bible and say, "Well, I don't believe that. I'm a Christian and I've accepted Christ, and there are a lot of things in the Bible I believe, but that's too big for me, I can't buy that," by that action you show that you don't trust God at all, because the Bible is the Word of God. And when you begin to doubt the Bible, then you are showing that your trust is not in God. Your trust is in some kind of a salvation you've designed in your own mind, but you're not ready to humble yourself to the salvation God has shown in His Word.

CALLER: Okay. That really helps me and I really do appreciate your time.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Understanding the True Gospel (675A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I was wondering if I could clarify a few things with you. I'm trying to understand your message of salvation. As I understand it, we must know and understand the true Gospel, and we must constantly be on guard against false gospels. And we must be very careful of people who may be giving us false gospels, although they themselves fully believe in what they're saying, and may apparently be able to back it up with Bible Scriptures. Is this basically correct?

HC: Yes, I would say that is basically correct. Every false gospel (and we call it a gospel only because they still talk about the Lord Jesus and the shed blood, and so on) has an authority that is wider or narrower than the Bible alone and in its entirety. And yet those who follow it are convinced they are following truth, and their doctrines have some Biblical validity. That is, they find verses that will support whatever doctrines they are teaching. Now of course they're looking at those verses from the vantage point of their larger authority, so that they interpret the verses very frequently differently than if they were following the true Gospel. But nevertheless they are convinced that they can back up at least some of what they're preaching from the scriptures.

CALLER: How then is a simple person such as myself supposed to know and recognize the true Gospel, without apparently extensive background and training, which apparently you had?

HC: There are two things that I might say. First of all, the Bible says Jesus' sheep did not hear them. And the context is where Jesus is saying, "All that have come before Me are thieves and robbers." And God identifies thieves and robbers in the Bible as a term that relates to those who are followers of other gospels than the true Gospel, and yet they claim that they are saved.

What I'm trying to say is that the Bible teaches that ultimately it is God who guides us into truth and keeps us from being snared into a false gospel, if indeed we are to be saved, if we are indeed one of God's elect. That is a commitment that God makes. But at the same time, God does warn, "Beware of false prophets." And God tells us to test the spirits, and so on. And wonderfully, there is a very simple test. It's so simple, and yet so few theologians have ever expressed it. And that simple test is that any religion or any gospel is determined by the authority under which it operates. As I've said so frequently, if you are a Muslim how do you know how you are to live, or what you are to believe as a Muslim? Well, you go to the writings of Mohammed. He is the authority, and these writings are looked upon as divine.

And so if you're a true believer, what is your authority? The authority is the Bible, alone and in its entirety. We're not to add to the words of this book, nor take away from the words of this book. Therefore, if someone talks about the Bible, and really believes the Bible is the authority, and yet he also believes there is another source of divine truth, then by definition he has a wider authority than the Bible alone and in its entirety. And therefore they have a different gospel than that which would be determined or structured by the authority of the Bible alone and in its entirety.

CALLER: What I'm concerned about myself is that I understand several messages that I've heard you give, signs or miracles or visions or speaking in tongues, or any of the number of manifestations of the Holy Spirit, are now pure signs of the reverse. These things don't happen any longer, in other words. And now if you receive signs, or if you see a miracle, it is definitely from someone who is representing a false gospel.

HC: All I can do is tell you what the Bible teaches. As the Bible talks about the character of the church at the end of time, where I believe we are, we find that in every case (there are no exceptions to this) where it talks about signs and wonders in the church it always relates to Satanic activity. And that's a very ominous fact.

Now the interesting thing is that those churches that are interested in signs and wonders (and they're legion today, they're growing and proliferating all over the world) invariably those churches are also interested in visions and voices and

tongues, and so on. But visions and voices and tongues are an admission that God is still speaking today, that God is still bringing divine revelation. Therefore the Bible is not alone the Word of God. They are saying there is more to the Word of God than the Bible. And so by definition their authority is a different authority than the Bible alone. And so it's no wonder therefore that they're also interested in signs and wonders. Any gospel that is not the true Gospel is not of God, and if it's not of God it's of Satan. There is only one true Gospel that is of God, and that is the Gospel that is structured by the Bible.

CALLER: What about the case of signs and miracles that are pertinent only to today, but still fit the scriptures? Doesn't that relate to the place where Christ said, "By their fruit ye shall know them," that a good tree cannot bear evil fruit, and an evil tree cannot bear good fruit? That's the only real test that I've ever found - that Christ said to test the prophets on that basis, by whether their fruit was good or evil.

HC: But what is the fruit? You see, if the Bible says we're not to add to the words of this book, and now someone says, "That's fine, but I believe that God is still speaking today, that He still comes with visions, and so on," then he is rebelling against God. He is rebelling against the authority of the Word of God. And so regardless of how moral he may appear or how often he talks about the Lord Jesus or the blood of Christ or the church or the resurrection, or whatever it may be, the fact is they are designing a gospel that they want rather than a gospel that is structured by the Bible. This is where the whole thing begins and ends, and that is with the authority. The Bible is the authority. It is the only authority. The entire Bible is the authority. And the moment we depart from that, then we are starting to go down a path that is designed from our own minds, if we're hallucinating or dreaming, or whatever; or it even could be of Satan, if the vision did come from him.

That's the problem that we're facing today. Are we willing to surrender our will to the authority of the Bible alone and in its entirety? That is where the true Gospel is. And we aren't willing to do that if start looking for divine truth in a vision or a voice or something else.

CALLER: Then you're saying that God no longer speaks to people.

HC: I'm very certain He does not, in any kind of a verbalized or articulated way. God indicates that we're not to add to the words of this book I'm very positive about that.

But I also know that in the secular world, for example, mediums and so on are convinced that they are receiving messages from God, and I know that Satan does speak through ouija boards and tarot cards, and so on. And so God certainly allows Satan to break the silence between the supernatural and the natural. Now the Bible warns in Second Corinthians 11 that Satan comes as an angel of light, or as a messenger of light. In other words, he comes looking exactly like the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Bible speaks of Satan's ministers as being ministers of righteousness. So deceitful is Satan that these ministers are convinced that they are serving Christ, absolutely convinced. But God calls them emissaries of Satan, or false prophets.

If Satan is allowed to break the silence between the supernatural and the natural in the secular world, then certainly he'll do it in the church. But he's going to do it in the most holy surroundings. And so we're living in a very dangerous era, a very dangerous time. And the only security we have is that we listen only to the Bible as the Word of God.

CALLER: You just made a remark that I'll have to question you about. You say that if Satan was going to speak out like

that, it would only be in the most holy places. Shall we say from Bethlehem, in a manger? Shall we say from a simple man walking around in the most rural country area?

HC: No. The most holy place insofar as the Bible is concerned is the church Bethlehem is not a holy place. Bethlehem is the place where Jesus was born, but that doesn't make it a holy place.

CALLER: I would say the manger was.

HC: No, it's not a holy place. Jesus was born there, but that which is holy is that which has been set apart for the service of God. And the temple that God speaks about is the body of believers. And that's exactly where God warns that Satan will operate. In Matthew 24:24 God says, "False prophets and false christ's will arise with signs and wonders, so lead astray if possible even the elect." Now the elect are the true believers. They are the ones who have been chosen by God from the foundations of the world. And they are found in the churches and congregations that hold the true Gospel. These churches are going to be harassed by false prophets, who come in the name of Christ, with a gospel that looks so close to the true Gospel that even the elect would be deceived, if that were possible. It's not possible. God gives us that assurance in other passages. But it will be so close to the true Gospel, because Satan comes as an angel of light.

But one of the factors that we can recognize immediately, as stated in Matthew 24:24, is that they will come with signs and wonders. And so any time someone is featuring signs and wonders it's really a red flag. Watch out! Watch out! That can't be of God, because the true Gospel is not interested in signs and wonders. It's interested in walking by faith. And it's an evil and an audacious generation that seeketh for a sign.

CALLER: Then how would a person know if he was one of the elect?

HC: We know we're one of God's elect if we have become a true believer, if we know that our sins have been paid for and that Christ is our Savior and Lord, and we're convinced that the Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. It is the Word of God. But if we say we're saved, if we say our sins have been paid for, and yet we have become convinced that there is more to divine truth than the Bible, then we don't know what salvation is. The Bible says that if anyone adds to the words of this book, God will add to him the plagues written therein, which is another way of saying that he is still subject to damnation, which brings us to the conclusion therefore that he is still unsaved.

CALLER: The thing is, though, if I believe all the things that you say, then how can I be sure that what I read in the Bible is really the true Gospel, and that I'm not deceiving myself.

HC: You see, we have to start with faith. By faith we have to believe that the Bible is the Word of God. Now the Bible is not something that has just been written in the last 100 years, and it's a popular best-seller because it's caught man's fancy. The Bible is a book that has stood the test of 2,000 years in time, and millions of people have hung their lives on it. And when we study the Bible very carefully, we find that the internal evidence of the Bible clearly demonstrates that it is a supernatural book. There are just far too many truths hidden within it and pouring out of it to ever allow it to be anything but a book that is God breathed. In fact, the Bible says of itself that holy men of old spoke as the Holy Spirit moved them.

We start therefore with the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God. It's not some publisher's book, it's not some church's book. It is the Word of God itself. And the Bible says of itself that we're not to add to it. And those who have hung their lives on the Bible and have trusted

everything that the Bible offers have come to salvation, and they know that they're saved because the Bible is the living Word of God. As they read the Bible, the Holy Spirit witnesses with their spirit that they are a child of God. And this is not in any articulated or verbalized fashion. It is simply that they sense in their hearts that yes, this is truth, I believe this. And God's wish becomes their command.

CALLER: The verse that you keep quoting from, about he who adds to or takes away from this book, is right at the end of Revelation. And when I read it, I can see no reference to the rest of the Bible, only to the prophecies of the book of Revelation. That's where you and I would disagree. How do we know that you're right and I'm wrong, or I'm right and you're wrong?

HC: The Bible is one cohesive whole. The Bible is not a series of sixty-six books, each standing on its own merits, so that you can do with any one of those books as you wish. The Bible is one Word, it is the Word of God. And if you add something to the book of Revelation you have added it to the Bible. And if you take something away from the book of Revelation you have taken it away from the Bible.

CALLER: The point is this. I would agree that you could not add to or take away from any of the books of the Bible. But when I read Revelation, I only read that that is a curse, or a wrath of God, particularly pertaining to that book, because if anyone disturbs one word of that prophecy he throws the whole prophecy off, thereby blinding anyone who would understand it.

HC: Supposing that someone added a verse to the book of Revelation and it was a verse from another part of the Bible. There's a lot of redundancy in the Bible, where God uses the same verse even in the same chapter, over and over. If someone added a verse to Revelation that was found elsewhere in the Bible, they have now thrown Revelation out of balance. But the fact is, they have added something to the Word of God. They have put something there that God has not said, that God has not decreed at that particular point.

The Bible is the Word of God. This is the big point. And we either believe this or we don't believe it. And if we don't believe it, then we can make our additions to the book of Revelation, and once we do that when we read Revelation 22:18 we're going to interpret it in the light of our wider revelation. And we've already accepted the principle that God is still speaking today. And so then we're going to read Revelation 22:18, and we're going to say, "Well, whatever it means, I know it doesn't mean that God is not speaking today, because my later authority indicates that that conclusion is impossible." That's exactly the trap that you get into.

But if we just let the Bible speak to us, then we know that we stop with the book of Revelation. That is the end of revelation. The curious thing is that so frequently those who are interested in signs and wonders are also interested in adding to the Bible, adding further visions, and so on. And yet the Bible is very clear that signs and wonders near the end of time are related to Satanic activity. And yet they don't seem to fear that they may have fallen prey to this.

Secondly, if I would receive a vision, a glorious vision, some holy vision, knowing that Satan goes about as an angel of light, how do I know it's not Satan? He's no dumbbell. He's not going to come against me with a red suit and a forked tail and a pair of horns. He's going to look like Christ. He's going to look as much like Christ as he possibly can. And so how do I know that I'm not being conned by him? The only reason I know I'm not being conned by him is to not listen to him, because the Bible says

that he goes about as an angel of light. And the Bible says we're not to add to the words of this book. So if I received that vision tonight, I would be on my knees praying, "Oh God, have mercy on me. What happened to me? How did I ever become this kind of a prey? How come Satan became this interested in me?" I would reject it out of hand.

Here God has given us this magnificent Bible, and there is no individual in the whole wide world who has really come to understand it altogether, because it is the matchless riches of the revelation of God's grace, and no one has plumbed the depths of the riches of the Bible. And here it is to read, and every word that you read, you know absolutely, this is the Word of God. God has given us the instruction to compare spiritual things with spiritual, that is, we let the Bible be its own interpreter. And as we search the Bible and compare one part of the Bible with another part, we can begin to get more and more information as to what God is really teaching. It's just a marvelous, marvelous experience in getting into the Word of God. And virtually nobody is doing this. And yet my, how entrancing it is, how intriguing it is, that maybe God would bring a vision or something else. And frankly, I want nothing to do with visions or voices. I don't want to be conned by Satan. I want to be absolutely obedient to the Word of God.

And we live in a free land. If someone else would rather take a chance with visions and voices, and if he's intrigued by signs and wonders, fine. We live in a free land. He can do this. But from my vantage point of studying the Bible, I know that it's not the gospel of the Bible. And if you don't have the true Gospel, then you don't have salvation. And frankly, eternal damnation is a pretty long time, and it's pretty awful. And I wouldn't want to take any chances that I might end up in hell, because I'm following the wrong gospel.

CALLER: OK. In other words, you are certain that you are saved.

HC: I'm absolutely certain I am saved.

CALLER: Because you have studied the Bible, and it fits your beliefs. Your interpretations fit your beliefs, and so you are certain of them.

HC: It does not fit my interpretation. I have studied the Bible, and I have come to the point where I am ready to surrender my will, my interpretation, my anything, to the Bible itself. The Bible is the authority. And any time I can learn, it's going to be from the scriptures, not from my mind. It's going to be from the scriptures. And the more I study the Bible, the more I'm going to learn. It is the Word of God. If it is what I bow to altogether.

CALLER: What I mean is, what you read in the Bible substantiates what you believe, and so therefore you are convinced that you are saved. Is that basically what we're talking about? I'm trying to find out for myself.

HC: The Bible teaches that we're sinners, we're under the wrath of God, that we deserve to go to hell, and except for God's grace that's where we go, that if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who has paid for our sins, if we find in our life an earnest desire to do God's will, not for merit, but because we love God and because we find this earnest desire in our hearts, then we can know that we know Him. And so when I find these characteristics in my life, that I really believe this with all my heart and have these desires within me, then I know, based upon the Biblical statement, that I am saved.

CALLER: I agree with basically everything that you've said there. And I don't believe my faith in God is any less than what yours is. But I do find that I disagree with you on some points of the Bible. And this causes me some problems because . . .

HC: Yes, but it depends on what points you're disagreeing on. If you're disagreeing on the authority itself, if you believe that there is more to divine revelation than the Bible alone and in its entirety, then you have a different gospel than I have. And of course that's your privilege. On the other hand, if you agree with me that the Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word, and yet you disagree on this point or that point, then it's a matter that both of us have to keep studying. And if we keep studying, since truth is one piece, we are going to come closer and closer to each other. No one can have truth unless he has truth; and if two people have truth then they agree with each other.

CALLER: I believe that I am totally open to the will of God and obedient. And I do believe that the Bible is the one and only true Word of God. But I do believe that the Bible does leave some space for directions from God, specific directions from God, at a time period later on in the history of man.

HC: By that statement, if you are referring to an articulated or a verbalized statement, through a dream or a vision or a voice, or whatever, then you are negating your first statement, where you say that the Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word. Effectively you're saying, 'But I believe there still is additional divine revelation.' And then you by definition have a different authority.

First and Last in the Kingdom of God & What Does "Believe" Mean?

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Brother Camping, I don't have the Bible reference for this question, so I hope you will be able to remember where this is. I think I recall Jesus in at least one of the Gospels talking about someone being the "least in the kingdom of God", and there is another reference for "the first will be last and the last will be first". The point I am trying to get at here is this: Is there a possibility of some being greater than others in heaven?

HC: No. First of all, let's talk about that phrase that we find in a number of places, "The first shall be last, and the last shall be first" [Matthew 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30]. There are those like Ancient Israel, for example, who for 2,000 years were in a favored position with respect to the Gospel because virtually all of the holy men of old, who spoke as God the Holy Spirit moved them, came from National Israel. So, the people of Israel were the first ones who heard the Gospel. Also, God used Ancient Israel very frequently as types, or pictures, or representations of the Gospel.

For example, David, who was one of their greatest kings, was a picture (a portrait if you will), an example, or a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. More than that, Christ Himself came out of the nation of Israel.

So they were first. They had all the priorities. They had all the advantages, and yet most of them perished at any time in their history because of unbelief. Whereas many Gentiles – who had never heard the Gospel and had none of the prerogatives and none of the privileges that National Israel had – very quickly after they heard the Gospel became saved.

We see this particularly in the book of Acts, where we find that Paul and Barnabas would go to a synagogue and the Jews, in the main, would not want their Gospel at all; but many Gentiles heard them gladly. In that setting, the Jews, who were first, became last – that is, they never did become saved – and the last, those who had not previously

heard the Gospel, became first. They became those who did become saved.

That, incidentally, is also true in churches today. There are individuals who have grown up in Christian families, who have gone to churches where the Gospel has been reasonably presented in truth, and they never became saved. They were first because all their lives they heard the Gospel.

Yet, on the other hand, that same Gospel goes out and here is an individual that never heard the Gospel before. His whole family is not saved. Then he hears the Gospel and things begin to happen in his heart. He realizes he is a sinner, and the next thing we see him as having become saved. He is the last who became first. The individual in the church who never did become saved was first, and he became last.

Now, the phrases "great in the kingdom of God" or "least in the kingdom of God" [Matthew 5:19; 11:11; Luke 7:28] do not indicate that there are degrees of greatness in the kingdom of God. We all stand on the same ground. No one is greater than another – except the Lord Jesus, of course. He is our King. He is the Head of the whole kingdom of God. But insofar as believers are concerned – whether we are the Apostle Paul, or Mary the mother of Jesus, or Mary Magdalene, or the thief on the cross who became saved in the last hour of his life, or whoever – we all stand on the same ground in that we have eternal life. So, when we read about the "great in the kingdom of God" that is what God has in mind – that is, everyone in the kingdom of God is great. Not in the sense of their own personal greatness, but because they have become identified with Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

However, God also speaks of the kingdom of God frequently in a corporate, or external, sense. The churches, for example, that we belong to and that carry the Gospel with some degree of truth, corporately are identified with the kingdom of God. That does not mean that everyone in those churches are eternally in the kingdom of God (there may be a few that are eternally in the kingdom of God), but corporately all the people in those congregations are identified with the kingdom of God. However, even though they are in those churches and are identified with the kingdom of God, if they are not saved, they are least in the kingdom of God. That is, they are not going to be there eternally. They are only there temporarily in an external fashion, but they have never become eternal residents, or citizens, of the kingdom of God.

CALLER: Thank you for that. I do have one more quick question, and I will listen to the answer on the air. I was wondering about the verse in one of the Gospels, and again I don't have the reference, where Christ asked Peter, or the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" One said "a great teacher" and another said something else. Then Peter replied, "You are the Son of the Living God." I believe that is the way he put it. Now, I believed from the beginning of when I was saved that Jesus is God, and I am wondering if that is given by the Holy Spirit. Is that the same as when Jesus said, "Flesh and blood has not revealed it to you?" [Matthew 16:13-17]

HC: Well, you see the word "believe" is a very misunderstood word. In the New Testament, where we find the word "believe" used very frequently, there is only one Greek word that is translated as "believe". And we find, for example, it says that the devils "believe" [James 2:19]. Well, they are in rebellion against God, and yet they "believe". We also read about those who "believe" for awhile, and then, when the cares of the world come, they fall away [Luke 8:11-18]. That is the same word "believe". We also read about those who "believe" because they have become saved

[Acts 13:48]. They are called "believers" [Acts 5:14].

Now, what does the word "believe" really mean? You see, we normally think of "believe" as acknowledging something – that is, we agree that something is true. We agree that we are sinners. We agree that Christ is the only One who can save us. We agree that He is the Son of God and the Son of Man. We agree on a lot of these principles. However, Satan knows all of those things too. He knows about Christ better than we do because he was living in heaven with Christ. "We know who You are," the devils say, "Thou art the Son of God" [Matthew 8:29; Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41; 8:28]. So, just agreement with all of these principles is not "believing". It is acknowledging, but it is not "believing".

Now, there are those who really think that they have come to a "belief" where they truly have become saved because they think they have hung their lives on the Lord Jesus, and they really want to follow Him. That is a result of true "faith". That is what would happen if they were truly saved. But in their case, that "faith", or that "believing" (and believing is just another way of saying we have "faith"), or that trust is a product of their own desire to be right with God and did not come from God. Because it did not come from God, in time they will fall away because they get tired of trying to do it themselves. They don't realize that it came out of their own personality and not from God.

Now, on the other hand, there are those that God begins to draw. He begins to deal with that person, and we read in Philippians 2:13, which is talking about someone that God is working with, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." So "believing" begins to show up in that person's life. That person is not necessarily saved yet, but he begins to trust more and more in what the Bible says – "I'm a sinner." He is not just acknowledging it; but he begins to come under conviction – "I know I'm a sinner!" He is not just acknowledging that Christ is the only One who can save him, and it begins to penetrate into the very core of his being that he has to get right with God. He has begun to hang his whole life on Christ. Christ is increasingly Number One in his life. He is still not saved necessarily; but then at some point, God saves him.

Because he has begun to trust in God more and more and because he realizes that he is going to hell for his sins, he also begins to turn away from his sins. He begins to repent. Yet all of that "believing" activity is not a precondition for salvation. God does not require any of that in order to save someone. Because, on the other side of the coin, here is a little baby that is just a day old, or maybe not even born yet, who knows nothing about all of these things; and yet God can save that person just as readily as the one that has been learning more and more about his sins and is beginning to get more and more of a desire to turn from his sins.

None of this is a precondition for salvation. At some point God is going to save the ones that He wants to save. That is strictly the work of God. Whether it is a baby in the womb, or whether it is a child that does not have a mind at all, or whether it is an adult who has been seeking the Lord for a long time and has begun to trust God more and more in his life and has begun to turn away from his sin – it is all the same action. God makes that person a brand new personality by giving him a brand new resurrected soul. That is what happens at the moment of salvation; and at that moment, he is justified. That is, the fact that Christ paid for his sins long ago is applied to his life, and from that moment on he is no longer under the wrath of God.

Now, the **consequences** of the fact that he has truly become saved is that he will have an earnest desire to **do** the will of God. He will trust God. He will know that Christ is everything and that He has to be Number One in his life. He will be turning away from his sins like he never did before, and that will go on for the rest of his life. At the moment of salvation, these things get locked in because he has been given eternal life and never again will he turn away.

While God is drawing him before he is saved, there may be periods when he is not that interested in the Gospel. Then God draws him some more, and maybe he becomes somewhat more interested in the Gospel. But when he has truly become saved, he has eternal life in his new resurrected soul. From that point until he dies, there will always be an ongoing, earnest desire to do the will of God. There will be an ongoing trust, or faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ; and that **faith** (or trust, or believing) as well as the **doing** of God's Law are all **works** that are seen in his life. These are the **results** of – not the bases for nor the causes for – God's salvation.

CALLER: That's very good. I appreciate that information. Thank you so much.

HC: Thank you for calling and sharing, and shall we take our next call please.

CHAPTER 17 – SATAN & THE OCCULT

SATAN

Can Satan Still Seek Audience Before God? (235C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: When Satan was given an audience with the Lord, accusing Job, when Jesus died on the cross did Satan lose his right to an audience with the Lord at that point?

HC: The question that has been raised by our caller is: In the Book of Job we read that in the counsels of God up in Heaven Satan appeared. And there he accuses God that the reason Job is able to walk so holy is that God has put a hedge around him, and has given him every blessing. And so Job has every reason to live the obedient life to God that he lives.

Now the question is, at the cross was Satan cast out of Heaven, so that he no longer can accuse the brethren this way, that he no longer can have this kind of conversation with God? And the answer is, yes, I really believe this is so.

Remember when Jesus sent out the seventy, to bring the Gospel? And this was just before He went to the cross. This was anticipating the victory of Christ on the cross. And what did Jesus say? "Behold, I saw Satan falling as lightning from Heaven." This particular truth is strengthened if we turn to Revelation 12. We see in verse 7: "A war arose in Heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon [the dragon is Satan]. And the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in Heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in Heaven saying, 'Now the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come. For the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb.'"

Now this again is emphasizing that Satan and his fallen angels were thrown out of Heaven. And I'm going to speculate for just a little bit. But when Christ went to the cross and successfully endured the wrath of God for our sins, proving that God meant what He said, that hell is to be paid for our sins, by the same token claiming a people for Himself, in view of the fact that He had taken their sins and paid for them, this guaranteed hell for Satan. And this guaranteed that God's justice would be done with regard to Satan.

And I can see in Heaven, right at that point in time, that Michael and his angels are given the task of throwing Satan and his angels out of Heaven: "You can't be here anymore! Throughout the Old Testament period you could still be here and accuse the brethren, as you did Job, because Christ had not in time gone to the cross as yet. But now Christ has gone to the cross. And He has shown that God means what He says, that hell must be paid. And Satan, you no longer have any access into Heaven." And so Satan goes about as a roaring lion, as the prince of the power of the air, seeking whom he might devour.

But he can't come into God's presence any longer, to accuse us.

Numerology + Christ and Satan (268A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Thank you. I've got a very serious problem that came up. Some time back, about a week and a half ago, I was visiting with a young man in Davis, who was very much into the occult. And he was telling me about the Jewish Kabbalah, and Kabbalahism, and he inferred that everything in the Hebrew scriptures had some kind of a hidden meaning, and was numerologically related. And he tried to contend that the designation of Jesus as the Lamb of God had something to do with the planet Mars, and all kinds of stuff that I knew was not scripturally sound. But what really bothered me was that he made reference to the number of the sign of the Messiah as being equivalent to the number of the serpent. And I know that in scripture the serpent is always (as far as I know) symbolic of the Evil One, or Satan. And this troubled me very greatly.

And he went to a supposedly conservative Bible dictionary, put out by Funk and Wagnall Company, to prove his point. And he was pointing out that according to this particular dictionary the "Bright and Morning Star," which Jesus referred to Himself as being, was equal to the planet Venus, and also equal to Lucifer. But Lucifer is the name of Satan. So this really troubled me. And it seemed to me that the people who wrote these books are way off the track. I don't know too much about Kabbalahism, and I was kind of dumbfounded by what I was being told. I didn't know what to think or how to respond, or how to answer this kind of thing. I'd never confronted it before, and I'm so ignorant of the matter that I thought maybe you could help me out.

HC: All right. Let me speak a little bit on this. I've got two or three observations to make that might be surprising to you, but they may be helpful. And I'll just talk to you about this on the air. Would you like to do that? You want me to talk about numerology, and Christ represented by a serpent, and what do we do about this matter of Lucifer and a Bright and Morning Star?

CALLER: Okay.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night. The observation was made: Is it true that in the Jewish writings there were hidden meanings in every statement? Well, I don't know if there's hidden meanings in every statement. I think that may be saying more than the scripture would say. But definitely there are hidden

meanings throughout the Bible. And of course the Bible was written in the context of Jews. Most of the human authors of the Bible were Jews, all under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of course.

For example, again and again in the New Testament you'll find a phrase where Jesus says, "I AM." When He was being taken in the Garden of Gethsemane by the temple servants, they said, "Are You the Christ?" and He said, "I AM." In some of the Bibles that's translated, "I am He," because "I AM" doesn't seem to make sense. But the word I AM is the name of God Himself, and Jesus is the I AM. This is taken from Exodus 3, where He told Moses, "You tell Israel that I AM has sent you." Christ is the Ever Present One.

And there are many things like this in the Bible, where there is a deeper meaning than what appears on the surface. And normally the deeper meaning relates to the nature of salvation itself. So in that sense our caller's observation is somewhat correct.

However, when it comes to numerology, that in my judgment is not so, when anyone says that the numbers figure out in Jesus' Name to be the same as the numbers of the serpent. Numerology has to do with assigning certain value to the letters of the alphabet, and then looking at the name and seeing what those numbers add up to.

On the basis of this, for example, men have figured out that all kinds of individuals and organizations are the antichrist, because by numerology their letters add up to 666. There is no Biblical precedent for this that I'm aware of. Now I don't know everything that's in the Bible, and maybe there's something here I don't know. But in my studies on this question I have never received the slightest suggestion that the Bible teaches in a numerological way, although I am intensely interested in the numbers of the Bible, and the numbers of the Bible do signify spiritual truth, very frequently.

For example, the number five very frequently in the Bible is a number to symbolically represent grace or redemption. The number forty represents testing. It's used this way again and again in the Bible. The number seven is the perfection of God's plan. The number ten is the completion of God's plan, the number twelve the fullness of God's plan. But that's not numerology. That is simply going back to the earlier illustration that a word in the Bible has a deeper hidden meaning.

Now we come to something that's a little bit strange. The question was raised: Is there ever a time when Christ is identified with a serpent? Is there ever a time in the Bible when Christ is identified with a serpent? Now remember, the serpent is a figure of Satan. He is the great serpent, the devil, the Bible says. And Christ is the absolute antithesis of Satan. He is the eternal Son of God, who came to destroy Satan.

But surprisingly enough, there is a place in the Bible where Jesus is referred to as a serpent. Now don't be horrified now. I'm going to read to you from the Bible. In John 3:14 we read, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life."

Now what God is teaching here is that He's referring back to an historical incident that occurred in the wilderness, when the nation of Israel was going out of Egypt to go to the land of Canaan. And they murmured against God. They were rebellious against God. They were sinning very grievously. And so God sent into their midst serpent, poisonous serpents that began to bite the people. And they began to die.

Now these serpents represented their sin. And sin of course is intimately related to

Satan Himself, because Satan is the very essence of sin. It was a terribly destructive kind of a situation, the very thing that happens in our lives when we sin. And everything that we do is tainted by this sin. We are subject to death. We are moving in the direction of hell, because of our sin. It's like we are being bitten by these poisonous serpents.

Then the people cried out to God, and God instructed Moses to make a serpent of brass and put it on a pole. And then he told the Israelites that anyone at all who was bitten and who was dying of that snake bite, could look upon that brass serpent on a pole, and he would receive healing.

And now God says in John 3:14 that that serpent on the pole was a figure of the Lord Jesus Christ: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life."

Now how can we tie this together? Well you see, the Lord Jesus, in going to the cross, became sin for me. He was my substitute when He went to the cross where He was lifted up. The language of being lifted up and looking upon Him is the language of us looking to Christ on the cross as our Savior, who can save us from our sins.

Before we are saved, we are bitten by our sins. We are slaves of Satan. We're being destroyed by our sins. We're heading for hell. Our situation is exactly like, in a spiritual sense, it was in a physical sense with the people of Israel in the wilderness.

But Jesus became sin for me. He took upon Himself all of my sins. And with all of my sins He was hung on the cross, where He endured the wrath of God, the equivalent of an eternity in hell. And because He became sin for me, He became intimately identified with me as a sinner, as a slave of Satan. He became intimately identified with all that is cursed and vile. And yet I have to look at Him on the cross, where He became sin for me. I look upon Him spiritually when I place my trust in Him and in His redeeming work for me on the cross, in the fact that He went there to pay for my sins. And in that sense He became a serpent.

Now He did not become Satan. Christ never did become Satan, because Christ is Eternal God, and Satan is an antichrist. Satan is directly opposed to Him. But He did become the very essence of sin, which Satan is, in that He became sin for me.

Now the last observation is also very interesting. The comment was made that Lucifer is called a "Bright and Morning Star," and so is Christ called a "Bright and Morning Star." Lucifer of course is another name for Satan in the Bible. And that seems just impossible. How can this be? Well, significantly, that is the case. That is the case.

In Isaiah 14 it's talking about Satan, under the figure of the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon is used in the Bible as a figure of the kingdom of Satan. And in verse 12 it says, "How you are fallen from Heaven, oh Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to Heaven, above the stars of God. I will set my throne on high. I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to hell, to the depths of the pit. Those who see you will stare at you and ponder over you, Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms?"

Now the morning star is Venus, but that doesn't mean that Satan is related in any kind of an occult way or supernatural way to Venus. That's only a figure. But Christ also is called the Morning Star. Christ is the one who finally rules over

this world. You see, Satan was given the right to rule over this world because he vanquished Adam and Eve in the Garden. And he is the one who is called the ruler of this world today. But Christ comes as the eternal Ruler. He came to vanquish Satan. He came to destroy him. And Satan will be sent to hell, this world will be renovated, it will be destroyed and recreated New Heavens and a New Earth. And in this New Earth Christ will rule over us forever and ever.

Now the fact that Satan is called the prince of this earth, which is really a title that ought to only be attributed to Christ, does not mean that Satan now is Christ, or that Christ is Satan. It simply means that Satan, for the time being is ruling over the hearts of men, but that the time will come when it will be God Himself, Christ Himself, who will rule only over the hearts of men.

And this is why Christ went to the cross, to redeem us from Satan, in order that He might be our ruler. So the fact that Christ is called a Prince of King, and Satan is called a prince or a king, therefore we should not be surprised that Lucifer is called a morning star, and Christ Himself is called the Morning Star.

Actually, it is Christ who is eternal. Satan is simply temporal. He only for the moment is shining bright, as the prince of this earth. But his doom is certain, because of what Christ had done against him on the cross.

So insofar as our caller's question is concerned, some of the observations he heard were at least somewhat correct, although we have to be very careful in this kind of a study that we don't go beyond what the Bible does. The moment that we get into numerology, the moment that we get into thinking that there's a relationship between the planets . . . The sun, for example, is used as a figure of Christ. But that doesn't mean the sun is involved with Christ in getting the work on this earth done. The sun is simply used as a figure in that it rules over the day, in the sense that it brings its light and warmth and life, and so on. Only in that sense is it related.

Well, thank you for that question.

Does Satan Know Who Belongs to God? (341C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Does Satan know who belongs to God? I'd like to have some answers from Scripture, and I'd like to hang up and listen.

HC: Thank you for calling. The question is: Does Satan know who belongs to God? Well, we certainly know this, that Satan knew that Job belonged to God, didn't he? God said, "Have you considered My servant Job?"

We certainly know that Satan knew that the disciples belonged to God, that is, except for Judas. And he knew that Judas didn't belong to God because he came into Judas. He knew that he was one man that he could use as his slave, to accomplish the betrayal of Jesus.

On the other hand, he came to Jesus, when Jesus was ready to go into the Garden of Gethsemane, and he said, "I want your disciples. They're going to be mine. I'm going to sift them as wheat." You'll recall Jesus' statement. So he certainly knew that the disciples belonged to Jesus.

More than that, an unsaved person is a slave of Satan. When we belong to Jesus, we have been taken out of Satan's dominion and transferred into the Kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13). And I'm quite convinced that Satan and his fellow fallen angels keep pretty close tabs on those who are his and now have been taken out of his dominion. I don't think for a moment that Satan lets go of these slaves of his

gladly. I'm sure that there is a tremendous struggle on his part.

Really, I believe, based on what I said about the activity of Satan over against the disciples, the activity of Satan over against Job (and there may be other passages), Satan certainly knows who belongs to him and who belongs to God.

It's interesting to know the insight that Satan has. Remember when Jesus cast out the demons. They would frequently say to Him, "Have you come to torment us before our time?" You remember when they would say to Jesus, "We know who you are. You are the Holy One of Israel," or "the Holy One of God." Satan has a lot of insights. The Bible says that he knows that his time is short, and he trembles. I really do believe that Satan knows who are the true children of God and who are not.

Now this of course gives Satan vast encouragement, I would think. You see, in any congregation that holds forth the true Gospel, there are many who are unsaved. If the whole congregation was born again, so there were no unsaved persons in that congregation, Satan would not have any real interest in that congregation, because he knows He's never been able to snatch anyone away from Christ, once they belonged to Christ.

But because the congregation is made up of many who are unsaved, Satan will continue to plague that congregation with other gospels, particularly, and with persecution or whatever, in order to snatch those who have not yet become born again out of the environment of the congregation. As long as they're in the congregation, hearing the Gospel every Sunday, studying the Bible, the potential for salvation is very great. At any time they can be saved. But if he can snatch them away, and get them into a false gospel, then they're safe under his control. They're not going to be under the hearing of the true Gospel any longer.

If he can drive them out into the pursuit of pleasure, out into the cares of this world, again they're going to be outside of the hearing of the Gospel. They're going to be safe in his clutches. Now the Bible teaches that Satan goes about as an angel of light (II Corinthians 11). The Bible teaches that he is like a wolf in sheep's clothing, coming after the flock.

And I really believe, although I'm not absolutely certain about this, that the burden of the evidence is that Satan knows who belongs to Christ. And he also knows who belongs to himself.

Does Satan Know Our Thoughts? (393B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Harold Camping, I'd like to ask a couple of questions. First of all, is there anything in the scriptures about silent prayer? And the second question is, can Satan read our minds?

HC: The first question is, is there anything in the scriptures about silent prayer? First of all, the Bible does talk about . . .

CALLER: I was thinking about Joshua 1:8: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, and thou shalt meditate therein day and night." That's the gist of the verse.

HC: Joshua 1:8: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

We have the same idea in Psalm 119, where God indicates, for example, in verse 97, "O, how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day." And the Bible also gives other verses in Psalm 119 which . . .

CALLER: Also relate to meditation. Now I wanted to know if all these verses that talk about meditation indicate that there is such a thing as silent prayer.

HC: The Bible indicates, for example, "Pray without ceasing." Now if God means what He says, that we are to pray without ceasing, it means we have to be able to pray in every kind of a situation. Certainly, therefore, God anticipates that we will be praying within our hearts. There's a passage someplace that indicates that God knows what we will ask before we even ask it. God knows our secret thoughts.

CALLER: Then do all of these verses collectively indicate that a Christian can pray to God in the mind?

HC: Yes. I really believe that with all my heart, that our thoughts are just as, for example, here's an excellent proof text. In Psalm 19:14: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." This clearly indicates that God knows exactly what we are meditating on within our heart. And in our meditation, if we're praying to Him, God knows this just as readily as if we were praying out loud.

Now the second question is, does Satan know our thoughts? The Bible indicates that when we are born again, we have been transferred from the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is Colossians 1, I think verse 13. Now that means that no longer are we under the rule or control of Satan. He no longer has anything on us. We are a citizen of Christ's Kingdom. Christ is our Lord. He is our King. Satan bears no relationship to us. Therefore I am quite convinced that Satan has no idea what's going on in my heart or in my mind.

CALLER: I see. Then you don't think Satan can read our minds.

HC: I don't think he can for a moment.

CALLER: I see. Thank you, Brother Camping.

HC: Now on the other hand, this brings to mind this matter of ESP. You know, there are these people who have the ability to read your thoughts. Now if I would present myself to such a person as a born again individual, and said, "Can you read my thoughts?" at that point I think that (and I believe that all of this kind of action, such as ESP and occult activity is Satanic), I think that's the reason that it will work. There is this spirit world. And I think that when I present myself this way, "Read my thoughts", I am effectively placing myself in his hand to some degree. And perhaps he can read my thoughts.

CALLER: By us being yielded, you mean?

HC: Yes, by yielding to him I'm really opening myself to him, to Satan, to use me. Actually, the Bible teaches that we are to turn away from Satan, that we are to trust only in the Lord Jesus Christ. We should not have any part in any kind of occult activity of this nature.

CALLER: Right. I believe that, too. Thank you, Brother Camping. I want to say in closing how much my wife and I enjoy your program and your faithfulness to the Word and to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

HC: Thank you so much for calling. Good night.

The Devil as a Roaring Lion in 1 Pet 5:8-9 (586C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I'd like to know about I Peter 5:8 & 9, where it says, "The devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Does that mean Christians that are wandering?

HC: The question is raised concerning I Peter 5:8 & 9, "Be sober. Be vigilant, because your adversary the devil as a

roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." Now who is he seeking to devour!

Well, I've become convinced in my study of the Bible that Satan does not know who are the born again believers. All he knows is that there are these congregations where people call themselves Christians, and they serve the Lord. But he also knows that amongst them there are those who can be snared away from the true Gospel. And he can come to them with his wives, he can come to them through intimidation, through persecution. He can come through other gospels. He can come in a lot of different ways, and there will be those who will throw in the towel, so to speak, and turn away from the true Gospel and begin to follow a gospel patterned after Satan's liking, where they think they're really serving Christ, but actually they are not serving Christ.

And he is seeking for anyone whom he can devour. He doesn't know who they are that will fall, but he knows that in that congregation there are those who are not truly born again. He doesn't know who they are by name, but he does know that they exist within that congregation. So he's going to heckle and hassle that congregation as a roaring lion.

It's just like having a flock of animals out in the wilderness someplace. The lion is always looking for what he can devour. And who does he devour? Well, he devours the young and the aged, the weak cattle that are on the outskirts of the flock, the ones that do not have real strength. And he'll bring one down and have his food for the night. And that's the way Satan hassles the congregation. He looks for those who will prove to be weak in the faith because they have never become born again, and he will either tempt them back into materialism, or he will tempt them into another gospel, or he will persecute them so they will renounce the faith, or whatever. But this really, I think, is what God has in view.

CALLER: Do you think He's talking to people that are not Christians?, Or is He talking to everybody?

HC: Well, constantly in the Bible God warns us, "make sure that you are saved." And this is another question. This is another way of saying the same thing. Be sure that you are saved, because if you're not saved, Satan is right out there with all of his wives. And remember, he's the master deceiver. He's the father of lies. And he's going to snare you off into another gospel, or he's going to draw you away in some other way. And you resist him. And remember what Ephesians 6 says? What is the armor that we put on in order to resist Satan? It's the armor of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the feet shod with the Gospel of truth, and the Sword of the Spirit, and so on. It all has to do with salvation. We get as close to salvation as possible so that indeed we've become born again.

And only when we're born again, and absolutely born again, and know this, are we safe from Satan.

CALLER: How much are we really fighting against Satan, or are we, if we're in Christ and we're truly born again?

HC: If we're in Christ, if we're truly born again, Christ has done the fighting for us. He has become our Conqueror. That is, on our behalf He has conquered. And Satan is a completely defeated foe. We have no fear of him any longer. We are safe in Christ, because Christ has won the battle altogether for us.

Now until we are born again, however, if we're not born again, we're not safe in Christ. Our sins have not been paid for, and we are fair game for Satan. Even though we are corporately identified with the Kingdom of God because of joining

that church, nevertheless he's going to hassle and hustle us, and he's going to keep after us. And those who are not born again eventually will fall away.

CALLER: Oh. So that's why in Ephesians it tells us to put on the armor because after we have it on we don't have to worry.

HC: That's right. Put on the whole armor of God. Then we can resist the fiery darts of Satan. Then we're safe, you see.

CALLER: And how did you come to the conclusion that Satan doesn't know who's who.

HC: Well, I came to that conclusion in a very very interesting way. In our Sunday School class we were studying the Book of Ezra. And as we were going through Ezra, we discovered that indeed it was like many other parts of the Bible. It was an historical parable. And it actually was a fact of history, all the things we find recorded in Ezra, but there were spiritual truths that were contained in the language of these historical events. And we discovered as we went through Ezra that those who were on the other side of the river (and we find that reference in a number of places) were really a picture of Satan and his forces, that were seeking to frustrate the building of God's temple, or the sending forth of the Gospel. Ezra came of course to bring the Gospel, to reestablish the law. And the people on the other side of the river were against this.

And then, amongst other things, in Ezra 5 these men from the other side of the river, who spiritually represented Satan and all of his hosts, said to those who were busy with the law of God, "What are the names of the men that make this building?" In other words, they didn't know the names. And they sent a letter to the king, and they said in verse 10 of Ezra 5, "We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. And thus they returned us answer saying, We are servants of the God of Heaven and earth and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up." That has to do with the erection of the temple that Ezra was building at this time. That's particularly in view. And the erection of that temple was a figure of building the house of God. We are all temple builders.

But in this we discovered that these from across the river did not know the names of those who were doing the building. And so immediately the truth began to shine through that Satan does not know who those are that are born again. And I don't know of another verse in the Bible that would suggest that he does. And that of course immediately indicated why he continues to hassle the church and everybody that's in it, because he keeps hoping that he's going to snare someone else away from the true Gospel. And because there are enough people in any congregation who are unsaved, he is victorious now and then, as one will get snared off into another gospel or as one will depart from the church and go back into his old ways, and so on. And so he's very encouraged all the time as he goes along.

CALLER: We know that Satan no longer has dominion over a true born again believer. Does he know that he doesn't have any more dominion over him? And if he does, why would he still be hassling him?

HC: You see, a lot of times we give Satan credit where credit is not due. We must remember, Satan is not God. Satan is not omnipresent. Satan is not infinite in his knowledge. Satan can't be everywhere at once. Satan is a fallen angel, who is a created being.

Now by right of conquest, anyone who is unsaved is a slave of Satan, and those who are far enough away from the true Gospel can be used of Satan in many ways. As wicked people Satan can entice

them to persecute and to do wicked things and so on, if God permits him to do this. And frequently God does permit him to do this.

But when a person joins the church, when he is a member of the congregation, whether he's born again or not, then he has come very close to the shelter of salvation. He's where God's people are and where the blessings are all around. And this is not the easiest place for Satan to work. Now he can have an emissary in there. There may be someone in the church who is a false prophet, and definitely the Bible speaks of this. And this false prophet is going to be working his best to try to lure anybody he can in that congregation away from the true Gospel. But let me ask you this. Is there any human being who really knows who is born again? No, we don't know who really is born again. We suspect that this one or that one is born again, and we have to make sure in our own life that we are born again. But we can't really ultimately know who is born again. Only God knows that.

And so Satan likewise doesn't ultimately know who is born again. But he keeps working away at a congregation, hoping to find those who are not, and he rejoices when he can bring someone into another gospel, or lure them away from the congregation. And this is really the activity that any congregation faces. And I really think this relates to I Peter 5, where it talks about Satan going about as a roaring lion. He's hassling the flock just like a lion would hassle and come against the sheep, the flock of sheep. If there are any on the outside, or on the outskirts, or who are showing weakness, he will kill that one. And the closer we are to the Shepherd, and the more we entrust our lives to the Shepherd, the safer we are.

Thank you for calling and sharing. Good night.

DEMONS & SPIRITS

How Does One "Test the Spirits" in 1 John 4:1? (113C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. I've been looking at 1 John 4, and it's got me puzzled. It says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." How can you test them? How can you know?

HC: The easiest way we can test the spirits is to discover what the person is doing with the Bible. Well, let me see if I can develop this just a little bit, because this is a very excellent question.

First of all, the question is: How are we to test the spirits? We read in verse 1 of 1 John 4: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, to see whether they are of God." And then in verse 2 it tells us how to test the spirits: "By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist."

Now is this saying that if anyone at all acknowledges that Jesus is come in the flesh, then we can know that that person definitely is of Christ and not of Satan? No, it's not saying that. The key word here is the word confess. Now we have to understand what confess means in the Bible. Satan and his evil spirits, you know, acknowledge that Jesus came in the flesh. When Jesus cast out demons, the demons would say to Him, "We know who you are. You are the Holy One of God." Or they would say, "Have you come to torment us before our time?"

But you see, that was not confession. That was acknowledging Jesus. But you see, the word confession in the Bible

means to repent. It means to have the same mind with God. And the evil spirits, of course, could never confess Christ because they were antagonistic toward Christ. Their wills were deliberately opposed to that of Christ.

And so just because people today say, "Jesus this" and "Jesus that," that in itself is not confession. Just because they say, "Lord, Lord this" and "Praise the Lord, the other thing," that in itself is not confession. Confession means that our will has been surrendered to Christ.

Now the Word of Christ is the Bible. And if I say I am surrendered to Christ, and yet I do not submit to the authority of the Bible, if I say, "The Bible is the Word of God, but there's also these other revelations that are from God," and so on, going quite contrary to the Word of God, then I am showing by this that I am not confessing Christ. I am showing by this that my will is not surrendered to the Word of God as the holy book, as the only infallible Word of God. I have a gospel that goes beyond the Bible.

And so this shows that I do not belong to Christ at all.

CALLER: I do appreciate your help. Thank you. Good night.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Are Believers Empowered to Cast Out Demons? (132A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Since I am a Christian, do I have the power, through Jesus Christ, to cast out demons?

HC: Your question is, since you are a born again believer, do you have the same power that Jesus had to cast out someone else's demon?

Now it is true that the Jews of Jesus' day who had become born again (the seventy and the twelve apostles) did go forth, and they did cast out demons. We must remember, however, that the task of the believer is to be a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is the work of God to do the saving. How . . . What does that have to do with casting out demons?

Well, you see, a person who is unsaved is a slave of Satan. He may be beset by demons. He may be demon possessed, or he may be an emissary of Satan, a false prophet. Or he may just be an ordinary slave of Satan, such as most of the people of the world are.

Now when we bring the Gospel, that is the key that unlocks the prison house of Satan. And we are authorized by God to bring that Gospel. We are authorized to witness to those who are unsaved. And whether they are demon possessed, or whether they are simply an ordinary slave of Satan, makes no difference. If they respond to the Gospel, if they come with a broken and a contrite heart, and put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, they will be saved, and then demons will be removed from their life. They no longer will be under the power of Satan in any sense.

And so we are the vehicle that God uses to bring the Gospel, but it is God Himself who applies that Gospel to the life of someone who is unsaved, and frees them from Satan's dominion. Therefore we don't have to go around looking for somebody who is demon possessed. Everyone who is unsaved is a slave of Satan. Everyone who is unsaved is going to hell. Our job is not to try to cast out demons. Our job is to witness and let God do the freeing. Let God apply that Word as He will, in accordance with His own sovereign good pleasure.

And in fact, when the disciples cast out demons this was simply to give us an illustration, a literal illustration, of the power of the Gospel. It was not suggesting that we are to go around doing these same miracles, but the casting out of demons was a picture to

show that Christ's power was greater than Satan's power. The demons could not stand before the Word of God.

The Evil Spirit in 1 Samuel 16:14 (211C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Mr. Camping, I have a question about 1 Samuel 16:14, where it speaks about an evil spirit from the Lord coming to torment Saul. It's hard for us to understand that, because it sounds like there's evil coming from the Lord. Is an evil spirit the same thing as a demon?

HC: The question is, How are we to understand 1 Samuel 16:14, where we read, "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him. And Saul's servant said to him, 'Behold, now an evil spirit from God is tormenting you.'"

Now the question is, How is it possible that an evil spirit would come from God? Isn't an evil spirit a demon? Yes indeed, an evil spirit is a demon. An evil spirit is a fallen angel. But you see, God is in control. God controls everything.

Now normally, unsaved men are under the power of the evil spirits. They are enslaved to Satan, and he does with them what he wills, insofar as God allows them to do what they will with mankind. God chose Saul to be king, and therefore qualified him to be king by sending the Holy Spirit upon him, not in the sense that he was born again, but in the sense that he would have the wisdom and the qualification to be a king.

But then Saul turned against God, rebelled against God. And so God allows the evil spirits to again gain more control over his life. And to show that God is in control of this, the language is actually used that an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.

Now we have other illustrations of this in the Bible. In other words, this is not isolated, as if it's an anomaly that you just can't understand at all. In II Samuel 24:1 we read this: "And the angel of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And He incited David against them, saying, Go number Israel and Judah." Now God is taking full responsibility here.

Now the same event is recorded also in I Chronicles 21:1: "Satan stood up against Israel, and incited David to number Israel. So David said to Joab and the commanders of the army," and so on. In other words, Satan is actually the instigator, but because God allows it to happen, God takes the ultimate responsibility that it has occurred.

CALLER: With this evil spirit tormenting him, it causes Saul to sin. I was under the impression that because the Lord is without sin, He cannot tempt anyone.

HC: Now the question is, Since God is a holy God, how can He allow anyone to be tempted into sin? This is beginning to look like it is God who is making Saul sin. Now we must remember that God isn't doing the sinning. Saul is doing the sinning. Saul is the one who was created in the image of God, and who, all the way from the depths of his heart, is in rebellion against God.

Now God can restrain sin in Saul's life, as He has done to some degree in order that Saul might be a good king over Israel. But when God removes His hand of restraint, then this allows Saul to become more firmly in the grasp of Satan, in whose dominion he is normally, anyway. And Saul simply does what comes more naturally to him now, and that is to sin. That is the normal posture of Saul, to sin. That's the normal situation of mankind. Mankind's heart is desperately wicked.

In other words, any time God takes His hand of restraint off of any unsaved man's life, that man is going to start sinning more desperately.

CALLER: Is that what it means in Romans 1, when it speaks of the lifting of God's hand from someone?

HC: In Romans 1 we read that God gave them up to all kinds of immorality, and so on, and so on. Three times in Romans 1 we have the terrible words, "God gave them up." Now that is emphasizing, amongst other things, that if man persists in rebellion against God, then eventually God allows wickedness to multiply in their lives and gives them up to that which is natural within their lives, so that they become increasingly sinful.

Now this non-neutrality of God is also emphasized in II Thessalonians 2. It's very surprising how God becomes involved in the sins of mankind, never making Him the author of sin, never making any sin to be charged at God's door. But because the basic nature of man is so fantastically sinful, the heart of man is desperately wicked, the moment that God removes any restraint from man, any insights from man as to what really goodness is, man will automatically become exactly what he is.

Now we read in II Thessalonians 2, where it's talking about, in verse 10, those who are to perish "because they refused to love the truth, and so be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Now how does God do this? All He does is remove His hand of restraint, and He lets them be as blind as they are by nature.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

What is an Unclean Spirit? (243D)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. What is an unclean spirit?

HC: An unclean spirit is a fallen angel, a spiritual being who has rebelled against God and is now called a demon or an unclean spirit, or an evil spirit. On the other side of the fence we have the angels who are also spirits. They are ministering spirits sent by God on behalf of those who are being saved.

CALLER: Thank you very much.

HC: You're welcome. Thank you for sharing that question. Good night.

Do Demons Have Power Over Believers? (259A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. I would like to know. Do you think that there is such a thing as a witch board? Somebody brought one to me, and said, "What would you do with it?" And I said, "Burn it?" And he said, "Will you?" And the next day he said to me, "If you touch that board, you're going to be possessed by demons." But I told him that I didn't believe in that because I was already possessed by Jesus Christ. But I don't know. I've been running a fever every day, and I don't understand this. I'm weak, but I don't believe in this thing. Would you try to explain this thing to me, and also pray for me?

HC: Yes. Now the question you have raised is a very good question, because many people have been troubled by fears of Satan. Someone has come to you with this board they've called a witch's board, and they are telling you that because you touched it, therefore you're under some kind of demonic power. Now the question is: Are you really... does that witch's board (so-called witch's board) really have any power over you?

Your answer to them is absolutely correct. If you are a child of God, if you are born again, Satan has no power of any kind over you. You are no longer of

his dominion, of his kingdom. You are a citizen of Christ's kingdom. You have been transferred out of the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son, as we read in Colossians 1:13. As the closing verses of Romans 8 puts it, nothing can separate you from the love of God, neither life nor death nor principalities nor powers (that would be references to Satanic activity), nor anything in all of creation, nor things present, nor things to come, nor anything at all can separate you from the love of God.

More than that, Jesus says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." And so in your anxiety, you go to the Lord and you pray, "Oh Father, forgive me for my anxiety. If I'm running a fever, if I'm ill, that's part of Your program for my life. But I know that it has nothing to do with witches or with Satan, or with demonic power, because they have no power over me. I'm Your child, and I simply rest in You. If You want me to be ill, that's Your business. Could it be that the fragrance of Christ, the victory of the cross, might be seen through my illness. I just want to rest in You. And oh Father, forgive me that I might have any kind of ideas like this, that perhaps Satan can get at me. Forgive me for even being concerned about this."

Now wonderfully, in your anxiety you can go to the Lord, and you can just spill it all out to Him, you see.

"Prayer and Fasting" to Remove Demons in Mt 17:21 (856C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. How would you interpret Matthew 17:21?

HC: The question is concerning Matthew 17:21, where we read, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." The question is concerning the removal of an evil spirit from a child. We read in verse 14 of a certain man saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and sore vexed." A "lunatic [that means he is insane] and sore vexed. For oftimes he falleth into the fire and often into the water. And I brought him to Thy disciples and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to Me. And Jesus rebuked the devil.'" [God now is opening up the curtain and we see that this child was under the power of Satan.] "Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

Now the question that has been asked is, what does it mean "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting"? Remember the Biblical rule is that when you see words or phrases or concepts that apparently have nothing to do with salvation, then you are to look for a deeper spiritual meaning. First of all, the casting out of the evil spirit is a picture of someone becoming saved. When we become saved, or before we are saved, we are under the power of Satan. We are being destroyed by Satan, as this child is being destroyed. And under the power of the Gospel, we are set free from the power of Satan. We no longer are under that power.

Incidentally, let's talk about verse 20 as we go along. What does it mean to have faith as a grain of mustard seed? Well, in another place Christ had declared, "The kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard

seed. Though it is the smallest of the seeds, yet it grows into a great tree," or words to that effect. In other words, God is likening the kingdom of Heaven to a mustard seed. It was very tiny as it began in the world, with the apostles, but it grows until it is found all over the earth. And so effectively He's saying in verse 20, "If you have faith as that that belongs to the kingdom of God," because the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, "ye shall say to this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place..." Now to remove a mountain from one place to another in itself has nothing to do with the kingdom of God or with salvation, just as a mustard seed in itself has nothing to do with salvation. We couldn't understand this word mustard seed until we find the other statement in the Bible that the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. And then we can substitute the word kingdom of God, and we're beginning to see the deeper spiritual meaning.

Likewise the word mountain in itself has nothing to do with salvation of any kind. But when we search the Bible we find that frequently God uses the word mountain as a figure of kingdom, as a figure of a kingdom. And Satan rules as a king over his dominion. And if we have the faith of the kingdom of God, that is, if we have saving faith, then we can see the kingdom of Satan moved over. That is, we can see that there can be those who are freed from the dominion of Satan, who are taken out of the dominion of Satan and brought into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we read in Colossians 1:13.

"And nothing shall be impossible to you." In other words, even though it is impossible for you and I in ourselves to assault the kingdom of Satan, so that we are able to free someone from the kingdom of Satan, if we have the faith of the kingdom of God, that is, if we have saving faith, the faith of a grain of mustard seed, then we have the power of God on our side. And through the Word of God, and God working through His Word, He will free those whom we witness to from the mountain or from the kingdom of Satan. That is the truth that God is developing in verse 20.

Now verse 21, we find two words that are emphasized prayer and fasting. Does the word prayer relate immediately to salvation? And indeed it does. Prayer is an integral part of the salvation program. We are to pray for one another. We are to pray for forgiveness of sins. Prayer stands. And as we bring the Gospel, one of the things we do is that we pray. We pray, because God works through our prayers to accomplish the salvation of those who are to be saved.

But now the word fasting, the fact that we would stop eating food, does that have anything to do with salvation? The answer is, no. No, the fact that I don't eat a few meals doesn't have anything in itself to do with salvation. So immediately we sense that the word fasting is like the word grain of mustard seed, or the word mountain. We have to find out what is the deeper spiritual meaning to the word fasting.

Now we find when we study the word fasting that it means that we have to send forth the Gospel, we have to proclaim the Gospel. This is shown to us in Isaiah 58:6. God declares "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke. Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out of thy house, when thou seest the naked that thou cover him?" Every one of these statements has to do with bringing the Gospel. Those who are unsaved are under the bondage of wickedness. They are under the burden of sin. They are oppressed by sin and by Satan. And they are spiritually hungry for the righteousness that they can have in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are spiritually

poor, and they are outside of the commonwealth of Israel, and have to be brought into the house of God, which is Christ Himself. Spiritually they are naked, and they have to be covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness. All of these statements are identified with fasting. In other words, God is explaining that to fast means to share the Gospel.

All right. Let's go back here to Matthew 17: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." We've already seen that this young man, who was under the power of Satan, is a picture of an unsaved person, who is a slave of Satan. And Satan is destroying him, as Satan does. When he became freed of that devil, he is a picture of someone who has become saved. He has been spiritually cured of his illness that is going to send him to hell, the illness of his sin.

And how is that salvation accomplished? By prayer and the presentation of the Gospel, prayer and fasting. Any time we see anyone who is unsaved, there is only one way of attack to accomplish the salvation of that person if indeed it is God's will to save that person. And that is to pray for that person and to try to witness to that person, because God works through His Word to accomplish that salvation, and He works through our prayers, to accomplish that salvation, if it indeed is God's plan to save that person. And this is the beautiful, beautiful truth that the Lord is developing here in Matthew 17.

THE OCCULT

Dealing with the Occult (37B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Hi. I was listening to your program, and I'm kind of confused now. I'm a born again Christian, and I praise the Lord for that. In my past I was involved with a Satanic priest. And after I left him, starting last year at Christmas, all kinds of really weird things started happening to me. And it was to the point where I was going into mental telepathy, and all the occult things.

But anyway, I finally got into this one church. And this pastor helped me out. And he does not believe in exorcisms. I grant that you shouldn't dwell on demons. You should, you know, go out and witness. But with me, I couldn't say Jesus' name, I couldn't say the blood of Jesus, or anything like that. I was home alone with my two children, and I had to learn how to say, "In Jesus' name, I rebuke you, Satan," in order to have that whole feeling go away from me.

So I don't understand when you say that we don't have the power to do that, because it worked for me.

HC: I don't know what is happening in your life. You're really raising a question of what your relationship to Satan really is, and what your relationship to Christ is. But you must remember this, that the focal point of your life has been on Satan.

Are you troubled at all by these things now?

CALLER: No. I love the Lord. He's taken care of my life so fantastically that I have every minute of my life yet to praise Him.

HC: Well, when were you rebuking Satan then? Before you were saved or after you were saved?

CALLER: Before, way before, and this is what led me to this one church, and to this pastor. And circumstances kind of made us move from one place to this place here. And I got my help from these people. And slowly, it took about three months for me to come out of it, but I did come out of it.

HC: Yes. Well, you see, Satan doesn't leave you alone because you were rebuking him in the Name of the Lord.

That is not where your victory comes. Your victory comes only when you have been taken out of his dominion and transferred into the Kingdom of God's dear Son.

You see, before you are saved, you are a slave of Satan. You are owned by him. You are under his dominion. You are under his power. Now when you have placed your trust in Christ, when you have abandoned yourself to Him, so that you've become a born again believer, the Bible tells us that you have been taken out of the dominion of darkness. If you will read Colossians 1:13, it tells us that we have been transferred out of the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son.

And so, then Satan has no more power or control over us at all. So we don't have to rebuke him. We resist him. The Bible says, "Resist him, and he will flee from you." Now we resist him by paying no attention to him, by turning our backs on him.

You will find, even as a Christian, if you think about Satan, and you are looking for demonic activity, and are interested in the occult, and so on, you will find that you're going to be troubled by him, because he will enjoy that kind of attention. But if you simply refuse to give him any thought at all, he is a defeated foe, he has no power over you, and your thought life ought to be focused on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now look, in Philippians 4 God puts it very significantly, in verse 8: "Finally, brethren, whatever is true (that's not Satan), whatever is honorable (that's not Satan), whatever is just (that's not Satan), whatever is pure (that's not Satan), whatever is lovely (that's not Satan), whatever is gracious (that's not Satan), whatever is excellent (that's not Satan), whatever is of good report (that's not Satan), if there is anything worthy of praise (that's not Satan), think about these things."

In other words, to be a healthy Christian, we focus our attention on that which is true and honorable and just and pure. That's the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the essence of all of this. And His Word gives us the rules of the Kingdom that we have entered into. We earnestly study the Word of God that we might know more and more how to live for Him.

And we give Satan no thought at all. He is a defeated foe. Christ has taken care of him. He means nothing to us any longer. And he will only trouble us when we take our eyes off Christ, and when we leave ourselves wide open to temptation from the outside.

CALLER: Okay. Well, I agree with you on that. But I'm talking about before I ever knew the Lord. Don't you believe that if somebody is not born again, and they have been in contact with a lot of the occult, that there can be demon possession and oppression? It happened to me. That's why I'm questioning. It wasn't just in my head.

HC: Yes, of course. There is an occult world. And people who are unsaved can be used of Satan to demonstrate this occult power. There is ESP, there is supernatural activity. Satan does this all the time. And if a person is unsaved, a percentage of the unsaved population become involved in this. And they may not understand it. They may have a sense of power. They may even think that it's from God. But it's not from God. It's from Satan.

Now as an unsaved person, you can't rebuke Satan. He is your ruler. Even in the name of Christ you can't rebuke him. He is your ruler. You are a slave of his. You might think you're rebuking him, but you're not. Satan isn't worried about the Name of Christ. He'll use God's Name. He comes as an angel of light. Satan quoted Scripture. He quoted Scripture to Christ when he tempted Him in the wilderness.

You see, some people have some kind of superstitious idea that if we only plead the blood of Christ, or plead the name of Christ, or read some Scripture, then Satan is going to be in stark terror. Now that isn't so. Satan can use the name of Christ. He comes as an angel of light. He can use it as glibly.

Just think of Matthew 7, where it talks about the false prophets, who will stand at Judgment Day and declare to God, "Did we not do many mighty works in your name?" And yet they were emissaries of Satan, because Jesus said, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." And so this idea of pleading the blood of Christ, or pleading the name of Christ, doesn't mean anything.

The way that Satan is overcome is by God Himself. And our task is to throw ourselves on the mercies of God and place our trust in Christ. Then He makes us born again. And He takes us out of Satan's kingdom. And Satan no longer has control over us.

Now I read from Jude. And you'll notice there that even the angel Michael, who is an archangel, one of the greatest of the angels, did not presume to rebuke Satan. Now that gives us an indication of our conduct. He said, "The Lord rebuke you." It is God who has to rebuke Satan. And God did rebuke Satan. God won a total victory over him on the cross, so that Satan no longer is able to hold us in his captivity. And the moment that you placed your trust in Christ and actually became born again, from that moment on, Satan no longer is your master. You didn't have to rebuke him at all. From that moment on, he never never can come at you with ESP or with anything at all.

CALLER: It didn't happen constantly, these weird things. I won't go into detail. I found out that's just not healthy at all for you. But God has the power to control Satan. Correct?

HC: Yes.

CALLER: So when God figured I'd had enough at that time, He kind of bound Satan for a while, until I was ready to surrender my whole life to Him. Do you think?

HC: Well, I don't know. I don't know what the background is. But all I know is that before you were saved, you were a slave of Satan, and he used you. And he managed to keep your attention in these ways whenever he wanted to do it. You were a slave of Satan.

But once you became born again, you see, the marvelous thing is that regardless of how deep we are in the clutches of Satan, regardless of how desperate our condition is, we can be saved. And so even though you might have been having ESP experiences, occult experiences, all day long, every day, even though you have been possessed by seven demons, none of this is a trouble at all for Christ, because when you place your trust in Him, then Satan has to leave you alone forever. He no longer has any power over you.

Now he will come at you through others, through literature that you might read, through friends that might try to tempt you. Through these means he will try to woo you away from the true Gospel. But he can never come into your mind. He can never come with an occult thought to you any longer. But one thing I would strongly caution you. And that is, forget about the past. Forget about what Satan has been in your life. And focus your attention on Christ. Don't talk about Satan anymore. When you tell your story about what Satan has done in your life, and all of this, without realizing it you are magnifying the power of Satan. You are eulogizing him. You are giving him lots of credit. And he rejoices.

Your task is to bring the Gospel, that is, to witness to the fact that you were a

sinner, and you were under the power of Satan. Enough said. And Christ has come and has freed you. And now you want to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ and His marvelous new Kingdom that you have entered into. Okay?

CALLER: Okay. Thank you.

HC: Okay. Thank you for calling. Good night.

CALLER: Bye.

Diviners, Mediums and False Prophets (151B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Brother Camping, I need to ask you a question. What is the New Testament position on divination?

HC: The New Testament position on divination is found in the Old Testament, simply because the New Testament insists that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. That's a New Testament verse. And in the Old Testament, it says in Deuteronomy 18 that one who divines is an abomination to God.

More than that, those who divine, who try to foretell the future, apart from what they read in the Bible, are believing that they are receiving a message from God. And in Revelation 22:18 God says, "If anyone adds to the words of this book, I will add to him the plagues written herein." In other words, it's impossible to actually receive information from God apart from the Bible, once the Bible was completed.

Therefore we can readily begin to see that anyone who claims to divine the future, to be able to know the future, apart from the Bible, is not being used of God. He is being used of some other source.

CALLER: Four weeks ago I met a pastor, a real pastor. And he told a group of us, Brother Camping, these words: "I am a trance medium. I can leave my body at will and visit other places. I have contact with the other side. My grandmother came to me and visited me, and we talked. And she promised me that I would get a car. And sure enough, the next morning I got the very car that my grandmother told me I would." Would you comment on that?

HC: Yes. Just because, first of all, someone is a pastor does not mean that he is of God. Jesus speaks, for example, in Matthew 24:24 of "false prophets and false christ, who will come with signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." There are plenty of pastors around who are not of God. The only people who are of God are those who hold only to the Bible as the Word of God.

Now there is of course an occult world, composed of Satan and his evil spirits, the fallen angels. And Satan does give individuals insights into the future. Now he's not always right, because God can circumvent Satan. But apparently Satan does have some access or some way of looking into the future. And he is able to convey that information to individuals. But any kind of occult activity is listening to Satan rather than listening to God. And so we are to have nothing at all to do with that.

CALLER: All right. The final thing is, he said, well, he really has a going church. And he said, "I prayed for a new organ, and God spoke in an audible voice and said, 'Yes.'" And he got it, Brother Camping. He said, "I prayed for a new Steinway piano, and God answered 'Yes' audibly." And he got it. And the last thing he asked God for was a telephone. They didn't have a telephone, and the people said they couldn't afford it. And he asked God for a telephone and now he has three. And he said, "Brethren, if you don't believe it, you can come in the church and look at them. They're there." And many people

will testify that he has actually stood up in his congregation and told them what was going to happen, and it happened. He has blessings, and a lot of people follow him.

HC: It may be that these things are happening, but that doesn't mean he is of God. Let me read to you from Deuteronomy 13, where God speaks about a very similar condition. Before I read this, let me emphasize that when we hold something to be the Word of God, and we want to be obedient to it, we are worshipping the God who has given that particular document. In other words, if I look at the Bible and I say, "That's the Word of God and I want to be obedient to it," effectively I am worshipping the God who has given it.

By the same token, if I receive a vision or hear a voice, or whatever, and I am convinced that it is from God, and I want to be obedient to what I saw in that vision, then I am worshipping the God who has given me this vision.

Now in Deuteronomy 13 God warns thusly, beginning in verse 1: "If a prophet arises among you." Okay, now "a prophet arises among you" means that it's someone of your own people. And he claims to declare God's Word. That's what a prophet is. "If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams [notice the immediate focus there is on someone who holds to dreams] and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass [notice how legitimate he is], and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods which you have not known [in other words, let us listen to the voice of other sources of divine truth than the Bible, if you really want to put it in the language of today] and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and cleave to Him."

You see, God in these days is allowing this to happen, and through this God is testing congregations. Are they going to listen to the Bible, or are they going to listen to that which purports to be divine truth from other sources?

CALLER: Amen! Well, Brother Camping, are there prophets today?

HC: Yes. Every born again believer is a prophet. Now in the widest application a prophet is someone who declares God's Word. And whenever we witness to someone concerning the Word of God, we are acting in a prophetic capacity. Now a lot of times we think of a prophet as someone who can foretell the future. Now of course we can to some degree.

When we witness to someone and we tell him, "Judgment Day is coming," we are foretelling the future, aren't we, because that is a future event. It hasn't happened as yet. But we have received our information from the Bible.

CALLER: Amen. What is a trance medium? I've never found it in the dictionary.

HC: Well, I don't exactly know the meaning of any of those words because I have no interest in becoming involved in that kind of an activity. But from your description, he claims that he is able to speak with the dead. Now obviously he cannot speak with the dead, that is, dead people. Dead people go down to a place of silence, the Bible says. But he can talk to those who are spiritually dead angels, those who have rebelled against God and have become the helpers of Satan. And they will mimic dead people. They will deceive such individuals into thinking that they are speaking to dead loved ones. And in this way these individuals are bound more tightly than ever by Satan.

CALLER: What shall I do for this brother? He's serious. What is a Christian's responsibility, other than to pray for him?

HC: All you can do is pray for him, and pray that God might give you an opportunity to open the Word to him. But he is convinced that he belongs to God, that God is doing this work through him. And my guess is that he will not listen to you at all. He'll simply say, "Well, you don't understand." And so remember, his sin is not against you. His sin is against God. Because you love your fellow man, you can pray for him. And it is only God who can make a difference in his life. There's nothing that you really can do, except to pray for him.

The Deceitfulness of Mediums in 1 Samuel 28 (278B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I would like to talk about the Witch of Endor. Was that really Samuel that was brought up, or was it something else?

HC: The question that is raised is concerning the Witch of Endor, that we read about in 1 Samuel 28. This is a passage that, if we read it just fairly superficially, we can come to the very distinct conclusion that Satan has some power over the dead, that he was about to raise up Samuel.

But when we read it more carefully, we find that it's not so at all, if we read it really in the light of everything that the Bible offers. Now you see, Saul, who is king of Israel, has reigned for forty years. And he has rebelled against God, and God's wrath is against Saul. And the prophet Samuel, who is the spokesman for God in that day, had died several years previously. And more than that, Saul would not even go to Saul in the closing days of Samuel's life. And after Samuel died, Saul more directly than ever would try to get information from any other source than from God Himself.

And so the Philistines are at war with Israel, over whom Saul reigned. And things are looking very bad for Israel. And so Saul goes to a medium, or to a witch, in order to ascertain what the future is going to bring, whether he is going to be successful in this endeavor, in this war with the Philistines.

It reminds us of some of our leaders in our land today, whom we hear about now and then, who go to mediums, in order to find out the future. Now this was really an abomination altogether. The fact is, God had commanded Saul earlier to kill all the mediums and the witches and the wizards from the land. And God had warned, in Deuteronomy, that the Israelites were not to have anything at all to do with those who were diviners or mediums or enchanters, or whatever.

But Saul is in rebellion against God. Saul is anti-God. And so in his desperation he goes to this witch, this medium of Endor. And he asks that Samuel be brought up, because he wants to talk to Samuel. And lo and behold, we read in verse 11, that Saul says, "Bring up Samuel for me." When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul." The king said to her, "Have no fear. What do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a god coming up out of the earth." He said to her, "What is his appearance?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel. And he bowed with his face to the ground and did obeisance. Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" And Samuel goes on to tell him, in verse 19, "The Lord will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines. And tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. The Lord will give the army of

Israel also into the hands of the Philistines."

Now when we read this casually, or superficially, it certainly looks like this medium was able to bring up Samuel, and that Samuel talked to Saul, and Samuel told him exactly what was going to happen on the morrow, that Saul and his sons would be killed, and the Lord would give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.

And when we go into the next couple of chapters, we'll find that this is exactly the thing that happened. Saul and his sons were killed, and Israel was defeated by the Philistines. And so it would certainly seem that the witch had been able to bring up Samuel.

But when we read it more carefully, we find that this is not really the case at all. First of all, how do we know this is Samuel? Well, what does the medium know about him? It just says, "When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice." Now Saul says to her, in verse 14, "What is his appearance?" In other words, "How do you know that this is Samuel?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe."

Now do you see how if we want to see something we're going to see it? She wanted to see Samuel, because she was genuine in her ability to foretell the future. And as a slave of Satan, as an emissary of Satan, she had been able to do other things of this nature previously. And so she's convinced that this apparition that she is looking at, which looks like an old man, wrapped in a robe, that this is Samuel.

Now notice what Saul said. It says, "And Saul knew that it was Samuel." But what did Saul see? Well, we read here that Saul didn't see anything. The woman saw Samuel, which was really this apparition of an old man wrapped in a robe. And the woman said to Saul, "I see a god coming up out of the earth," and he said to her, "What is his appearance?" In other words, he didn't see anything. And yet because he was convinced, and completely deceived that she could bring up Samuel, therefore, when they saw this apparition that appeared to look like an old man, they were both convinced they were looking at Samuel. And Saul begins to worship and address him as Samuel. And God carries out this deception by simply going on and speaking, "And Samuel said to Saul," and so on.

Now how do we know it wasn't Samuel? Well, first of all, nowhere in the Bible does God indicate that Satan (and remember, this witch of Endor was under the power of Satan) has the power over those who are born again believers, to bring them up from the dead. Only God can resurrect a person. Satan can never do this.

Secondly, where did Samuel go when he died? The Bible says that "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." Samuel was a priest of God, and he was in Heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ, along with Moses and Elijah, and all the other believers that were there. And so he would not have come up. True, his body may have come out of the grave, if indeed there had been a bringing up here. But Samuel, in order to speak, would have had to come down from Heaven.

And so this whole thing was a hoax. This whole thing was a deception, worked out by Satan himself. This is exactly the way mediums operate today. They are convinced they are speaking with the dead, because Satan mimics the voice of the dead. Evil spirits mimic their voices. Evil spirits make tables move, and create certain other phenomena in haunted houses, and so on, because Satan breaks the barrier between the supernatural and the natural.

Now what about the fact that the evil spirit speaking through this apparition is able to foretell what's going to happen

tomorrow? That, of course, is because Satan is part of the spirit world. Mediums today are frequently able to foretell the future with a reasonable degree of accuracy far beyond that which they could guess at. Somehow Satan has some knowledge of the future. We know this, of course, that whatever Satan's knowledge of the future is, it is going to be frustrated by God. Whatever events will be frustrated by God, in those events he will be incorrect.

It certainly was Satan's desire that the Philistines would destroy Israel, and destroy their king. And God allowed this to happen. And so Satan certainly was accurate in his prognostication, in his forecast of what tomorrow would bring. But this does not mean for a moment that this was Samuel speaking to Saul. It was Satan himself, or an evil spirit, speaking to Saul through this apparition of Samuel.

We must not have anything at all to do with the occult world, no matter how good or how holy it may be. Saul was convinced that this was Samuel. And since it was Samuel, he perhaps reasoned in his heart, "I did something terribly sinful in going to this medium, this witch of Endor. But here is Samuel, and that certainly underscores that maybe it wasn't as bad as it might have been." Saul may have reasoned this in his heart.

But God does not want us to have anything to do with the occult. If we want to find anything at all about God, we must go to the Bible. The Bible reveals to us the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Prophet to whom we are to listen. And Christ calls Himself the Word. And the Word of God is what we read in order that we might know truth.

Well, thank you for those questions.

Is Fortune-Telling for Real? (330D)

CALLER: What does the Bible say about a spirit of divination? I believe that somewhere in Acts there's a woman who is held by a spirit of divination. And she followed Paul, and it was cast out. Can you shed some light on that?

HC: Yes. The question is raised concerning the activity of the slave girl who had the spirit of divination. Actually, Satan, or the demon world, have some knowledge of the future. They are outside of us. And just how they have this knowledge, I am not really certain. But they do. They are able to know something about the future.

Now they don't have a perfect knowledge. One of the reasons is that the future is not in their hands, and God can frustrate what Satan would desire. But even as a medium or a fortune teller today is able at times to have some insight into the future being reasonably accurate, so it was possible for this slave girl to have the spirit of divination.

Now any activity of this kind is altogether of Satan. Anyone who claims they can divine the future has to be receiving his information from Satan. The only sourcebook that we have of the future is the Bible. And of course it is absolutely accurate, if we understand it correctly. The Bible is a marvelous source from which we can have knowledge of the future.

But the moment that we think we can divine the future because of some other information that has come to us from whatever source it may be, then we are violating God's rules. We are becoming a prey of Satan.

Dealing with Psychics (370A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes, good evening. I have a question regarding psychics. And the question is, I'm curious if these people who claim to be psychics might have some way actually of telling what a person may think or feel. I'm

specifically mentioning this because at a social gathering a friend of mine was approached by someone who claimed to be a psychic, and was told that certain events would occur in her life. And she did not want to listen to this, and felt that it was not of God. Consequently she did not pursue the conversation. But the person still was able to give her some indication of things and events to happen. And some of these have come to pass.

And so I'm curious. If a psychic says something is going to happen in your future, whether or not you've asked for the information, should you make a point of avoiding what's supposed to happen, or should you just ignore it?

HC: The question is, "What do we do in relationship to a diviner of the future, or a psychic, someone who claims to know the future?" From the Bible we know there is an occult world. There is a world of evil spirits. There is also a world of angels, of course, and of God Himself. The Bible, however, indicates that God will never reveal Himself except through His Word. So any occult activity, of any nature, is going to be derived ultimately from Satan, or from the evil spirit world.

The Bible indicates that we are not to listen to this. This kind of activity is an abomination to God. Now these psychics, who are frequently in tune with Satan himself (and Satan has some knowledge of the future, it appears), certainly at times what they predict will come true, although many of the things they predict do not come true. But certainly they do better, perhaps, than what they would do if they were simply guessing at the future.

As a Christian we ought to pay no attention whatsoever to them. There was a day, a few years ago, when I was particularly interested in these subjects, and I spent a lot of time reading books that were produced by psychics. And I found that ultimately this was very detrimental to me. This was not a wise thing to do. I never read any of this any longer. If anyone comes to me and tells me, "I know something about the future, concerning you or concerning anything else," I want nothing to do with it. I don't want to listen. If I am forced to listen, I would ask the Lord for mercy that I would forget everything that had been told me as rapidly as possible, and that I would pay no attention to it at all.

The Bible indicates that Christ is the one that we are to listen to. He is the one we are to give heed to. If we want to know something about the future, let's study the Bible.

CALLER: In what way actually is this detrimental, out of curiosity?

HC: First of all, it is detrimental in the sense that we are adulating Satan. We are paying attention to him. We are giving him recognition that he doesn't deserve or need. We are taking our eyes off Christ.

I found in my own life, in a very practical way, that I was inviting Satanic activity. It was at this time that two of my teenage children had a real vivid experience with the occult through a ouija board, in which they were finding that the ouija board was giving answers like, when they asked it "What is your name?" it spelled out "Satan." And this is no exaggeration of any kind. I found that I was simply inviting Satan's attention. As soon as we become interested in his activity, he thinks that he's making some points.

The Bible indicates that we're only to listen to the Lord Jesus Christ. If I want to know something about Satan, I'm going to study the Bible, and just stay with the Bible.

CALLER: It's my understanding that there is a scripture that "the rain shall fall on the just as well as the unjust," and there are a number of scriptures relating to the fact that there are natural

occurrences in the world, that effect both the unjust and the just, or the unsaved as well as the saved. And the reason I brought up the subject was out of curiosity as to whether or not this future, say within even a twenty-four hour period, could be perceived by an individual. And if it was related, say that someone told you that if you turned left at 3:00 P.M. at a certain street corner you could get in an accident, my thoughts were, "Well, what would prevent you from just turning right?" Because it was prophesied by a psychic, does that make it more of a Satanic influence? Or is it just one of the natural occurrences that fall on both the just and the unjust?

HC: The Bible teaches, first of all, that God's care does not necessarily just average out. We read in Amos 4:7: "And I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city. One piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered." In other words, God is selective in His blessings and in His warnings, and in His admonitions, and so on. It doesn't mean that this thing is just kind of out of control, or that it just goes without very great and specific care.

But the point is, "How did I get myself in a position where I listened to a psychic?" How would I know what a psychic has suggested is going to happen? I don't have to listen, you know. If someone would tie my arms behind my back and say, "Now you better listen to me; I've got something to tell you," I don't have to listen. My thoughts can be a thousand miles away while he is speaking. And I would not listen. I don't want anything to do with someone who says, "I have information about the future."

I must admit, being a human being, there is a natural curiosity that invades my soul as well as anyone else, to know the future. There was a day when I thought, "My, at least I ought to evaluate what this psychic is saying, or that psychic is saying." But today I have no interest at all in evaluating. I have no curiosity for what they have to say. I don't want to know.

I know that a large part of what they say is not true. I know that maybe a little of it might be true, but I know that that is not the place to look for information. The Bible is the place to look for information.

CALLER: All right. I appreciate that, and I can assure you that was mainly from a standpoint of just reaffirming my own feelings on this, and that I agree totally with your feelings on it. And I think that anyone else should take heed, because this can happen to anyone. So thank you very much for commenting on it.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

Interceding for a Troubled Friend (380B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. Brother Camping, I have a friend who has a problem and I was wondering if you could give me some insight on it. Several years ago she became involved in fortune telling and had her fortune cast through Tarot cards. And since then she's been the victim of depressions and nightmarish type dreams. And just very recently she became a born again Christian, and since then she stopped taking the anti-depression type drugs that she was taking to counteract the depression. But when she stopped taking the drugs these manifestations have intensified. And I was wondering if you could give me any insight as to whether there is a Biblical reason for anything like this happening in this day and age and what I can do to help this person.

HC: One thing of course you can do is to pray that God will intervene in her life. The Bible teaches that God's perfect

love casts our fear. This person, of course, has been living very close to Satan for a while, with her Tarot cards and the kinds of things that she got into. And so this really made a very severe impact upon her life.

Now if she is truly born again, if she is truly born again, now remember, to be born again means that we are hanging our whole life on the Lord Jesus Christ. It means that we've placed our whole trust in Him. It means that we don't fear hell or damnation. We know that Christ has paid for our sins. But neither do we fear Satan any longer.

CALLER: She knows this, and she wants to seek relief from this. I was there, and another person who was a good friend of mine was there when she did come to know the Lord. And we truly believe that she is a born again person. And she needs relief from this thing that she's undergoing right now.

HC: The relief will come only as she trusts in the Lord. Remember what Philippians 4:6 & 7 says? "Don't be anxious," or "Be careful for nothing. Be anxious for nothing. But with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to the Lord, and the peace of God that passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." That's a faithful promise of God.

The anxiety will hit her again and again. Every time she becomes anxious, she should go to the Lord. "Oh God, have mercy on me. Take this fear out of my life. Help me to remember how I stand before Thee. What a wonderful thing has happened in my life, that I belong to Christ, that I am a child of His, that I have all of the promises of the Bible that He will leave me nor forsake me, that even though I go through the valley of the shadow of death, He will be with me, that nothing can happen to me outside of His control and keeping."

She should feed on the Word of God. Just read the Psalms. Read Psalm 23 over and over and over again, making this really a part of her life, that her trust is in Christ. Right now she's at the sixty-four dollar question: Is this matter of being a Christian only good for people who don't experience anything serious in their lives?

You see, it's very easy to be confident. I'm a believer when all is going well, when there is no particular stress that we are facing. But if we're really a child of God, if we're really born again, it should stand the test when we're undergoing severe trauma or severe testing. This is what God is really helping her to see, "Is my trust really in God, or am I only paying lip service to this?"

If my trust really is in God, if I really believe that God means what He says, that He will not leave us nor forsake us, that He will give His angels charge over me, that I have no fear of Satan at all, then what am I fearful about? Then what am I fearful about?

CALLER: Well, she expressed the opinion that it was possible that she was suffering for the salvation of some other, or something like this.

HC: I don't know of that in the Bible.

CALLER: Well, neither do I. And I tried to point her to Ephesians 6:10-18, where we take on the armor of God, and verses like this, where she can, through reading the Word of God and filling her mind with the Word of God, come closer and closer into unity with Him, and by this alleviate her fear. I've tried to point out to her that in her mind is where this battle is taking place. This is the means which Satan uses to attack us, through the medium of our minds.

HC: Satan will not attack through her mind, if she belongs to Christ. Satan has no hold on her of any kind. Satan can't touch her. The whole question is, where does she stand in relationship to Christ? It is her old nature that has been

identified with her past life, which has been seared and hurt by her past life, that is not willing to trust.

But in her new soul, where she is born again, there ought to be this confidence in Christ. Now it can be demonstrated, in the face of the experience she's going through right now. She must recognize, "Okay. In my old body there is this fear that keeps creeping up on me. But I'm to crucify the flesh and its desires, its lusts. I'm to put it down. I'm not to listen to that. Oh God, have mercy on me when I begin to feel fearful. Forgive this sin. Forgive this sin, because ultimately it is the fact that I'm not trusting in Christ the way I ought to. Oh Lord, strengthen me in my trust. Help me in my unbelief."

This is the cry of the believer. And keep going back to the Lord, and thank Him for His blessings. And then the moment that anxiety begins to develop, go back to the Lord, "Oh Lord, forgive me. Now I'm beginning to sin all over again. I'm not trusting the way I ought to. Oh Lord, forgive me. Strengthen me in my trust. And encourage me to turn away from this kind of fear."

This fear develops because we take our eyes off Christ. Fear develops because we're not really sure whether God is going to care for us all the way.

CALLER: I tried to explain to her that perhaps this was a testing of her faith, and that she should turn to the Lord for release from this, and just absolutely put her trust in God.

HC: But to put feet under that is very difficult, isn't it?

CALLER: Right. Absolutely.

HC: It's one thing to hypothetically say, "Yes, this is what you ought to do," and it's another thing, when you've lived close to fear for a long time, to let go. But you see, this is characteristic of any besetting sin.

A person who by nature is addicted to alcohol, and there are certain people who very easily become involved in alcohol. They become drunkards. It doesn't mean that in five seconds after they become saved they'll never have any desire for alcohol again. This may trouble for a little while.

The same is true of any besetting sin. If a person has a vicious temper, that is always there. And they're really delighted in just letting it fly when things went badly. They don't, in five seconds, get victory over that. But if they recognize this is rebellion against God, then there can be victory. There will be some failures, but there will come victory.

The same is true of someone who has a lustful desire to desire, or is subject to evil desire, a sexual desire that is wrong. All of these sins that are deeply besetting sins, we have difficulty getting victory over. Now the path is always the same. We must repent. We must turn away from it. The path of turning away from fear is not an easy path. But if we'll deliberately concentrate on those passages in the Bible that indicate that God cares for us if we'll feast on these verses and remind ourselves of this, and cry out to God for forgiveness, when we do become anxious, then we're going to begin to get victory over that sin, too.

CALLER: One other thing. Would it be efficacious at all for myself and perhaps three or four other Christians to gather together to pray for this person in this specific regard? Is there any Biblical basis for that?

HC: The Bible teaches, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." It however does not mean necessarily that you have to gather with others to pray. The fact is, Christ insists that prayer ought to be done in our inner closet, where nobody knows what we're praying. It's wonderful when we can encourage others to pray with us. That's why we have Prayer Time on Family Radio. We don't do this, however,

to assault the throne of God, like getting as many signatures as possible to Congress, to sway their decision one way or another. We do this only because this is the Christian fellowship that we have one with another. We pray for one another.

However, if one person is praying, or two persons or twenty persons, the question is, what is going on in my heart? Am I really bringing this to God, as an earnest desire, and letting His will be done?

CALLER: Well, do you think it would be good for me to pray with this person herself?

HC: It could be, it could be. There's no formula for this, you see. There is nothing that's indicated. If you did pray with her, this may be helpful to her. But her trust cannot be in you. Her trust has got to be in Christ. It has to be in Christ.

And she has to look at herself very honestly, "Is my trust really in Christ, or am I really just paying lip service to this? Am I just intellectually trusting Christ? Am I in fact not really trusting Him with my whole heart?" That's the big question.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much, Brother Camping.

HC: You're welcome. Good night.

CHAPTER 18 – SIN & SUFFERING

GOD'S ALLOWANCE OF SIN

Why Did God Create Man Knowing He Would Sin? (338C)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I am a born again believer. God, knowing all things, would He create man knowing he would die a death in which the spirit would be lost? If so, what purpose would like be here? Jesus came to give an abundant life. And I'm kind of concerned about whether God would really create something knowing the end, knowing that man is going to die.

HC: The Bible is very very clear that God knew precisely what was going to happen before He ever created the universe. There were no surprises for God. We read in Ephesians 1:4 that He predestinated us from before the foundation, or He chose us from before the foundation of the world, in Christ, to be holy and conformed to God's will, and so on. He predestinated us.

This was before He ever created the world. He already planned our salvation. He knew right along that man would rebel, that man would be under the wrath of God. Now we must remember that God is sovereign, altogether sovereign. Number two, we must remember that God did not create mankind sinful. He created mankind good, after His own image.

Mankind was created a responsible being, accountable to God for his actions. Mankind of his own volition rebelled against God and came into the terrible state that he did come into. And God in His sovereign good pleasure walked the second mile by providing for our salvation at a very dear and terrible cost to Himself, of course, because it was necessary for God to become man and endure hell for our sins in order to save us.

Now why God did this is all to His glory. The whole creation is to His glory. We read, for example, in Romans 9:22, "What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He hath afore prepared unto glory." Here God is saying that He is sovereign in these

matters. If he wants to glorify Himself through His poured out wrath on the unsaved, that's His sovereign good pleasure, even as it's His sovereign good pleasure to save those whom He will.

We of course, as sinners in the misery of sin, can't understand this. We just can't fathom the love of God, we can't fathom the grace of God, we can't fathom the holiness of God. We only know that it exists.

CALLER: He is mighty.

God's Purpose in Allowing Sin (341B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: The Bible states that God is perfect. Therefore, how do you explain the creation that went sour, and that's Satan. Now God is supposed to know everything, from the beginning to the end if He knew that Satan would eventually mess up the world, why did God send him down in the first place?

HC: The question is raised: Why, if God is perfect, and knows the end from the beginning, would He create a world that eventually would become completely rebellious against Him? Why would He create angels, so that one of them would lead many of the other angels into rebellion against God?

The fact is that before God ever created the world, the universe, God not only knew that sin was going to enter the world. But He already made provision for the redemption of the world, for the redemption of the believers. We read in Ephesians 1:4 that He chose us, the born again believers, "in Him [that is, in Christ] before the foundations of the world." So you can depend upon it that God did not become surprised at any point. He not only knew what was going to happen. But He also made provision for the redemption of those whom He planned to save.

Now the question might then logically follow: "Well, why did God go through all this agony, of creating a world, allowing it to rebel against Him, so that He would have to go through this massive effort in order to redeem the world? The best answer that I can think of (and I know that this is very biblical) is that everything happens to God's glory. He says that "even the wrath of man shall praise God."

But let's think of it this way. The Bible says, "God is love." That's an excellent statement: "God is love." But it is not nearly as dramatic and recognizable and highlighted when it is said, as when it is expressed in reality. Think, for example, of the love that God had for this creation, allowing it to rebel against Himself, so that it became that which ought to be stamped out. It did not deserve to continue. But to provide for its redemption, it was necessary for Christ, for God to become the God-man, to be humiliated as a man, to be maligned by sinful men, to be spit upon, and then to endure the wrath of God, the equivalent of an eternity in hell. All this had to happen in order to redeem this world.

Now that is an expression of love that cannot be gainsaid. There's no deeper love than this, that God would do this for those of us who are so unlovable, who by nature are so rebellious against Him, that God would leave the perfection of Heaven, and become so involved in the misery of our sins. That is a dramatic expression of the love of God, that dramatizes that God is love far beyond what words could ever express.

Now the same thing can be said for the wrath of God, and the justice of God, the mercy of God, the grace of God, the patience of God . . . all of the divine attributes, which are all true and trustworthy. They're truths that will stand forever. But all of them come into sharp and brilliant focus in actual demonstration in the drama of the fall of

man and the redemption of man and the universe, by virtue of the fact that Christ went to the cross. This I believe, is one reason that God allowed all of this to happen.

Isn't it marvelous that we have a God who so loved us? If He had not made provision for our salvation, you could rest assured that every last human being on the fact of the earth would end up in hell. We deserve to go there. Absolutely we deserve to go there. There's not one of us that deserves salvation. Praise God for such a wonderful Savior.

OUR FIGHT WITH SIN

Gaining Victory Over Sin (093E)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. Would you please explain something to me? Are you supposed to ask God for forgiveness for a sin for which you have already asked forgiveness? If it still annoys you, does that mean that that sin hasn't been forgiven? And how to you overcome such feelings? I really want to be with the Lord so much, and be on good terms with Him. How do you do it?

HC: Yes. I'll try to explain some of these things.

CALLER: Thank you.

HC: Thank you. Good night

What do we do when we find that we have sinned, and the guilt just stays with us? That is the nature of sin, you see. It troubles us. Now one of the prerequisites of salvation is that we trust God implicitly for what He says.

Now in I John 1:9 we read: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now God is not lying to us. He means what He says. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Now the problem arises in the meaning of the word confess. If we go to the Lord and, with our mouth, state to God that we have sinned, that we are sorry for our sins, forgive our sins, that is not confession. We ordinarily think of the word confess as meaning just to admit the truth, putting it in words, so to speak. But that isn't the meaning of the word confess in I John 1.

The word confess there really means that we not only declare to God that we have sinned, but that we also have repented of that sin, that we have become of like mind with God. You see, one of the problems in life is that we like sin. And so we sin, and we feel troubled in our heart about it, and we tell the Lord about it, but we're not ready to give up that sin, because we like it too much. So we tell the Lord about it, and we don't really feel at ease in our conscience. We somehow sense that maybe the Lord hasn't forgiven that sin. Maybe I'm still under God's wrath.

And this is particularly enhanced or encouraged by the fact that we continue to do that sin, even while we're confessing it. That is, while we're telling the Lord about that sin, we know that tomorrow or the next day, when the same temptation will arise, we'll commit that sin all over again. And so we sense in our own soul that there is something that's wrong here.

Well, the thing that's wrong is that true confession—if we're going to understand what the Bible means by true confession—has to do with repentance, that we go to the Lord, "Oh, Lord, have mercy on me, I'm a sinner, I did this, I did that, and I don't want to sin anymore" and realizing that this is wrong, that this is rebellious against God, realizing that this can't be. I am taking steps to turn away from it. I'm walking the other way, so to speak. I'm not engaging, I don't want to engage in

that activity anymore, whatever it is "Oh, Lord, will you strengthen me? Will you give me victory over this sin?"

Now that's true confession, and when we do that, then we can know that it has been forgiven. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." You see, in other words, at that point we are abandoning ourselves to God. We are really saying, effectively, "I want Christ. I want Him only to be the King of my life. I want to live the way He wants me to live. I don't want to do my own thing anymore. I want to cast my lot with Christ. I want to hang my life on Him."

That's what true confession is, and that's also what salvation is. When we hang our life on Christ.

Now part of this faith, or part of this trust that we are beginning to manifest in our life has to do with accepting God's statement when He says that He became sin for us, that He died on the cross for our sins, that He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleans us from all unrighteousness. We must take God at His Word.

Now if you, first of all, try to say, "Okay, I know I don't want to sin anymore. I'm sick of my sin. I don't want to be in bondage to sin anymore. I don't want to go through life being rebellious against God," and so you've begun to take steps of repentance, you've begun to cry out to God for mercy, and now if you begin to say, "Oh, if I could only understand how Christ could forgive me, if I could only understand how this all works, because until I understand it I can't accept the fact that He will forgive me," that isn't salvation, either.

We simply trust what the Bible declares, because God declared it. And we don't understand it. Who can understand the mind of God? Who can really penetrate all the aspects of what this wonderful salvation is. All we know is that God declares, "If you turn to Me, I will abundantly pardon." All we know is that if we confess our sins, if we repent of our sins, and acknowledge our guilt before God, and cry out to Him for mercy, He is faithful and just to forgive us from all iniquity.

And we say, "Oh, Lord, I don't understand such a marvelous salvation. I don't understand such grace. I don't understand how You could be so merciful, but I accept it, because You declared it to me. You are Eternal God. You are the One I trust. And whatever You tell me, I trust that it is so. And therefore I rejoice that I can know that my sins are forgiven. I know that I am confessing my sins, because I know that I don't want to sin anymore. I know that as You strengthen me, I will continue to turn away from that sin. I don't want to sin anymore."

That's what salvation is all about.

Does Our Struggle with Sin Ever End? (232A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening. You were talking about becoming a new person and living in accord with the Word of God. And I had some questions about that. I and maybe some other people have the same experience. I call myself a Christian, because I believe in God and I believe that Christ died for my sins. But I find that there are still a lot of times in my life when I'm doing things that I know aren't right. And it's almost like I'm kind of fighting God.

And yet there are a lot of times when I'm doing things that I don't want to do. And I say, "Well, I'm not going to do that because I know it's wrong." Does there ever really come a time when all of these things stop happening, when a person can really live completely in accord with God's Word? Or is the fact that I'm not doing it an indication that I'm not really

a Christian, that I'm not really saved?

HC: The question that's been raised is a very practical and a very good question. How can I know when I have really become born again, or born from above? And when this happens, does there ever come a time when I'm no longer struggling with sin?

Now first of all, we must realize that when we become saved, our salvation, while judicially is entirely complete, so that from now on every sin that we would ever commit has been covered by the blood of Christ and can never threaten us with hell, nevertheless in actuality our salvation is only half complete.

You see, we are essentially a body and a soul. The apostle Paul spoke in II Corinthians 5, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord," and he was speaking about himself in his soul existence. At death, in our souls we leave the body and go to live and reign with Christ in Heaven, if we've become saved.

Now before we're saved, both in body and soul we lust after sin. We like our sin. We will only pay lip service to the laws of God. We may try to live like a Christian because we're thinking that in this way we're going to be right with God. Actually we're in rebellion against God. We're trying to design our own salvation program. And all of this is sin? and it's all going to end us up in hell.

But at the moment we became saved, the transformation occurred in our souls. Now in our soul we became a brand new creature, and we read in I John 3:9 that "That which is born of God cannot sin." Now that's a truth that God is giving us. That means that from now on, from the moment I was saved there ought to be an ongoing earnest desire in my life to live for Christ, which was not present at all before I was saved.

But that only happened in my soul, because my body was not changed. My body is still subject to sin. And so while on the one hand there is this earnest desire to live for Christ, on the other hand there will be this lusting after sin. We never had that struggle like this before we were saved. But now it's an ongoing struggle.

Now let's see what happens when I sin. Before I was saved, if I would sin, both in my body and in my soul I was very comfortable with my sin. This was the nature of my body and soul, that I loved sin. I was by nature in rebellion against God. And while in my conscience I sensed that it was sin, because God has put His Law in my heart to that degree, nevertheless I did not have a great struggle with sin, because I like my sin both in my body and my soul.

Now I'm born again. In my soul I've become a brand new creature. And now I begin to sin. Well now immediately conflict is set up, because in my soul, which is as real a part of me as my body, I feel violated. I'm doing something that's contrary to my new nature that God has given me, that is, my new soul. And so I begin to feel depressed. I begin to feel oppressed. I realize that I can't go on this way.

And it isn't long at all before I'm coming to the Lord, "Oh Father, forgive me. How can I go on this way? I don't want to commit this kind of sin." Now that doesn't mean I'm going to get victory over that sin in five minutes. I may struggle with that sin for a long time, because I may not understand repentance as well as I could.

But every time I commit that sin it's going to leave me unhappy and upset because I have been violated in my soul. And that's an experience that I never would have really had before I was saved. That's one of the major differences between the one who is saved and the one who is still unsaved.

Now one of the best accounts of this struggle that goes on in the life of the believer is recorded for us in Romans 7. Now we must bear in mind that the apostle Paul, as he spoke these words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was not just a brand new Christian. He was a Christian of long standing. But he had become very sensitive to the Word of God.

And it doesn't mean, either, that he was still living in gross sins of the flesh, like the world does. But he had become sensitive to the Law of God. And the more we read the Word of God, the more we sense that so many things are sin which before we never looked upon at all as being sin. And so in that sensitivity he says in verse 21 of Romans 7, "So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the Law of God in my inmost self [that's in his soul, where he has experienced the new birth]. But I see in my members [that's his body, that hasn't been saved as yet] another law, at war with the law of my mind, and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

You see the struggle that's going on? Now the path of the believer, however, is a path of growing in sanctification. The Bible constantly warns us, "Crucify the flesh and its desires." Exercise control over your body. Put to death that which is fleshly within you. We are to pummel our bodies, or to beat our bodies, so that these sinful things will not gain the ascendancy.

And so, to put it in plain language, when we see a sin that continues again and again, we are not to live with that sin. We're to get victory over it. We are to repent of it, to turn away from it, and ask God to strengthen us that this sin might not continue. And God will give us that victory if we mean business.

Now once we get victory over that sin, we're going to find other sins that we can go to work on. And this will be the story of our life. As we grow in the Lord, we will get victory over this sin, and that sin, and the other sin. But as we do this, we will become more sensitive to the will of God, and we'll see other things that we can get victory over. And we'll do this right up until the time that we die.

CALLER: It seems like every time one gets taken care of, every week and every year there's a new one. That's I guess why I've been feeling really discouraged lately, thinking, "Are all these new things going to keep cropping up? Have I really been saved?" because it seems like there's always just something else.

HC: The whole question boils down to, what am I doing about the sin in my life? The unsaved person will sin as long as he can get away with it. The greatest deterrent to sin in the life of the unsaved person is the problem of being found out, or the problem of being caught, or whatever.

But in the life of the believer, the greatest deterrent to sin is that in his own life he will feel violated, and God Himself will begin to deal with him if he would continue in sin, because his body has become a temple of the Holy Spirit. We have been bought by Christ. We belong to Him, and God will not permit us to go on this way.

CALLER: I think the problems that I have the most trouble with are not things like going out and stealing or cheating someone, or something like that. But there are things in my head and things in my heart, the rebellion in my thoughts.

HC: All right. Now when you have these rebellious thoughts, look upon them as they are. This is sin. And immediately go to the Father, "Oh Father, how can I sin this way? How can I have these rebellious thoughts? Father, forgive me. I don't want to live this way." And in order to strengthen yourself, read the Bible.

Read the Bible. This is where your strength will come from.

I find in my life that if I am busy with everything else, and not reading the Bible, for even a comparatively short period of time, I find that my thinking is not nearly as clean and wholesome as it is when I am spending time in the Word.

CALLER: Thank you. And thank you for your program. It's sure a help.

HC: Thank you for calling.

Growing in Sanctification (235B)

CALLER: What do I do with doubts that I have, that come and go periodically, about my salvation?

HC: The question is: What do I do when I have doubts about my salvation? They're not there all the time, but they do come.

The probability is that you are undernourished spiritually. You're suffering from spiritual malnutrition. You see, our faith is strengthened by the Word of God. And as you read the Word, and read it confidently, that this is God's Word speaking to me, this is God speaking without error, without exaggeration, without lie of any kind, and He has this to say to me.

And the more you read the Bible, the more you will find assurance for your salvation, because the Bible is one great volume of conversation about the nature of salvation. You see, when you run across a verse like I John 1:9, "If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness," well, okay, have I really turned away from my sins? Do I find in my life that I don't want to sin? Have I talked to God about it? Am I willing to take Him at His Word that He has cleansed me from all unrighteousness? What tremendous assurance, you see.

Now if you, in your life, are coddling up to a sin, if you have a sin in your life (and as Christians we can have this in our life), and you're struggling with it to some degree but you haven't had victory as yet, and it's a besetting sin, now that will give you doubts of your salvation, and rightly so. Rightly so.

If we are born again, we should not be struggling with a besetting sin. When that sin has been around a little while, we'd better get busy and make sure that we have victory over it. Now what we normally do, when we have this besetting sin, and normally it's a sin that we particularly like. It particularly identifies with a certain twist in our old nature that's still left. And it can vary from one person to another. In one case it might be the sin of gossip. In another person it might be the sin of a vicious temper. In another person it might be a sin of selfishness, or of envy, or of evil desire, or whatever. And it just identifies so very well with what we are by nature in our old nature.

And we really enjoy it, to some degree, even though every time we commit that sin, afterwards we just feel miserable. "How did I do it? Why did I do it again?" And we pray, "Oh Lord, forgive me." And how we mean that. Oh, how we mean that. But even as we're praying, we know that tomorrow, or the next day, when temptation arises, we'll commit the sin all over again. Right?

Okay. Now the problem is that we like our sin, and we're not repenting of it. Now God works through repentance. We are praying, "Oh Lord, forgive that sin," hoping, trusting that somehow He will quietly take it out of our life, without us ever having to give it up, because really we're afraid we're going to deprive ourselves of something very nice, if we can't have that sin around any more, and we'd rather not have to take that action.

But God says we have to repent. And so we look at that sin squarely in the eye, and we say, "Now look. That sin has got to go. That sin is open rebellion

against my Savior. That sin cannot have a part in my life any more. I'm going to quit feeling sorry for myself, with regard to that sin, and kidding myself that that sin is all that desirable. I'm going to cut it off. And it may mean that I have to cut off a friend or two. It may mean that I have to change my way of life a little bit. It may mean that there are certain magazines I can't read anymore, or certain TV programs I've got to quit looking at. It may mean a lot of different things. But I'm going to do it, and nobody's going to keep me from doing it. And it's going to happen right tonight. I've had it. I want no more of this."

And I begin to call upon God, "Oh Lord, forgive me for my sloppiness in this. Forgive me for my self-pity. Forgive me for my love for this sin. Give me an intense hatred for this. This sin has got to go. Strengthen me as I repent. Strengthen me that I'll keep walking in this path. And under no circumstance do I ever want to do that sin again."

Now ordinarily you will find that that sin begins in your mind. There are certain times in the night or in the day when you start thinking about how nice that particular sin would be. And so the first thing that we do is that we fondle that sin in our minds. We coddle it. We play with it. We love it up in our mind. So far it isn't so bad, you see. We haven't actually committed open sin. We haven't gone out and committed the sin. But we're really developing a real case for it in our mind. And finally it becomes so big that we feel, this is too big for me. And out we go. The sin develops again. And then comes the remorse.

Well now the place to stop that sin is right where it hits us in our mind. The next day the thought comes, and we begin to think about that sin, following the old pattern again. And right there we say, "Now wait a minute. Wait a minute. This can't be. Oh Father, forgive me for having it come into my mind again. Strengthen me that this will not happen again." And we immediately go to God's Word, or change the subject in some other way in our minds. This we may not think about anymore. We're not going to let this thing grow and fester in our minds.

CALLER: The best way to get the victory then is that you have to look at it, of course, as sin. And then you have to turn away from it. It's all right then to use the Word of God to strengthen you, and to get victory over it. Right?

HC: The key word is repentance. Now you see, we don't want to dodge that. Don't try to get around it. Means that we've got to cut that sin off. It means that if my sin is gossiping, and there's a certain individual in the congregation that every time she calls I find that we're talking about this one and that one, I'm going to have to say to her, the next time she calls, "Now look, today I just don't have time to visit, because I don't want to talk about other people." Now our friend might be real angry with us. But why gossip and encourage her into sin, and encourage yourself into sin? That isn't worth anything at all. It's far better to lose her friendship. If the sin is gossiping, you might try this, when the ugly thing about someone else comes up, say, "Now wait a minute. Let's talk about all the good things about this person." The Bible says, "Whatever things are just," and so on, this is what we've got to talk about.

Or let's say it's the sin of drinking or smoking. It means no more of this. We cut it off, if that's what we believe is sin. If it's the sin of anger, it means we have to say, "Now why do I always become angry?" We can sense when we're going to become angry again. We can sense when the hair begins to stand up on the back of our necks, so to speak, and our blood pressure begins to rise. We have to walk out of the room. Or maybe we can't talk to a certain person at a certain time of the day, to avoid this possibility. But

we're not going to be angry anymore. We've got to cut it off.

And we must be very ruthless about it, giving ourselves no quarter.

CALLER: Now when I have a sin in my life, that will stop the Spirit from bearing fruit in me, right?

HC: What happens is, when we coddle sin in our life, first of all we feel like a hypocrite when we witness to someone else. It's really hard to be a fair and honest witness to someone else about the love of Christ for those who turn to Him, when we are harboring sin in our own life, and playing with it. It's really hard to say to the other person, "You know, the Bible says that unsaved man is a sinner and he's heading for hell," when we are living in open sin in some way. And so we get totaled out that way by our sin.

Secondly, when we have sin in our life that we're fussing with like this, it's hard to go to the Lord Jesus, to go to the Father, and have open communion with Him, communication with Him, because that sin is always in the background. Somehow we feel dirty because we are not leveling about that sin. We haven't repented of that sin. And if we're going to be of maximum service, we want to have wide open lines of communication with God.

When you get victory over your sin, and you will. You will find that if you mean business, and repent of it, that the desire will go away. Then when you have victory over it, this will be a tremendous encouragement to you, that Christ is indeed your Savior. But it will also mean that then you can go to work on the next sin in your life.

And that is what growing in sanctification is all about.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you very much. And I really appreciate your program.

HC: Thank you for calling. Good night.

Our Ongoing Fight with Sin (242A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Good evening, Mr. Camping. You had some people who were asking questions about how to live a Christian life working for non-Christians. And you made a comment further on in your discussion about a Christian and his witness. And you gave an example of a Christian who had a bad temper. And you said that if a Christian would lose his temper frequently, you felt that he should take a close look at himself, whether or not he was born again. Now did I quote you correctly?

HC: Yes. Any time we have a besetting sin that just goes on and on and on, then we have to ask ourselves, how can this be if I have become born again? Why am I not getting victory over sin in my life?

CALLER: Oh, so it's the lack of victory?

HC: Yes. We do have an old nature. We do have a body that has not been saved as yet. But the difference between a born again believer and an unbeliever is that in the case of the unsaved person, he will continue in his sin and he will excuse his sin. He will rationalize his sin. It's just part of his whole being. But in the case of a born again believer, when we sin we are deeply troubled. We don't want to sin anymore. And increasingly we will be troubled by it. And over a period of time we will be casting around...how can this be? How can I get victory over this? And eventually the question will come, how can I be saved and still live this way?

Now after we get victory over a sin, a specific sin, we're going to find that it was covering up some others, and then we can go to work on those. The path of the Christian is a growing in sanctification, as we exercise more and more control over our bodies.

CALLER: I guess it's hard to put a time limit, or something, on this. But I would like to take the rest of this on the air, if I could. Would you please explain some signs for us to start really examining ourselves, how to cope with these type of sins in our lives that are repetitive and are part of the old nature.

HC: Yes. Our caller has asked a very practical question. How can we recognize a real problem in our life in regard to sin, so that we might wonder if we're really saved? How can we cope with these sins? What should be going on in our life?

First of all, let me read from Romans 7, because we want to get the whole picture here. In Romans 7 the apostle Paul, after he had been saved for many years, had this to say in verse 21: "So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law, at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

In other words, the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is saying that no matter how hard he tries, no matter how much he longs for perfection, the potential for sin is always present in his life, because his body is still unsaved. In his soul, or in his mind, as he uses the expression here, or in his inmost self, he always wants to do what is pleasing to God. But in his body there is this lusting after sin.

However, we mustn't think for a moment that Paul was speaking here about an ongoing walking in adultery, or an ongoing walking telling lies. That is not possible, because we read in I Corinthians 6:9 that the immoral, the adulterer, the fornicator, the thief, and so on, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. But you see, the problem is that when we are saved, when we are born again, every time we read the Bible we're confronted with the perfection of God's holiness. We are given the standard of perfection, and we find again and again little areas where we don't quite measure up. And of course, the more we read the Bible, the more we're sensitive to the will of God, even those little things that we thought weren't sins at all now begin to loom larger.

There was a day when I may have thought that to be a little impatient, that isn't sin. But when I continue to read the Bible, I finally discover yes, to be impatient is a sin. There may have been a day when I thought that to lash out at someone when they hurt me was not a sin. But when I study the Bible more carefully, as I grow in grace, I find that yes, that's a sin, too. And so every place I turn I find that there are rough edges of sin potential within me that have to be worked over.

Now if I find a besetting sin . . . And every born again believer is confronted with this. You find a sin that especially besets. It may be a temper, it may be that you just have a terrible time with gossiping. Certain friends call up, and the next thing you know, you're gossiping a blue streak. Or it may be that you're having trouble with evil desire. In your life you're just attracted to pornographic literature. Or it may be, well, you can name it. You can think of your own sins. There's a whole host of them that you can catalogue.

Now if I'm unsaved, both in body and soul I am essentially and ultimately in rebellion against God. And while I may know that I'm a bad boy because I do certain bad things, as long as I'm not going to get caught or as long as I'm not going to get hurt by it, I will continue in it because I like sin. With my whole being I like sin. There's something enjoyable about sin. And I will continue. If anyone reminds me of it, I will excuse myself. I will make alibis. I'll say, "I

know that you're telling me I'm a sinner. But look, I'm not nearly as bad as the other person over there. And did you read in the newspaper about 'so and so', what they're doing? He's way more guilty than I am." Or, "I was tired, and when I get tired then I don't have the strength, and then I fall into sin," or whatever it may be. We excuse ourselves. Now that's the life of an unsaved person, even though he may call himself a Christian.

But if we are a born again believer, and that besetting sin occurs, let's say it's the sin of a temper, and the situation develops and we feel the hair stand up on the back of our neck, and we feel our face get red, and we lash out, afterwards you know the remorse. "Oh, I did it again. Oh, Lord, strengthen me. How does it have to be that I keep committing this sin?" And this is one of the evidences of being born again, when we have this heartfelt sorrow in our heart that we have rebelled against God again.

We're bound to have that heartfelt sorrow, because in our soul we have become a new being. We have become a resurrected person. We are a new creation. We don't sin anymore in our soul. And so we are violating our soul every time, we sin this way. And so of course we feel very terrible.

More than that, we have become related to God and we love Him. And the evidence of loving God is that we want to keep His commandments. So we pray, "Oh Lord, forgive me. Oh Lord, forgive me." And oh, how we mean that. But even as we're praying, "Oh Lord, forgive me," we know that tomorrow, when the situation develops again, we're going to commit that sin all over again. Now what has gone wrong? Why doesn't God forgive and take that sin out of my life? I've been praying for it. Why don't I get victory?

Well, there's one of two things. I might not be born again. Or it may be that I am born again, but I'm not following God's program. God's program calls for repentance. Now what is repentance? It means to turn away from that sin. The whole problem is, we like that sin and we feel deep in our hearts that yes, it's terrible to commit this sin. It's an affront to God, to Christ our Savior. And yet deep in our heart we enjoy that sin and we don't really want to give it up. And so as we pray, "Oh Lord, forgive me," we mean that with all our heart, but what we're really asking is, "Oh Lord, let me continue in this sin as long as I want to. And You just take it out of my life without asking me to give it up." And God doesn't work that way. God works through repentance.

And so if we really mean business with a sin in our life, whatever it may be, we first of all recognize it, that it's dirty, rotten sin. It's active, open rebellion against Christ our Savior. It's a reproach to God, it's a reproach to the work of grace that's within our life. And that sin has got to go. And at that point we're going to quit pitying ourselves. We're going to recognize, "I like that sin, but I've got to make a choice. Do I like that sin more than I like Christ?" That's really the choice I have to make. "No, I love Christ. I may like the sin, but I love my Savior." Then the sin has got to go.

The Bible tells me that sin's power over me has been broken. I'm no longer a slave of Satan. So he can't make me sin. The only reason I'm sinning is that I have not surrendered to Christ. And so the giant step I must take is repentance. I must turn away from it. I must deal with this very ruthlessly. I must give myself no quarter. It's got to go. I cut it off. If it means that I have to quit reading magazines for the rest of my life, I'll quit reading magazines, if that's what's going to tempt me. If it means that I have to cut off friendships because through that friendship I'm getting tempted, cut off the friendship. The friendship isn't worth anything if it means that every time it's going to tempt me into sin. Cut it off.

You're not doing your friend any good, and you're not doing yourself any good, because every time you commit that sin the likelihood is you're dragging your friend into the sin also. And who wants to make your friend guilty before God? And so you cut it off. You give yourself no self-pity of any kind.

Now if you really mean business with the Lord, and you're really honest with yourself, "I like this, but it's got to go," and you begin to cut it off, crying out to God for mercy and for strength, and when that sin begins to needle in your mind you begin immediately to ask God for forgiveness, "Oh Lord, I don't want to move in that direction again," then you're going to find that you'll get victory. You will get victory. And that victory will be a vast encouragement that after all, God does mean what He says, that the power of sin has been broken.

Now when you've gotten victory over that sin, then you can go to work on the next one and the next one and the next one, and the next one. And that's really what growing in sanctification is.

Subjecting Our Thoughts to Christ (518A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. There's a verse in the New Testament, I think, about bringing your thoughts into captivity to Jesus Christ. Could you explain a little what that means? Does that mean that any bad thought, any types of thoughts that are not Christian, you should once and for all give to God and forget them? Or what exactly does that verse mean?

HC: What does it mean when the Bible says that we're to bring our thoughts into captivity to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Actually, sin begins in our minds, to a very high degree. When we are saved, we of course in our souls don't want to sin anymore, but we have a body that lusts after sin. And our body, therefore, in its sensual desires begins to think about sin. And so in our thought life we will fuss with sin, we'll play with sin. We'll let it grow there until finally it may even bring us to overt sin.

Now to bring our thoughts into captivity means that we give ourselves no quarter. We're not going to let our thoughts run rampant with sin. We want our thought life also to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

The same idea is worded in a somewhat different fashion in the beautiful language of Philipians 4: 8, where God says, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." You see what really ought to be happening. That is to bring your thoughts into captivity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

CALLER: So you yourself have the responsibility to control what thoughts to think about and what thoughts shouldn't come into your mind, right?

HC: The question is, do we have the control over what comes into our mind? And certainly we do. We have been freed from the bondage of sin. We don't have to sin. We are free to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we are making decisions all the time. Are we going to let our thoughts wander into sinful paths? Or are we going to recognize that this is moving in the wrong direction, so that we begin to cry out to God, "Oh God, have mercy on me. Cleanse my thoughts. Strengthen me that my thoughts might not go in this direction." And we actually repent of this by beginning to think of other things.

CALLER: Because it's true that Satan does have the power to plant thoughts in your mind, right?

HC: Does Satan have the power to plant thoughts in your mind? No, Satan does not have that power. We're talking of course about someone who is born again. Someone who is unsaved is still a slave of Satan, and that could happen. But in the case of someone who is born again Satan has nothing on us at all. He cannot control our thinking. He cannot plant thoughts there. The thoughts are there because we still have a body that lusts after sin.

Now Satan can come at us from the outside. He can come through a friend who is unsaved, who will try to entice us into sin. He can come at us at any place through the world, trying to entice us into sin. And if we pay attention, then of course that thought will be planted there that is sinful. And it can easily be planted there because we still have the nature that lusts after sin. But we can never blame Satan for our sins. The sin is ours altogether.

CALLER: Having the thought and dwelling on it would be two different things. I thought that Satan could plant a thought, and . . .

HC: No. Satan cannot plant thoughts. We plant the thought when Satan comes and tempts us. When Satan comes from the outside and entices us, then in our old nature we are interested, and the sinful thought is planted.

CALLER: Okay.

HC: Thank you for calling and sharing.

CALLER: Thank you. Good night.

SUFFERING

Why Does God Allow Suffering? (285A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: Yes. A question arose amongst my friends, a very dear friend of mine. I've talked to him about Christ, and so on, and he understands that God is supposed to be love. That's what the Bible teaches. Okay. And I said, "That's right." Okay, so if God is love, now I have a wife, who's been in the hospital. I believe today is about the 135th day. The doctor has given up on her. She has a brain tumor. I've called in for prayer. Okay, I have faith. But they have no more hope. They say she's going to die. And she's a very good person, as far as I know. I've been married to her a long time. She has done very right. She's very devout, a dear Christian, she prays every day. And here she has to suffer this pain. And so he tells me, "How can God be love? And I have really no answer. I told him to read the Book of Job, and he says, "I did. But that doesn't satisfy me."

And the question is, how do you explain to someone circumstances like this, like the condition of my wife, who is still living today, but according to the doctors, she must die because of a brain tumor? But I still have faith and hope. I do believe in Christ. I believe that He is all powerful, if it is His will. She was a very devout and good person all her life, as long as she's been married to me. She's taught me many things about the scripture. But what does a man say to a question like that?

HC: All right. I'll try to help you. Let me summarize your question. The question really is this: If God is a God of love, how can He afflict a person by allowing that person to suffer for a long period of time and then eventually die? How can God do this if He is a God of love?

Well, we have to get a little larger picture in answering this. First of all, we must remember that this earth was created perfect. It was created good. There was no sin. There was no curse of sin. Mankind was created with every blessing, to have fellowship with God and to enjoy God forever.

But man, of his own volition, rebelled against God and said, "I don't want to

obey You." And it began with Eve in the Garden of Eden, and expanded to Adam. And this has been the condition of mankind ever since.

And so the fact that man has rebelled against God has estranged him from God, and it has resulted in the fact that God has cursed this earth, so that this earth is a place of tears and toil and suffering and sorrow, because man does not live by God's rules.

Actually, as I've said so many times, God ought to destroy all of us and remove us into hell because of our sins. Here we're created in the image of God, to love Him. And by nature that's the last thing we want to do. We want to go our own way. We don't want to be obedient to this wonderful Creator, and we deserve to suffer, and we deserve to go to hell.

But God in His love has provided a marvelous way of escape. Now this is not an easy way. It wasn't something where God could just say, "Well, I'm God, and I can change the rules any time I want to. And therefore, I have decided that I love you. And if you'll only do 'so and so' you can go into Heaven. You won't have to endure My wrath for your sins." God couldn't do this, because He's not only a loving God, but He's a just God. And His justice demands that the price of hell be paid before we can go into Heaven.

Now there was no one on earth to pay for our sins. So God Himself—now just think of this love, God Himself came to this earth in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He took on a human nature, perfect God—and He allowed Himself to be aligned and slandered, and then He was spit upon and He was beaten. And then, worse than that by a million times, God Himself poured out His wrath on Him for my sins, punishment so severe that it was the equivalent of me spending an eternity in hell. Now that's love. That's what Christ did for me, in order to save me.

Now after I'm saved, I'm still a part of this creation, and the curse of sin is still present. And it may be God's provision that I will spend the last year of my life in a coma, or suffering with cancer, or whatever. This is because we're living in this kind of a world. And if I'm a Christian, God will show the victory of the cross in this kind of situation also, even as He showed the victory of the cross through Job, as God allowed all kinds of things to happen to him.

But if we're a child of God, none of these things are really meaningful. And to die is the most wonderful thing in the world, because to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. If this dear lady is a child of God, death will be that marvelous moment when she will be freed from all of suffering and sorrow. And she'll be living and reigning with Christ in Heaven. And nobody could ask for anything more wonderful than that.

And she will spend an eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ. And so you see, there is all kinds of love that shines through. Now if she is not saved, then of course it's a different matter altogether. Her suffering on this earth is just a drop in the bucket compared with the suffering she must undergo throughout eternity for her sins. And we can't understand that, because we are not sufficiently sensitive to the holiness of God. But this is what the Bible teaches, that there is eternal damnation for those who are unsaved.

CALLER: Brother Camping, thank you for this encouragement, and you've increased my faith.

HC: Thank you.

Comments on Affliction and Suffering (319C)

HC: Affliction and suffering are our constant companions in this world. In light of the fact that I meet so many people who have experiences regarding these problems, I thought it would be

good to take some time to discuss this whole question of affliction and suffering.

The Bible indicates that in the world we will have affliction. We will experience suffering. Now suffering can come to us in many different ways. Suffering can be in our lives because of our own personal sins. That can bring suffering to us. Suffering can be in our lives because of the sinful attitudes of others. That also is suffering.

Suffering can be in our lives because God is chastising us. And believe me, God does chastise those whom He loves. We read in Hebrews 12 that He chastises every son that He receives.

But through it all, as a child of God, we have a marvelous promise, that is that when we go through the deep water, God will go with us. We read this in Isaiah 43:2 & 3. We have the assurance that even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, "Thou art with me" (Psalm 23). Jesus assures us that He will never leave us nor forsake us. As a child of God, even though we are being grievously sinned against, we can know that we are safe in the arms of Jesus.

The reaction, however, that we frequently experience when we are troubled in this way—when we are sinned against, when we experience suffering or tribulation at the hand of others—is that we can become very sorry for ourselves. We can look at ourselves and really begin to get weighed down by depression and sorrow and self-pity. And these are natural things. These are not uncommon. These are the normal reactions to tribulation and suffering.

But God tells us to keep our eyes on Him. God tells us that we are not to become anxious. And if we will only keep our eyes on Him, if we will realize that after all, I am not losing my salvation; after all I'm not losing eternal life. True, my situation will be different than I had hoped. The antidote to the terrible oppression and depression that we feel in a situation like this is to turn our eyes on Christ. Remember how that song goes? "Turn your eyes on Jesus. Look full into His wonderful face. And the things of this world grow strangely dim, in the light of His beauty and grace."

It's in the light of His grace, in the light of what He has done for us in saving us from our sins, that all of the things of this earth become unimportant. Oh yes, they're terribly big today. They're huge at this moment. But in the light of eternity, they don't really amount to anything.

Now look, lots of times we think that our life is what is right now. We want today and tomorrow to be the big and important days, when all is well, and we are enjoying life to the maximum. When we take this kind of attitude toward life (and we all desire this, to a very high degree), we then are going to be terribly upset when tribulation comes and when difficulties arise. And down, down, down, into the depths of despair we will go.

But let's gain a perspective for just a moment. How long is our life really? The Bible teaches that we live eternally. If we're a child of God, it means that we live eternally. We don't exist eternally, like the unsaved who are under the wrath of God, eternally in hell. But if we're a child of God, we live eternally in the glorious presence of Christ, in the New Heaven and the New Earth. And bear in mind that the seventy more or less years that we live on this side of the grave is but a drop in the bucket, but a breath, compared with eternity in the New Heaven and the New Earth. The Bible teaches that the best is in front of us.

In the New Heaven and the New Earth there is no suffering or sorrow or pain or disappointment or frustration. Everything there is perfect. We are in the glorious presence of His Glorious Majesty, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are

in a brand new world, where there is no curse of sin. There is no wickedness around us. That is what is in front of us.

So, supposing we have to spend ten or twenty or thirty or forty years on this side of the grave living a little different existence than we had hoped to. I think of those who are rotting away in a concentration camp somewhere in another part of the world. They had not really hoped that this would be the way they would spend out their earthly existence. But in God's provision, this is the way they are to spend it. For the cause of Christ they are in a concentration camp, working at hard labor.

But what is that, as compared with the future that awaits them? And if our persecutors finally are able to take our life away, death will simply be the marvelous moment when we actually go to be with Christ in Heaven. So we can't miss.

The only way we can begin to face the turmoils and trials of life, the difficulties of life, is to keep our eyes on Jesus, to keep the larger perspective. One of the problems of suffering is that we don't like it. Not one of us likes suffering. Now let's be honest. We don't like to suffer. We like to have things quite well. We like to have everything on an even keel. We don't like to suffer.

But God allows and even sends suffering in our life, and sometimes the most intense suffering comes from those who are dearest to us. But He brings this into our life in order to strengthen our faith. For those for whom everything goes well, there's no need to wonder, "How well do I trust in Christ?" After all, He is taking care of all of my needs. But wait until things go wrong. And we wonder, "How can I face life today, and tomorrow?" My situation is going to change very dramatically because of an impending divorce or because of a death in the family, or because of whatever. How am I going to live now? Everyone has failed me. I thought I could put my trust in this individual, or in that dear one, or in this thing or that thing. And all of these people and things have failed me.

And so maybe for the first time in my life I'm beginning to realize that the only one who will never fail me is God Himself. God will never fail us. He is always there, to strengthen us, to be our friend, to be our father, to be our husband. Yes, yes, to be our husband, to be our wife, to be our child, whatever we think we have to have in our life. God will be there to sustain us. And He will never let us down.

Now it's true that He may allow us to walk in very deep waters. He may have a program for us where we are going to be in a situation that appears exceedingly unhappy for the moment. But through this God is going to strengthen us, if we're truly exercised by it. We're going to learn, as we've never learned before, how we ought to place our confidence and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's a tremendously refreshing experience, even though it is brought about by serious trial, to come to the point in your life when you realize that every hope that you have placed your trust in is gone, and all you can do is abandon yourself altogether on the almighty arms of God, where you just have to relax in Him, trusting in Him that all is going to be well, because there's no other place to turn. Any place you go, you know that you're going to be let down, you know you're going to be betrayed. But you can trust in God.

That's a marvelous moment in your life, when you finally come to that, where we just abandon ourselves to Christ: "Oh Father, have mercy. I have no strength. I don't know what to do. I don't know where to go. I know from your promises that you'll never leave me nor forsake me. I know from your promises that

You're with me through this deep and grievous water that I am walking in. I know that you've promised that each morning your mercies are renewed. And therefore there is going to be better days in the future. But all I know is that these things are true and trustworthy, even though I don't see how it can be. But because you've said so, that's enough. That's enough. And I'm just going to rest in you. And in the meanwhile, as I rest in you, strengthen me that I might be obedient to you all the way, that in my panic, in my frustration, I will not take your rules into my own hands, but that I will do only what is pleasing to you. Therefore, Father, give me wisdom. Give me wisdom, wisdom that I'll depart as far as possible from evil, that I'll want to do only thy will and thy Word."

And when we can really abandon ourselves to our Christ in this way, then the pain, then the anguish, then the tribulation, the affliction, the terrible wrong that has been done to us, is all worth it all, because it has brought us to the point where we are beginning to sense, more than we've ever sensed before, the marvel of having a Savior, a Savior who loved us so much that He left Heaven and took on our sinful nature. He became sin for us and allowed Himself to be maligned and spit upon and reviled. And then He allowed God to pour out His wrath on Him in order that I might be saved. Oh, what a wonderful Savior! And just think, I can walk moment by moment in Him.

"And oh, Father, even right now, when I become anxious, when this anxiety hits me again, oh, how can I face tomorrow? Forgive me, forgive me, forgive me. Tomorrow is a new day. You've told me in your Word, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' And oh, Father, make that the rule of my life. I know that thou hast cared for me today. Today thou hast been with me. And I praise thee and thank thee that today I still have my children. I still can know that I am saved. I still can know that I can call upon thee. How marvelous a Savior thou really art! And I thank thee for today. I thank thee for the past ten minutes, for the past hour. And oh, Father, give me the grace that an hour from now I'll thank thee for the hour that just past. And Father, help me to live this way."

Can you begin to see the posture of the believer in the world? It is really under the stress of tribulation and affliction that the grace of God can really begin to shine in our lives. Yes, yes, yes, that is so! When all is going well, that isn't when the Christian shines, showing the fragrance of the Holy Spirit. That isn't where the fruit of the Spirit is really going to show. Even the unsaved man can be a very fine person when all is going well.

But it's when tribulation comes, when the stress begins to grow, when things look so black, and our friends say, "Why don't you do this?" and "Why don't you do that?" And the natural impulse of our heart is to lash out in anger and frustration. That is the point where the victory of the cross can shine with a splendor that can be found nowhere in the world, except in the life of the believer as we patiently endure, as we are drawn in a stronger and stronger faith, to the foot of the cross, as we abandon ourselves more and more definitely into the almighty, everlasting arms of our Heavenly Father.

Suffering for Christ (340E)

CALLER: I have a question about the believers suffering. When Paul says that it was given unto us not only to share in Christ's blessings, but also in His sufferings, are those sufferings only the things that come from unbelievers that are shot at us, or are they all sufferings, like diseases and so on?

HC: Actually, when Jesus suffered for our sins, and the question is really,

ultimately, what does the Bible mean when we suffer? We find, for example, in Colossians 1:24, "whereof I Paul am made a minister, who now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body's sake, which is the church."

Now what does God mean when He talks about us suffering? When we look at Christ, there were two aspects of His suffering. The most serious aspect of course was the suffering of the cross, the atonement, when He paid for our sins. Now in that aspect of His suffering, we as born again believers do not contribute one iota, because that was uniquely Christ's. That was altogether His payment for our sins.

But Jesus also was called and mandated by God to be a preacher of the Gospel. He was to proclaim the Gospel. We read this in the last couple of verses of Luke 4. Christ, however, only preached for three and a half years. Of course when He did preach, He suffered. He was maligned, He was vilified, He was slandered, He was abused. Remember in His own home town, Nazareth, they wanted to throw Him off the cliff. They were after Him all the time, and they were always saying nasty things about Him. He must have ensured great suffering, because He was the perfect preacher. He was Eternal God Himself. There was no sin in Him. There wasn't the slightest reason why anybody should want to reproach Him. And yet this happened all the time. And finally He was beaten, and He was spit upon, and so on.

Well now, Christ went to Heaven. But we are His body, and we are now given the command to be witnesses, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel." We, the body of Christ, complete what Christ began to do, that is, to preach the Gospel.

Now even as Christ suffered as He brought the Gospel, we His body complete His sufferings. That is, we continue to suffer as we bring the Gospel. Now we suffer sometimes by overt persecution. Believers have been thrown to the lions. They've been burned at the stake. They've been beheaded, and so on. Sometimes the suffering is much more subtle. Maybe it's just that we're slandered, and people make false accusations against us. They call us names. They call us false prophets, or they talk amongst themselves. Oh, what a heretic he is. All kinds of suffering can come.

The apostle Paul is a good illustration of a man who suffered as he brought the Gospel. He was beaten a number of times. He was stoned and left for dead. He suffered very grievously as he brought the Gospel. And this is what we can expect when we bring the Gospel.

In Luke 6 God says in verse 26: "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you. For so did their fathers to the false prophets." If we're truly bringing the Gospel, the whole counsel of God, you can depend upon it that there will be plenty of people who will hate you with a fervor, because they don't want to hear the whole counsel of God. As long as you compromise, as long as you try to be all things to all men, and try to make the Gospel sound very gracious and wonderful and kind, and all of this, yes, yes, you're going to be a friend of everyone. But the minute you begin to talk about hell and damnation, to talk about the wrath of God, to talk about the sins that are everywhere, and of course also presenting the offer of salvation, the fact that in Christ is the only answer, if you bring the whole counsel of God, you're going to find great antagonism. You're bound to suffer.

Thank you so much for calling and sharing. Good night.

Sorrow, Unhappiness & Being Reviled (532A)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum.

CALLER: I have a problem in my Christian life, and I was wondering if you could help me. I've just finished rereading the Book of Ephesians, and it left me with a lot of doubts about my Christianity. And I was wondering if you could help me, please. Why do some Christians have more sorrows and problems in their lives than other Christians? Is it because they're bad, or they're being punished? Or is it just what God has in store for them?

HC: The first question is, why do some Christians have more sorrows and unhappiness in life than others? One of the clue phrases that we find is in Hebrews 12. There God indicates in verse 5, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons." And then He goes on to indicate that if we are not chastened, then we're not His sons.

So the fact that we have sorrows or that we feel the chastening of the Lord can be a real evidence of the love of God. God knows what the capacity of our faith can be, and He is going to strengthen that faith by bringing these chastenings into our lives.

CALLER: Is it sin when you go back to God and not really complain, but you constantly have to keep asking Him for help, and you fall down a lot? Is that sin?

HC: The question is, is it sin if we have to go back to God repeatedly for help, for victory over sin? Is that the idea?

CALLER: If you get hurt, if your feelings are hurt, or you just keep failing.

HC: If we keep failing. No, this is not sin. It is where we have to go for our strength. Remember that we are sheep and Christ is the Shepherd. And if you've ever studied sheep, you'll find that they're the most helpless creatures in the world. They're just completely helpless. They're dumb, and their only trust is in the shepherd. And they have no strength in themselves. They are easily beset upon by wolves or by wild animals. And the shepherd has to have constant care over them.

Well, God likens us to sheep, and He is the Shepherd. And so don't think for a moment that it is wrong to go repeatedly to God for help. Now the Bible teaches that we are to pray without ceasing. The Bible says in Hebrews 4 to come boldly to the throne of grace, to receive help in time of need.

However, if we find that it is a sin problem in our life, let's say our feelings are hurt very easily. We may have to think about this and pray for wisdom. We may discover that our feelings are hurt easily because we have a pride problem, and our pride has been hurt. And so we have to start praying more intelligently, "Oh Lord, give me victory over my pride. Help me to walk more humbly so that my feelings won't be hurt when somebody cuts me down." We have to read 1 Peter 2 again, where it says that when Christ was reviled He reviled not again, but trusted Him who judges justly. If people cut us down, if people say bad things about us, we can say, "Well, all right. So they've said these things. There might be an element of truth. It'll help me to reexamine my life, and whatever is false in it. God will take care of them. I only have to answer to God.

And so it may be that we can get strength as we look at again at the scriptures on these questions.

CALLER: How are we expected to treat a person that does this to us?

HC: How are we expected to treat those who cut us down and try to make life miserable for us? The Bible says we are to love our enemies. The Bible says we are to bless those who despitely use us. We are to pray for them who curse us. And the Biblical rule for the mind of the believer I think is stated as well as anywhere in the Bible in Philippians 4:8. It's just a beautiful verse that every believer ought to keep in the forefront of his thinking: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things."

Now someone cuts you down. Now that's a testing program of God. God knows all about it. You're His child. He knows this. And He's allowed this to happen. Now remember that we're in a testing program. We're in our wilderness sojourn, coming out of Egypt, as it were, into the land of Canaan. And they were tested. Are we really going to stand for Christ, or are we going to fall all the time? If we are a child of God, then we're going to increasingly find our confidence in Christ. And when these testing programs come, we're going to say, "Well, all right. God is testing me. And how am I to react?" Just like the question you're raising. Well, I'll pray for this person, and I'll realize, well, okay. He has to answer to God for that I don't know why he did it, but I want to make sure that there's no truth in what he or she is saying. And if there is truth, I'll correct that. But I'm going to still try to be a friend. I'm not going to react. I'm not going to take the bait.

You know, one of the neatest ways that wickedness operates, or that Satan operates, is to try to get our dander up. You see this in family situations, between husbands and wives or between brothers and sisters, very very frequently. One will make a cutting remark to the other, and the other will take the bait just so neatly, and they'll retort back with another one. And now the first one, who really wanted to start some kind of a thing, will really feel justified in continuing, because after all, look at the way the other one lashed back. And so then you've got a battle going. It'll go from bad to worse.

But the Biblical rule is, don't react. The Bible says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." When somebody cuts you, when somebody lashes out at you, bite your tongue. Ask the Lord for grace. Say nothing. And pray for that person. And pray for yourself that you will have patience.

CALLER: But what if you have to stay in the same room, or engage in conversation, or be with this person? That's what confuses me and defeats me every time. I don't know what to say. I pray.

HC: Don't say anything, if you don't know what to say.

CALLER: That's what I have been doing, but it leaves me so uncomfortable and so . . .

HC: You feel uncomfortable because you don't feel right toward that person. You feel uncomfortable because there is anger in your heart, there's resentment, there's bitterness, and you'd like to express it, and yet you realize that you should not express it.

Now what you have to do is pray the Lord, "Oh Lord, I'm going to be in this room with this person, and this person (whoever it may be) is going to look for opportunity to cut me down." And anticipate this. Really gird yourself. Arm yourself that you'll be ready for this. And so you pray, "Oh Lord, if she cuts me down the next time, give me the grace not to think bitterly toward her. Give me the grace to pray and desire the very best for her. Give me the grace that I will not

feel personally threatened by this." And arm yourself with this.

And then look for when the bait is going to be thrown at you. And so when she makes a cutting remark, you're anticipating it. You can say, "Yes, she did it. I've already prayed for victory, and I'm not going to take the bait. I'm just not going to take the bait. I'm just going to smile and go on. And if I find a bitter thought in my mind, I'm going to be praying. Oh Lord, have mercy on me. I don't want to think this way. Oh Lord, I only want the very best for my friend. And oh Lord, may the victory of the cross be seen in my life right now. Just keep praying, you see, and pray for that mind of Philippians 4:8. Pray for the mind of Christ at that point.

CALLER: What if you break and you cry? I know for a woman this is, I guess, a cop-out. What if that happens?

HC: Well, if you break and cry, there's nothing sinful in it of itself. Crying of course is an outlet. It is a way of getting rid of some bottled-up feelings. It would be far better to break and cry than it would be to sit there with bitterness.

But the fact is, you want to gain the confidence, first of all, you must make sure in your own life that you are living to God's glory, that you are doing God's will and that ultimately you answer to Him. And then if someone comes against you and calls you names or cuts you down, you know that you're answering to God, and ultimately you don't have to answer to this person. And so you are able to have a confidence, a serenity, where otherwise it might not be.

For example, and I know this is not nearly as intense as when you live with a person who might be at you all the time, but on this program, the Open Forum, very frequently I'll get a caller who will really let me have it, so to speak. I've been called a false prophet, and I've been called names, and so on, on this program. Now I can honestly say that normally this never gets to me. It never troubles me at all.

Why doesn't it trouble me? Because I'm such a big, magnanimous kind of a person, with broad shoulders and so on? No, no, that isn't the reason. I'm an ordinary human being. But because I am determined that I am trying to do God's will, and I'm just trying to be faithful, and if a caller is really coming at me like gang-busters, if there's something that he's saying which is true, well fine, I'm grateful that he has told me something that I have to correct in my life. I'm grateful for that. But beyond that, it doesn't trouble me at all. I feel that they're really arguing with themselves. They're really arguing with God and with His Word. They're not really arguing with me.

And so if you know in your life that you are living Christ's way, and then your loved one, whoever it is, is lashing out at you, just rest in the confidence. "I know that I want to live to God's glory, and I can have love for this person." And just let prayer be going on in your mind while this is happening. And God will give you victory over this. God will give you victory.

Now of course if you are troubled by a prior sin of pride, and pride is very close in all of us. I don't know of any exceptions. The nature of mankind is to be proud. And you feel cut down, you feel squashed down, you feel like you are nothing in this person's sight because of the way they are lashing out at you. Well, yes. Then it's going to be very difficult. But then you have to come to terms with that sin, and you have to start out as you arm yourself for the confrontation that you know will come because of this loved one. You have to arm yourself by first praying, "Oh Lord, you know there's pride in my life. And oh Lord, I know that I'm nothing outside of Christ. I have nothing to be proud of. And except by Thy grace I could not be a child of

Thine. And therefore, help me to walk very humbly. And when my loved one lets me have it, let me not react because of pride in my life, because I feel like I am being reduced to nothing, because I started out as nothing. And whatever I am is of Christ. And therefore, if he or she wants to lambaste you, oh God, you know how to handle that. But I know that I don't have anything to defend in my life."

CALLER: I understand that, but I guess what really hurts me the most about myself is that I think I understand that this person is jealous in some ways, and this is why this is going on.

HC: Well, that may be. Anybody who is sinning, and to revile or to lash out the way we're speaking is sin, and that also has its root in other sin. Sin breeds sin. That is a fact of life. Wherever you find sin, it will breed additional sin. It will magnify into even more destructive sin.

And sin is everywhere. Sin is all around us. But we can condition ourselves, that is, by God's grace we can be conditioned, we can be insulated so that sin in the lives of others does not necessarily have to produce sin in our life.

And if you are resting in Christ, and if you've been praying for the mind of Christ, and if you will memorize Philippians 4:8 and pray God continuously that this may be the kind of mind that you want, then you will have the defenses up, and the insulation there, so that when this person, in her jealousy or whatever it may be, cuts you down, it will not trouble you. And you can rise above the circumstances, you see. And you can say, "Well, poor soul. I'll pray for you. I understand. You've got other problems in your life, but I'll pray for you." And you won't take it personally even though she wants to make it very personal.

CALLER: I also prayed that this problem would just be resolved, and the hurt just completely taken away, and God has not done that. And then lately He's given me insight that it is from Him.

HC: You see, we always pray, we always want to pray, "Oh Lord, take the problem away." That of course is our solution to it. We can't think of a finer solution, when we are undergoing a testing program of some kind, but that God would take it away. But that is normally not God's program. God does not promise that He'll take the problem away. He will use that problem as a testing program to strengthen our faith, or to show us that we're not saved, so that we can get busy and cry out to God for mercy so that salvation might come.

If we go through a testing program and we find that we react exactly like the world does, and live like the world, and lash out like the world, continue like the world, and become bitter toward God because of it, which does happen, then that will be evidence that we aren't a child of God at all.

But if we are a child of God, the same testing program will be used of God to strengthen us. Now I talked about Philippians 4:8. Now let's look at Philippians 4:6: "Don't be anxious about anything." The King James says, "Be careful for nothing." But it really means there, "Don't be anxious about anything." And you're very anxious about this testing program that you're in, this individual who is really giving you a bad time. "But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving" now that's very important. In other words, when you pray don't just focus your eye on this problem, but also spend a lot of time thanking the Lord that you can go to Him and that He will strengthen you, and you do have His Word as a guide, and that He has saved you, and that He has helped you endure to this moment, and so on and so on. There are thousands of things you can be thankful for. And

that ought to also be a real part of your supplication to the Lord. A part of that also ought to be thanksgiving.

And then it says, "But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto the Lord." Now what will God do in response to this kind of praying? He'll take the problem away. Not so. He doesn't say that. Verse 7: "And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." In other words, God will give you the peace, the strength, the serenity, the confidence, that you can go through this testing program and not fall apart under it, or respond sinfully to it. That is the promise that God gives to you. And then your life will truly be showing the victory of the cross.

CALLER: And then possibly be able to point to salvation?

HC: You see, the marvelous thing is that as we react to these testing situations in God's way, then our lives are the evidence of Christ in us. Our lives become living epistles of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then our lives begin to have an impact upon the one who is harassing us, or who is giving us the business.

You see, if you react like the world does, if you lash back when she lashes out at you, then there is no testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ in your life, and you haven't witnessed at all by that kind of an action. The fact is, you claim to be a Christian with your mouth, and yet in your actions you're showing that maybe you're not a Christian. And so it makes it very confusing to an unsaved loved one, a husband, or whoever it might be who is giving you the difficult time.

But on the other hand, as you are able to find your faith strengthened by Philippians 4:6-8, and you are to react the way God wants you to react, then your life will become the fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it will become a living witness. And you have a promise, if this is a husband, for example, in 1 Peter 3, that by your submission and by your quiet and peaceful spirit God can use this in order to save your husband.

CALLER: In Ephesians 4:31 it says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice." Does He mean that if you feel that someone sins against you, that you must completely put this out of your mind?

HC: Yes. Remember what Philippians 4:8 teaches? If we have a root of bitterness in our mind, that first of all is terribly demoralizing. Oh, it's pleasant. Oh, yes, there is a certain miserable happiness in thinking bitterly toward someone. Sin does have a certain joy about it. It's the perverse nature of our lives, as we relate to sin, that causes this. We like to chew over again and again in our minds these bitter ideas toward this person, recounting what they said and how wrong they were, and so on. But it is terribly demoralizing, and it will lead to additional sin on our part. It is altogether contrary to the Word of God. It is never the mind of Christ.

And so the moment you detect bitterness in your mind, cry out to God for mercy, "Oh God, have mercy on me. I don't want to think this way. This is awful, what I am doing. How can I live this way?" The more you think bitterly, the more you are showing to this other person, because you will telegraph to him, that you are thinking this way. You can't avoid it. Our actions and what we say is going to ultimately be a reflection of what's going on in our minds. And then he will have won the victory. He will know that he's got you going. And so he will be encouraged that, after all, if you are able to think bitterly toward him, then there's all the more reason why he ought to lash out at you. And so it's a vicious circle, that just goes down, down, down.

But on the other hand, you cut it short. Now you can't have any self-pity. Self-pity is very sinful. And so you feel very justified in feeling bitter. But remember, when Jesus was lashed out at, remember now, He did not any sin. There was absolutely no basis for anyone to be bitter toward Him. And yet He never reviled in return. And He's our example. And you haven't been dealt with one iota as badly as Jesus was dealt with.

And so when you feel this bitterness in your soul, begin to pray, "Oh Lord, stop this in my life. Give me a hatred for this kind of a life." And you repent, by beginning to think nice thoughts about this person. And there's something nice you can think about him. He's not all bad, totally bad. And you concentrate on those nice things. And then five minutes later, you're going to start thinking bitter thoughts again, and again you pray, "Oh Lord, have mercy on me. I don't want to think this way." Start thinking nice thoughts. And then ten minutes later, the bitterness will return, "Oh Lord, have mercy on me. I don't want to think this way." And give yourself no quarter. Give yourself no rest on this. I've got to stop this bitter thinking.

And in your prayer, make this a heavy part of your prayer life, "Oh Lord, I have this thing of bitterness in my life, and oh Lord, I don't want it anymore. Take it out of my life, and help me to repent, and help me to have the mind of Christ, so that I'll think like Philippians 4:8." That is the victory of the cross in your life, you see.

CALLER: Yes, I do see now. Thank you so much.

HC: Well, I hope this helps a little bit. Thank you for calling.

How Can One Rejoice While Suffering? (586B)

HC: Good evening. Welcome to Open Forum

CALLER: I have a question about suffering. What I would like to know is, how can you... It's very hard for me to understand the scripture where it says that we are supposed to count it joy, that no matter what we go through, we can still be excited and rejoice, because we have a reward, or whatever. Could you explain that to me?

HC: Our caller is saying that we are to count it joy when we suffer and we're to be all excited about this. Well, I don't know where that is in the Bible. If I suffer, I may weep and I may be very troubled in my heart and be very sorrowful. The only joy that we have (and it is a marvelous joy) is the knowledge that I'm a child of God, and that no matter what happens to me I'm always in His hand. He is the One who cares for me, and all things that happen to me will work out together for good, because I am called of God, I do belong to Him.

But as suffering comes upon me, it of course is going to bring sorrow into my life. Even as I share the Gospel (and the Bible itself talks about this), and there are those who refuse to hear the Gospel (the Bible speaks about sowing with weeping), there's no joy when you share the Gospel and people don't want to turn to the Gospel. They go their own way. They want to have their own will. And there's no joy in hearing this. The only real joy that comes when we share the Gospel is when we come to one or another and they say, "Oh, yes. That's what I want to hear. I want to be obedient to the Word of God." And so there's lots of sorrow in life.

CALLER: Yes, but it says in the Bible to rejoice and be exceedingly glad when you are persecuted and all manner of evil is spoken against you.

HC: Yes. You are referring now to Matthew 5. Let's look at that. In verse 10: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake. For

theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in Heaven. For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Now you see, our joy is in the knowledge that we are children of God, that we are saved. And while this suffering that we will undergo as we are persecuted will be grievous for the moment, yet at the same time, because we know that we're a child of God, we know that there's an end to this and our hope and our security is in Heaven. And upon death we will leave this body and go to be with Christ in Heaven. And we know that Christ will never leave us nor forsake us.

And for that reason we are joyous. And of course there is another aspect, and that is that we can joy in the sense that we know that Christ suffered as He brought the Gospel, and we have the joy of walking in His shoes, as we suffer as we bring the Gospel. And in that sense there is a joy. But it is not a flippant, shallow, superficial joy of some kind, it is a deep-rooted joy that is rooted in Christ Himself, because it is tied altogether to the fact that we've become a child of God.

CALLER: Okay. You lost me somewhere. What I'm asking you is, how can you rejoice when all of these... If you listen to the radio and listen to a lot of the gospel programs, they say that the Bible says rejoice, even though you're suffering, you might have cancer, but rejoice anyway. I watch a lot of saints, and a lot of saints do not rejoice while they're going through it. So what I'm asking is, how can you rejoice while you are in it?

HC: First of all, the question here of Matthew 5 is when you are being persecuted, when you are standing for Christ and as a result of standing for Christ men come against you and speak evilly of you, and they persecute you, they reproach you, they revile you, they slander you. That is what's in view here in Matthew 5, that we rejoice that we are children of God and therefore we are suffering as Christ has suffered. Now again, as I said, this is not a superficial joy. It's way down deep in our hearts.

However, when we are suffering because of illness, when we are suffering because our loved ones are not being saved, there's an immense amount of suffering in the world, you know, all around us, we're not going to rejoice in this. We're going to be sad, we're going to be sorrowful. Anyone who says we're to rejoice in every situation, unless they mean that it's just in the sense that we know that through this Christ is still our Savior and He'll never leave us nor forsake us, in that sense we would have joy, but insofar as rejoicing, "Oh, goody! I have cancer," "Oh, goody, I brought the Gospel to somebody and I love them with all my heart and they rejected it. They don't want anything to do with it, and I'm so happy," that's sheer nonsense, of course. There's no happiness in this at all. There is deep sorrow in this.

CALLER: They said it says in the Bible, "I will praise God continually." In Hebrews it says, "Let us therefore offer the praise to God, through sacrifice, by giving thanks to His Name." And David said, "I will praise the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

HC: Yes, but you see, praising God and just experiencing a lot of happiness are two different things, that is, happiness as the world looks at it. We praise God that as we are undergoing illness, or as we share the Gospel and it's not being listened to, or whatever, we praise God that He is on the throne, that He does all things well, and He knows the end from the beginning, and we're in His hand. And He has provided this wonderful

salvation. And there are lots of other things that we can praise Him for. And in that sense we have joy.

But there are other aspects where there is deep sorrow.

CALLER: Now when David said, "I will praise God continually," that means that God wants us to praise Him with a heart that is full of praise. In other words, when God wants us to praise Him, He doesn't want us to just say, "Well, thank you, God, for another day." He wants us to praise Him with everything that we have. And what I'm saying is, if David said, "I will praise Him continually," and God wants us to praise Him with everything we have, there ought to be some joy in it. And if there is to be some joy in praising God continually, then how can you praise Him through the suffering? Do you see what I mean?

HC: You see, a lot of people think that praising God is simply saying, "Halleluia! Halleluia!" all the time, or "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!" all the time, and walking around with that great big smile on their lips. "Praise God!" That isn't really praising God. That could be nothing but lip service. That could be nothing but going through an act.

To really praise God means that we're going to live obedient before Him. It means that we have a real trust in Him. That's really to praise Him, where we are honoring Him as our Lord and our God, and we know that He is always in control and we've abandoned ourselves to Him. And so in the suffering that we're undergoing, we praise Him not with a lot of language that's flowing from our lips, but we praise Him because in our heart there is a trust in Him that He will make this come out well. And even through our tears and through the agony that we may be going through, we know, "Oh Lord, we're in Thy hand and all is under control, because You will never leave me nor forsake me." And that is a genuine praise of God.

Thank you so much for calling.

APPENDIX 1 – WHAT IS THE TRUE GOSPEL?

By Harold Camping

What is the True Gospel? There is no question that is of greater importance facing the world today. This is so because only the True Gospel will provide the answer that can save us from spending eternity under the wrath of God. Therefore, as we seek to identify the True Gospel, we will endeavor to discover answers to the following questions: What is the authority that structures and determines the True Gospel? What is the message of the True Gospel? What is the mandate of the True Gospel?

We hear sermons of various kinds; we read the Bible here and there; we generally hear a lot of good things about the Gospel. We hear about how we are to walk as Christians; we see rules in the Bible that God has given to us for the good of mankind. But, we begin to wonder, what is the essential structure of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? Can we strip away the peripherals and get right down to the very substance, the inner core of the Gospel?

The Authority Determines the True Gospel

In order to know what the True Gospel actually is, we must first of all determine the authority that structures and determines what it is. This is necessary because the nature of the True Gospel is defined and established by its divine authority. In fact, the nature of every

religion, gospel, and ideological system is defined and established by its recognized authority.

A Muslim, for example, may wish to know how to live as a good Muslim. So he carefully consults the Koran, a book in which Muslims believe God has spoken. The Koran, therefore, is the written authority that establishes the Islamic gospel, that is, the Muslim religion. An orthodox Jew has a different authority. It includes what we call our Old Testament, along with the writing of the church fathers that are considered to be divinely inspired. That is the authority that establishes the nature and character of the Jewish religion. On the other hand, a Mormon has as his divine authority the Bible, plus the Book of Mormon, which is believed to be divinely inspired. Because the Book of Mormon came later than the Bible, it has become a shadow that lies over the Bible. That is, someone who follows the Mormon gospel examines everything he reads in the Bible in the light of what is found in the Book of Mormon.

Similarly, the Roman Catholics follow still another gospel. The authority that structures and determines their gospel begins with the Bible. But the Apocrypha books are also a part of that authority, as are the visions of Joan of Arc, the visions of Fatima, and the infallible utterances of the Pope. All of these are looked upon as divine, and together they make up the authority that establishes the character of the Roman Catholic gospel.

Likewise, the charismatic gospel has its authority. It believes that the Bible is the Word of God, but it also believes in divine revelation through visions, voices, or tongues, which expands their authority beyond the Bible. Therefore, it has as its authority the Bible, plus the messages presumably received from God through dreams, visions, and tongues. This widened authority structures and determines the character of the charismatic gospel.

Bear in mind that every time we have a different authority, we also have a different kind of gospel. In other words, every gospel is structured and determined by its authority. So when the authorities differ, the gospels themselves differ. One definition sometimes offered to describe the True Gospel is set forth in 1 John 4:2: **"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God."** There we read that if we confess that Christ has come in the flesh, then we are of God. Yet as we read in Luke 4:33-34 **"And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God"** the demons also admit that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; and they are still under God's wrath. So that particular definition standing alone may not be adequate in every case. We have to know more about what defines and establishes the Gospel. We must, therefore, discover the divine authority that structures and determines the character and nature of the True Gospel.

The Bible indicates that it alone and in its entirety is the authority that establishes the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Revelation 22:18-19 says it best.

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

By that statement God established the parameters of the True Gospel. It is circumscribed by the **Bible alone**. The Bible, therefore, is the True divine authority. It is the only complete authority that established the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because it is the divine authority, because it is from God, it is to be entirely authoritative in our lives. We must eagerly read it; we must eagerly study it with a view to being obedient to it. And if we discover in our lives any kind of practice, or any kind of doctrine that is contrary to the Word of God, then as children of God, there will be within us an earnest desire to change that practice or that doctrine so that we will become more faithful to the Word of God.

If we follow an authority that is narrower or wider than the Bible alone and in its entirety, we are not following the Gospel of the Bible. Regardless of how holy it may appear to be, such a gospel will not lead to salvation.

The Central Message of the True Gospel

But now that we know that the Bible is the authority that establishes the True Gospel, we wonder what the central message of the True Gospel is. We could say that the Gospel is God's love letter to mankind whereby we can become righteous, know the love of God, come into the more abundant life, or learn to live to God's glory. We can think of a lot of verses in the Bible that describe and perhaps even crystallize the essential nature of the Gospel.

We can find summed up in John 3:16 the core meaning of the Gospel. This verse strips away everything else and gets right down to the essential message. There we read: **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."**

Ordinarily teachers focus on the first part of the verse: **"For God so loved the world..."** And that is a glorious phrase that introduces us to the amazing truth that God in His magnificent love has provided salvation to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the love of God and the salvation He has so generously provided cannot be fully understood unless we also understand the meaning of the word "perish" found later in the verse.

When we search the Scriptures, we find that the word "perish," as it is used in John 3:16, does not mean "annihilation," or ceasing to exist. In the Bible the word "perish" has another definition. The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death in Romans 6:23 **"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."** The living death that God has in view is to exist throughout eternity in hell. That is the predicament of rebellious mankind. That is what it means to perish.

The terrible problem of mankind is that we are sinners. Remember Romans 3:10-11: **"There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."** The heart of man by nature is desperately wicked, as we read in Jeremiah 17:9.

Because we sin - even a single sin - we will perish. Because we have been created in His image, God holds each one of us completely accountable to Himself for the conduct of our lives. God has appointed a day at the end of the world when we are to be judged. The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, **"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."** Because all of us are sinners without the Gospel, we are all on our way to hell.

This terrible truth cannot be seen with our physical eyes because we cannot look into the future. But what we see with our physical eyes is not the

whole story. In fact, it is a very shallow and incidental part of the whole story. For example, we may have had a friend who died. We have seen him as a man who lived out his life well regarded by his fellow man. But then he died. He was eulogized at his funeral as one of the greatest, and then we all went about our business and forgot about Brother Jones. But if Brother Jones died without the Gospel, that is, without being saved, the next thing he will be aware of is that he is standing before the Judgment Throne of God, where he must answer for every sin he ever committed; and these will be multitudinous. Any one of these sins could condemn him to eternal damnation. There is no escape; there is no reprieve, no parole. There is no way out.

Every day approximately 200,000 people die all over this earth. When we realize that most of these 200,000 people die unsaved and that the next conscious thing they will know is that they are standing before the Judgment Throne of God, subject to eternal damnation, then we become aware of a horror story of magnificent proportions.

The horrors of man's inhumanity to man, the horrors of famine, of war, or of whatever the trauma, result only in physical death. But physical death in itself is not the horror story. The horror story is that after death there is the judgment. God's perfect justice demands eternal damnation as payment for sins. Jesus says things like

"...there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:42); and "...their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44); and He speaks of eternal damnation in Matthew 25:46 "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." The only reason why we do not often read those passages is because they are so frightening. We had better be frightened if we are not saved, because hell is real.

Wonderfully, the truth that hell is waiting for the human race is not the whole story. If God had written the Bible simply to tell us that we are going to hell, we could still praise God that at least He warned us. But that knowledge would not do us much good, because we are all sinners. Because of our sins, we would still end up in hell. But woven into the fabric of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, like a golden thread running through the entire Bible, is the message of hope. It is the message that we can know the love of God by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. That is the other side of the Gospel coin, the central part of the Gospel presentation: **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16).

Now why is it that if we believe in Him we will not go to hell? The Bible tells us that it is because Christ became sin for us! We read in 2 Corinthians 5:21 **"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."** Or, as Isaiah 53:6 puts it, **"the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"** (that is, all who will hang their lives on Him).

That is the central message of the Gospel. There is no other news that can compare to this. It begins with the terrible truth that mankind is sinful and heading for hell. But additionally it is the wonderful news that all of us who cry out to the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy and hang our lives on Him can know freedom from hell because He became sin for us. Laden with our sins, as our substitute, He stood before the Judgment Throne of God when He stood before Pontius Pilate. He was found guilty for our sins, and God poured out His condemnation upon Him to the degree that it was the equivalent of every one of us who would believe on Him spending an eternity in hell. In this way He paid

for all of our sins. He satisfied God's perfect justice that demands eternal damnation as punishment for sin. Since our sins have been paid for, hell no longer threatens us. We are no longer under the law that decrees that we are to go to hell. We are now under grace. By God's grace we have become children of God. We have left the dominion of Satan (which we were in before we were saved), and we have become citizens of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What Does Mankind Want from the Gospel?

If someone does not want to face the central message of the Bible because he does not want to talk about hell, then what is he going to do with the Gospel? Unfortunately, we find that theologians begin to change the message of the Gospel to satisfy their own desires. They begin to make the Gospel political. They say, for example, "Christianity has to do with being free from political oppression." Or, they begin to teach an economic gospel by saying that Christianity has to do with having enough food to eat and having economic security. Or, they make it a physical well-being gospel by saying that the goal of the gospel is good health and happy lives here on this earth.

These three aspirations - political freedom, economic security, and good health - are sought by all mankind in one way or another. But the fact is that none of these aspirations has any direct relationship to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, to the true, spiritual Gospel. Let us see why this is so.

The True Gospel is unconcerned with the kind of rulers that a nation has. It is unconcerned with the political system under which a people lives. It does declare, however, that it is God who puts up and puts down rulers. It does warn that the citizens of any country are expected to be obedient in all things to those who rule over them. But it does not indicate that one kind of government is to be obeyed more than another.

The Bible is not concerned about the economic situation of those who hear the Gospel. In the day that Jesus ministered, and as the disciples went out, did man's inhumanity to man exist? Indeed, it did. There were slaves who were piteously beaten and mistreated. Was there economic uncertainty? Indeed, there was. It was a day when there were no mercy ships. Certainly there were people dying of starvation. Were there people who desperately needed a healing who did not receive it? Indeed, there were.

Some people misunderstood Jesus' mission when He healed the sick. Christ did not come with a gospel that promises good health. He simply did those miracles of healing as proofs that He was God and in order to give us historical parables through which we can see the spiritual nature of the Gospel. They were earthly stories with a heavenly meaning. Once Christ went to the cross and the apostles died, we do not find any further statements in the Bible regarding physical healing. The True Gospel is concerned with spiritual healing: "**Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray...**" (1 Peter 2:24-25). The True Gospel has to do with the healing of our sin-sick souls. The message of the Gospel is that mankind is on its way to hell, but that anyone can know God's love by trusting in Christ as Savior.

When we become saved, we are transferred out of the dominion of Satan, which encompasses all the unsaved people of the world, wherever they are found, in whatever political system they are found. We are translated into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:13), which is a spiritual

nation made up of those who are born-again believers, regardless of political ideology, or cultural differences, or whatever. Salvation has nothing to do with political nations.

The True Gospel looks far beyond political activity, economic desires, and desires for good health. When we have the True Gospel, whether we live in Russia, China, Germany, South America, the United States, or any other country, there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. It is spiritual unity. It is a faith wherein we understand that our sins are washed away. Spiritually we have become right with God. Spiritually we know that we are not sentenced to hell and that we have eternal life. Spiritually we have become one body, even though politically or economically or culturally we have no relationship at all to each other.

We must not fall into the snare that many fall into. In the Old Testament they read about all the gold and the silver of Solomon, and they read about the riches of Abraham, as well as many other statements about great physical prosperity. They conclude, "You see, that is what happens when we become saved. We are to have similar physical expectations when we become saved." But they fail to realize that God has set up types and figures in the Bible. Old Testament Israel was part of an earthly story, an historical picture pointing to the spiritual meaning of what the New Testament church was to be, that is, what it means to be a child of God. The physical prosperity of Old Testament Israel was an earthly story pointing to the heavenly meaning that believers in Christ become spiritually prosperous, copiously feeding their souls on the Bread of Life, which is Jesus Himself. The wine vats that were filled to overflowing in the Old Testament were a dramatic earthly story pointing to the plenteous flowing of the blood of Christ, for the complete payment for all of our sins. Whatever historical freedoms ancient Israel had represented the fact that in Christ we are free from the bondage to sin and Satan.

The problem is, however, that our saintained minds prefer to go to these historical antecedents (which are meant by God to be just figures and types) and make them the very essence of the Gospel. That caters to our sensual nature. That caters to what all men want: political freedom, economic freedom, and good health. But that is not the Gospel! If we try to make the Gospel fit the physical characteristics of the Old Testament figures, then we must also offer the sacrifices that were to be offered by the Old Testament believers. In other words, we are effectively denying the fact that Christ has come!

In the Bible we do not find any references teaching political freedom, economic security, or good health. The whole essence of the Gospel is spiritual freedom in Christ. Freedom from what? It is freedom from the wrath of God! It has nothing to do with the politics of this world! Simply stated, we have been translated out of the dominion of Satan. The law no longer can send us to hell. We are free in Christ. We have eternal life. That is the nature of the Gospel. That is the only message that we are to proclaim.

We read in John 5:24 that those who believe on Him do not come into judgment but have passed from death unto life. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." In our love for others, that is the good we should earnestly desire for them. That is the message God has mandated us to faithfully bring to the whole world.

The Mandate of the Gospel

Now we have come to the third point that needs to be examined. We have already looked at the authority that structures and determines the Gospel, and we have looked at the message of the Gospel. Now we should examine the mandate of the Gospel.

In the most lucid fashion, God has decreed that we are mandated to bring the Gospel message to all the world: "**Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.**" (Mark 16:15). Jesus commanded this; it is not an option. It is not something we can do if it is convenient, or if we feel like it. It is an imperative command of the Bible that we are to go out into the world and preach the Gospel. We are Christ's ambassadors to this sin-sick world - Christ, as it were, making His appeal through us.

The true ambassadors for Christ are the born-again believers. They are the only ones who understand the real nature of the Gospel. They have come face-to-face with the reality of hell, because they have learned to trust the Bible implicitly. They are the ones who have been given the marvelous task (which is a mandate as well as a fantastic privilege) to send the Gospel into the world. There are to be no alibis. We must do it by whatever means the Lord has made available to us.

Let us be very certain that we are bringing the Gospel of the Bible, and not the gospel of Europe or the gospel of the United States, or the gospel of Mexico, or any other perverted gospel. As long as we focus on the basic fundamentals, the True Gospel is absolutely common to every nation. It makes no difference what nation we are in. We all have the exact same spiritual need for the exact same spiritual antidote. We need to be set free from sin through the blood of Christ. Once we are free from sin, knowing that Christ has endured hell for us, then, even if we must live out the rest of our lives in a concentration camp, dying of beatings and starvation, we still have everything. Whether we are to merely exist like a beggar with only the dogs to lick our sores, or whether we live in a palace with all the blessings of this world, makes no difference. If we are saved, we know that we have the greatest good that we could ever have.

The Gospel Only is Needed

In John 13:34 Jesus says, "**A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.**" That establishes the nature of the love we are to have for others. We are to love our fellow man as Christ has loved us.

What was the nature of Christ's love for you and me? Did He come to bring us economic security or political freedom or good health? The answer is no. Absolutely not. In His love for us, He laid down His life. He endured the wrath of God, the equivalent of spending an eternity in hell, in order that we might have eternal life and not go to hell ourselves.

Jesus exhorts, "**A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.**" (John 13:34). If Christ has desired eternal life for me to the extent that He went to the cross and endured the wrath of God that I might be saved, if that desire was the focal point of His love, then that desire must be the focal point of my love for others as well.

Jesus also says, "**Love your neighbor as yourself.**" (Matthew 22:39). How do I love myself? What is the highest good that I could possibly desire for myself? Is it that I might have more physical prosperity? Is that the highest good for me? Not in any sense at all. In fact, it may even tempt me away from serving the Lord the way I ought. Well then, is it to be famous? Is it to have a name? Is it any of the things to which the world

aspires? The answer is no. None of those things are the highest good. When we look at the world, the one thing we should see, the one terrible specter that should grip our souls, is hell grasping out for the lives of the unsaved of the world. Because most people die unsaved, at a rate of almost 200,000 a day, hell is getting its due. That is the truth that we should see. That is the truth that Christ saw when He went to the cross.

In our love for our fellow man, we want to warn them: "Don't you see it? Because of your sins, hell is coming and hell is real. But there is a wonderful way of escape through the Lord Jesus Christ. In my love for you, I want the very best for you. Sure, I could spend some money to help you in many ways. But if you die unsaved, even though your life may have been extended because you were given some antibiotics, or whatever, what difference does it make? You are still going to die, and after death comes the judgment. Can't you see it? If you will only become a believer in Christ, then your physical situation, your political situation, your health situation, is altogether unimportant. You can still have the very highest good. You, too, can have salvation." To desire this for others is true love.

The highest good for me is what I should desire for others. So what is it? The one thing I need to be sure of is that I have been saved. That is, I must be sure that my sins have been paid for, so there is no possibility of going to hell when I die. Can anyone living on the face of the earth possibly think that they are going to escape death? This world has been around for 13,000 years and, with only two exceptions (Enoch and Elijah), every human being that has ever walked the face of the earth has died - everyone. No one has escaped. This is in accordance with the biblical rule that it is appointed unto men once to die and then comes the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). So this means that that is going to happen to me - unless, of course, the Lord comes first. Therefore, if I truly love myself, I am not going to aspire for more of this world's goods. I am not going to aspire to have a little better place in this world. Because, in the measure that I desire those things, I am going away from the path that is the very best for me. My first and all-important concern must be that I am absolutely certain that I am a child of God, that I am saved. Only then will I realize that all these other things are unimportant. It really does not make any difference how many clothes I have, what kind of car I drive, whether I even own a car, or what kind of situation I live in. These things really do not have any kind of lasting value at all.

As a matter of fact, God declares in Romans 12:1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." In the Old Testament the Israelites were commanded to tithe, that is, to give ten percent of all their income. That is the way the priestly offices were supported. But in the New Testament God wants everything. The Old Testament tithe was just an example to us pointing to the fact that God wants everything. God is simply saying, "I want all of you, all of your possessions, all of your money, all of your energy, in order that your task as ambassadors of Christ may be done." That task is to present this precious Gospel of salvation to a world that is headed for hell.

Can we begin to see the truth more clearly? The golden thread that runs through the Bible is the message of salvation. Any time we get off that thread, or focus, we can be sure we no longer have the Gospel of the Bible. We will have a gospel that has been designed in the minds of men, and we are going to get into trouble as we try to bring it to other nations of the world. A gospel that wrongly talks about economics or

politics is going to be resisted, particularly by political authorities who rightly feel their rule is being threatened by political or social gospels.

Obviously, the True Gospel will also be resisted. It is reprehensible to man. Mankind does not like to be told that he is going to hell. No one wants to hear that. It is reprehensible to the mind of natural man to hear that there is nothing he can do to save himself. Such resistance can only be changed in the heart of those who become saved by crying out to God: "Oh, God, have mercy on me, a sinner!" It involves having a child-like trust in Jesus Christ, who walked the face of the earth a couple of thousand years ago. It means my ego must be shattered. It shatters my self-respect. It shatters everything that I am.

But that is the only reason the Gospel should be reprehensible. May it never be that the gospel we present is resisted by the political authorities because we are preaching the culture and politics of a political nation. Such a gospel cannot be the Gospel of the Bible.

When we have become children of God, we have come to know that the highest good in our lives is that we are saved from the wrath of God; hell can no longer clutch at us. We are never going to have to stand before the Judgment Throne of God and answer for our sins. Christ has paid it all. We are covered by Him. We read in John 5:24 that those who believe on Him do not come into judgment, but have passed from death into life: "**Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life**" (John 5:24). And, in our love for others, that is the good we should earnestly desire for them. That is the message God has mandated us to faithfully bring to the whole world.

My first and all-important concern must be that I am absolutely certain that I am a child of God, that I am saved. All other things are unimportant. It really makes no difference how many clothes I have, in what kind of house I live, whether I even have a house to live in, or what kind of situation I live in. These things have no lasting value.

As we live out our lives as believers, faithfully obeying the command to bring the Gospel to the world, the Bible insists that we are to walk very humbly. Our example is the Lord Jesus Christ; we read of Him that He was meek and lowly. So it is that nobody should be ready to be reviled without reviling back again, be ready to take whatever is brought against us patiently, and be ready to give credit to anybody who wants it. Let someone else have the worldly honor. The child of God, who has become a citizen of Christ's Kingdom, is to walk humbly.

But why? Why are we to walk so humbly? Because God has so commanded. Jesus, who came not only as our example, but also as our King, was meek and lowly. He emptied Himself of all His heavenly glory and took on the form of man, sinful, rebellious man. Then He became laden with our sins. Besides that, we walk very humbly because we cannot take any credit for our own salvation. It is nothing we can boast about. We cannot say, "Well, you know, the real story is that God saw me and saw that I was a little bit better than somebody else, and therefore, He decided to save me." No way! As Ephesians 2:1-2 indicates, "**And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:**" We were followers of Satan and the lusts of the flesh like the rest of mankind. It is

only God's mercy, it is only by God's grace that He saved us.

Ephesians 2:7-8 says, "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God." So we live out our Christian lives saying, "Oh, my, how is it possible that I can be a child of God, that I can have eternal life, so that I fear no man? No matter what happens to me, I know that the moment I die, I am going into the heavenly palaces, into glory with the Lord Jesus Christ, and I have got everything going for me. All I want to do is live out my life in service to Him. I really want to sacrifice my life, to lay it down on the altar of sacrifice. I am consumed with passion that others might hear the Gospel so that they, too, can know the wonderful salvation which God has so richly provided."

Don't we have a wonderful Savior? Don't we have a wonderful Gospel, when we see what the Gospel really is? We can just stand amazed before the glory of God as He glorifies Himself through His Gospel. Let us be sure that we keep this Gospel message in the forefront of our thinking and in our hearts. If we find that at any time the gospel we bring begins to differ from the True Gospel, let us cry out to God, "Oh, God, forgive me that I might have had something else in my head when I was trying to bring the Gospel, that I was trying to tailor it to my own lustful desires." The True Gospel is this: I want this wonderful salvation for everybody else, and because I know I have become saved, there is nothing else in this world I need for myself.

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

APPENDIX 2 – HOW DO I BECOME SAVED?

By Harold Camping

The biggest and most dramatic need of mankind is to become right with God. To become right with God is to become saved from God's wrath and be renewed by the Holy Spirit and be given eternal life (Matthew 25:46). This is called salvation. What is salvation, and how can one become saved?

The moment of salvation is the moment of truth, when we take off our rose-colored glasses through which we thought that somehow all would be well with us, and we stop kidding ourselves that we are really rather fine people. The moment of truth is when we take our heads out of the sand and face the truth about ourselves.

One truth that we learn from the Scriptures is that we are desperately wicked. The Bible declares in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

The Bible says in Romans 3:10-18:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

These verses tell us of a horrible truth that we must honestly and frankly face. God is telling us that we are like

poisonous snakes. God is telling us that we are altogether rebellious against Him in every fibre of our beings. All the good things that we have been doing are not at all pleasing to God; we do them for our own selfish reasons or because we think that through them, God will look with favor upon our spiritual corpses in which we have no life. Moreover, we are enslaved to Satan, who is our master if we are unsaved (Ephesians 2:1-3).

Another truth that we must face is that because of our sins, we are under the wrath of God. God's Word declares in Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin is death." The death that God has in view is not merely physical death but it is spiritual death. That is, God declares that because of our sins, we must be eternally in hell under the wrath of God, paying for our sins. God created us good and after His image; therefore, we are accountable to Him for our actions.

God says in Matthew 12:36, "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Our thoughts, words, and deeds, when viewed in the light of the perfection of the law of God, will prove beyond a doubt that we are sinners. To pay for these sins, we must be cast into hell and suffer eternal damnation. What a heartbreaking, impossible future there is for us if we are unsaved. We might have thought we were good people with the best still to come in our lives, and now we discover the awful fact that we are corrupt sinners subject to the eternal wrath of God. Can there be salvation? Can there be a way of escape from this horrible predicament?

Another truth that we must face is that God has provided a marvelous, glorious, wonderful way of escape from our sins and the wrath of God, and that way is through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16). God so loved the world that He not only provided for the redemption of the universe, but He also provided for the redemption of those who recognize their bankrupt spiritual condition and cast themselves on the mercy of God. For these people, Christ became sin (II Corinthians 5:21), that is, Christ took all their sins upon Himself. As our substitute, He was judged by God as He stood before the Roman governor, Pilate. Christ was found guilty for these sins, and God poured out His wrath on Him as He, as our substitute, paid for these sins.

Wonderfully, we do not have to understand how all this happened. However, it is imperative that we recognize the truth that in Christ and only in Christ is there salvation. Somehow, through Christ, God's wrath has been satisfied, and we are no longer under condemnation before God. The Bible declares in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Those who have placed their trust in Christ have realized their hopelessly sinful and lost condition. They realize that their sins were sending them to hell; they have begun to see the terrible nature of sin, and within their lives, there is a tremendous desire to turn from their sins. They know that Christ must be Lord of their lives. Because Christ is God who has given us His Word, the Bible, they begin to have an ongoing desire to know more and more about His Word. As they learn from God's Word, they want increasingly to be obedient to all that they find there.

The Bible declares in I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This verse teaches us that somehow through Christ, those who trust God will have their sins forgiven. This is what salvation is -- to be saved from the wrath of God, which we otherwise deserve because of

our sins. Salvation is to abandon ourselves to Christ as our only Lord and Savior.

Before we are saved, both in body and soul, we are spiritually dead; we just after sin. We are in rebellion against God and we are slaves of Satan. By God's mercy, He reaches down into our lives and begins to open our spiritual eyes and spiritual ears so that we see our utter sinfulness, and we begin to hear from God's Word the importance of turning to Christ as our only Savior, the only Way by which we can be reconciled to God the Father. As God works within our hearts, we begin to more and more sense our terrible predicament. We realize that we are only a breath away from eternity; and if we die without the Savior, we will eternally be in hell. In our uneasiness, we begin to cry to God for help. As the publican of old, we pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

At some point, unknown to us, God gives us brand new souls. The soul is the spirit essence of man. The soul is the part of man that leaves the body at death. If we are saved, it is in our souls that we go to live and reign with Christ in heaven. It is in our souls that we experience eternal life. It is in our souls that we become born again. It is in our souls that we are new creatures. It is in our souls that we have been raised with Christ, that is, we have experienced the resurrection. It is in our souls that we never wish to sin again. It is in our saved souls that we have an ongoing, never-ending desire to be obedient to God's Word.

Because our souls are brand new after we are saved, our lives are quite different from what they were before salvation. It is true that in our bodies, we still lust after sin. Our bodies have not yet experienced the resurrection. But because we have received our new souls, we feel terrible when we sin. In our new souls, we feel violated by our sin. Therefore, we find true happiness only as we live obediently before God. Increasingly, then, we deny the lusts of the sin which our bodies crave, and we focus on the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we earnestly love and who has become the Lord of our lives.

APPENDIX 3 – GOD'S MAGNIFICENT SALVATION PLAN

By Harold Camping

PREFACE

"Good evening. Welcome to the Open Forum."

"...Brother Camping?..."

"Yes, go ahead, you're on the air."

"Well, I just had to call after that last caller... I mean, really, the very idea that not all can be saved... I mean, when the Bible is so clear, "...whosoever believeth in Him should not perish..." and sir, I want you to know that my Lord does not send people to Hell!" Click the conversation was abruptly ended.

Over and over, this scenario is repeated on the nationwide evening radio program called Open Forum -- people, sincere students of the scriptures, struggling with the enigma presented by the issue of divine election.

The caller had captured his position to his satisfaction with the verse he quoted from John 3:16. Others reach for the passage in II Peter proclaiming, "...He is not willing that any should perish..."

But the simple truth is there are other passages which seem to declare that only the elect who have been chosen before the foundation of the earth will be saved. Take, for example,

Ephesians 1:4, which states, "...He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation

of the world..." And how about Romans 11:5, where God speaks of "...a remnant according to the election of grace"?

The caller's frustration was focused on the implication that only an elect group of people is going to be saved and conversely that those not among this elect group would be sent to hell. Since he views God as a benevolent, loving Creator, to him such an election not only seems grossly unjust, but downright unworthy of decent men or God!

For five centuries this issue has been a battle cry. There was a time when Renaissance minds were causing an intellectual dawn to quell the Dark Ages with humanism's insistence that all life questions be seen from the human perspective. This insistence crept into the theological arena. From that perspective such questions naturally arise..."If those not elected by God are not going to be saved, how can it be true that God's offer of salvation is truly honorable? Whatever happened to the fairness we associate with God? How dare we tamper with the 'free will of man'?"

However, this issue is best served by looking at the question from the proper perspective -- the divine viewpoint. Once we capture a clear insight into God's identity, in His nature and work, it will not be difficult to see that His program of salvation is entirely fair and equitable.

And for those Bible students willing to struggle objectively to see the whole issue from this perspective, they will make two exciting discoveries: (a) this enigma can be resolved; (b) this resolution will foster a new appreciation of the incomprehensible love of God in providing such a magnificent program of salvation.

But make no mistake, whether your humanistic outlook is due to the secular classroom of today's education system or gleaned from a pulpit under the cloud of theological humanism some 500 years old, all such viewpoints must be abandoned.

True enlightenment and joy is attainable only by viewing this issue from the divine perspective; i.e., looking over God's shoulder.

CHAPTER 1 -- GOD'S MAGNIFICENT SALVATION PLAN

As we begin our study concerning the nature of salvation, we must begin by understanding who man is. We see that the Bible teaches that man was created to worship and serve God, that men of their own volition have rebelled against God and will never wish to come to Him. Therefore, because it is God's desire to have a people for Himself, God sovereignly chose the individuals whom He planned to save.

Going back to the very beginning in Eden, we see that man was created in the image of God. To be created in the image of God included the fact that he loved righteousness and truth just like God. Moreover, Adam could choose whether to obey God or not. He was free to obey God voluntarily because this desire was inherent in him as part of the image of God. Thus he stood before God as a responsible creature accountable for his actions. Therefore, he was also warned that he must bear the consequences of disobedience -- "...for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17).

The results of his disobedience are well known. Mankind was sentenced to death, physical death as well as spiritual death, which meant eternal separation from God in a place called Hell. There he would eternally endure the wrath of God for his disobedience.

The impact of that initial sin was so terrible that man's very nature was corrupted and disobedience to God

became normative for his life. Like an adulterer senselessly and stupidly returns repeatedly to the harlot, so man continues to disobey God. It was so far reaching that the whole human race, which issued from Adam and of whom Adam was head, remains in this awful corruption. Thus Romans 5:12 declares, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into

the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned..."

In 1 John 3:8 we read, "**He that committeth sin is of the devil.**" In Colossians 1:13 God declares that when He saves us it is that "**He hath delivered us from the power of darkness.**"

In the parable of the wheat and the tares Jesus informs us that "**the tares are the children of the wicked one.**" This enslavement to sin is described by the language of Romans 6:16, where God warns, "**Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey.**"

We see therefore that man in his very nature continues in constant rebellion against God. Because he lives in this enmity toward God, the awful curse of God's wrath continues to rest on him. He became a slave of dominion of sin and spiritual darkness which ruled over by Satan, who vanquished man in Eden.

Is Man Responsible For His Sin?

But now a question of great importance must be faced. Did this corruption of man's nature and this enslavement to Satan, which together produce an ever mounting condemnation for man, minimize or reduce in any way God's demand upon him to be without sin? Had he in any sense become so helpless in his sin that God could no longer hold him accountable? This is a key question, for in its answer one will be able to resolve the apparent paradox of God's gracious offer of salvation to all men and God's elective decrees whereby only God's elect will be saved.

The answer to the question of man's continued accountability to God after the fall is found in analyzing the reason for his hopeless condition of slavery to sin and Satan. His frightful condition did not result from a whim or caprice of fate. It did not result from irrational anger by God as God lashed out at man for his disobedience.

Rather it was altogether the result of man's own action. God had created him good, with every conceivable blessing; and because he was created in the image of God he was fully responsible for the consequences of his disobedience. Thus, the fact that his very nature became corrupted and that he became a slave of Satan did not diminish in any way his accountability to God for his sins. Even to the present day, because he is still man created in the image of God, however shattered that image may be, he continues to be answerable to God for his actions.

Therefore one is not surprised to read that at the judgment man must render account to God for all his works. Matthew 12:36 states, "**But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.**" Romans 2:5,6 declares, "...after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God: Who will render to every man according to his deeds..." Thus God is emphasizing that an answer must be tendered.

Romans 14:10-12 makes it clear that "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...for every knee shall bow...and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." II Corinthians 5:10 cites that "...we must

all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Moreover we read in Revelation 20 that at the judgment throne Christ will have on record all the deeds of those who stand there. And they must answer to God concerning these deeds. Revelation 20:12 declares:

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

That God looks upon man as being fully answerable for his sins is repeatedly taught in the Bible. Consider, for example, the words of Jesus in Luke 13:34:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not! (Cf. Matthew 23:29-34, 21:23-41)

Christ is speaking in these passages to people as responsible humans created in the image of God. He is not demeaning them by suggesting that in any way they are no longer accountable. His declaration is that they are fully answerable for their rejection of God's overtures of grace. Actually it is more than an offer. It is a command from God to the human race that they are to repent of their sins and turn to Christ for salvation (John 6:29, Acts 17:30, I John 3:18-24).

Thus the Bible gives ample evidence that mankind is fully answerable to God for his actions. Even though the entire human race is altogether in rebellion against God, each and every human stands accountable to God.

God Declares Himself To Man

In this sad context, God comes with His gracious offer of salvation. First of all, He gives plentiful evidence to man that God exists. By placing man in a creation that is so filled with incomprehensible impossibilities and delightful wonders, man cannot escape the knowledge that only an infinite being could bring this to pass. The stars, the newborn baby, the fragrant rose, all testify to the power of God (Psalm 19:1, Romans 1:18-23).

Moreover, because he was created in the image of God, there is a witness within man. Intuitively he knows that murder and adultery and stealing are sins because to some degree God's law is written on his heart (Romans 2:14,15). Intuitively he knows that there is a judgment coming when he must account for his sins (Romans 1:32).

Furthermore, God shows him that He is a merciful and loving God as He provides man with so many undeserved blessings such as health, the benevolent sunshine, and fruitful seasons. (Cf. Acts 14:17, Romans 2:4.)

But man's response to these evidences of the existence of God, to the knowledge that he is a sinner who must some day be judged for his sin, to the kindness of God as He surrounds man with His blessings, is one of even greater rebellion against God. But because man himself is the sinner, man himself must bear the full consequences of his actions.

Finally, God comes with His supreme offer of love. God has fully outlined this in that marvelous written declaration of God's will, the Bible. He covenants with man that if he will only throw himself on God's mercies, if he will only repent of his sins and entrust his will to Christ as Lord, if he will only trust in Christ as Savior for God's forgiveness for his sins, God will make him His child, God will give him eternal life, God will free him

from slavery to Satan and make him a citizen of God's kingdom. "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**"

To do this for man, to make this offer possible, requires an enormous sacrifice by God. It requires complete satisfaction of the price demanded by God's decree, "**the wages of sin is death,**" for all who will accept this gracious offer of salvation. This price was paid by God Himself, as He came as the God-man, to bear the wrath of God on behalf of those who would trust in God's offer of salvation.

If ten men out of the whole human race would believe in Christ as their sinner, Christ's suffering must be equivalent to the punishment deserved by these ten men. If a million people would trust in God's offer of reconciliation, Christ's suffering must be equal to an eternity in Hell for a million men. However many turn to God's offer of love, Christ would obediently endure God's wrath on their behalf. For only then can God's holy justice be completely satisfied (Romans 3:24-26, Romans 5:8-9, Romans 5:21).

No Man Will Accept God's Offer Of Salvation

But man in his perverseness, in the corruption of sin which has enveloped his whole being, will not accept this wonderful offer. He will not be obedient to God's command to repent of his sins and believe in Christ. His natural enmity towards God, his unconscious allegiance to Satan, his pleasure in his sin, all work together to encourage him to ignore, to spurn, to ridicule this offer. It is indeed a well-meant offer by God. There are no strings attached. It is given to man, who originally was created in the image of God to think God's thoughts after Him, to love God, to worship God, and to fellowship eternally with Him. The fact that man in his willful disobedience has become totally corrupted and has become a slave of Satan does not diminish or in any sense invalidate the gracious and marvelous intention of God's salvation offer. Man is still accountable to God. The fact that not even one man would be obedient to this offer does not make it any less a gracious offer of love.

Even so, the offer of God's love, the Gospel, with its command to mankind to believe on Christ, is sent forth into all the world. But no man of his own volition will respond to it. Rather, in his lusting after sin he will do all that he can to silence and reject it. The deadness of man is so succinctly outlined in Romans 3:10-20 and Ephesians 2:1-3. "**There is none that seeketh after God,**" we read in Romans 3:11. Man is as spiritually dead as Lazarus was physically dead after his body had decayed in the tomb for 4 days. No wonder the Bible declares in John 6:44, "**No one can come to Me except the Father draw him.**" No man is able to come because he is spiritually dead.

God Will Save A People For Himself

But God is not thwarted in His desire to have a redeemed people. If man left to his own volition will not respond to His gracious, well-meant offer and command of salvation, God will reach down into the mire and misery of human sin and save a people, whether they want to be saved or not (John 6:37). He will take for Himself as many as He wants, and precisely those whom He wants, so that He will be the Redeemer. He will build His church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail. Read, for example, the beautiful description of God's salvation plan in Ezekiel 34:11-16.

Therefore, in sovereign righteousness and justice God chooses, even before He creates the world, those whom He will

save (Ephesians 1:4). They are not to be saved because they are in any way, to any degree whatsoever, more holy or more worthy of salvation than those who remain unsaved. Rather it is totally God's sovereign grace that He saves one and leaves another under His wrath (Romans 9:11-13).

For those whom He does save He must provide payment of the penalty required by God's perfect justice. And so Jesus became sin. He took upon Himself the sins of all whom God planned in His elective decrees to save. Based on God's declaration of John 3:16 that "*whosoever believeth on Him should not perish.*" we might declare that Christ was prepared to pay for the sins of anyone in the whole wide world throughout time who might turn in faith to God and accept this offer of forgiveness. This is perhaps one truth inherent in the Biblical statement that Christ died for the sins of the whole world. In all the world Christ was the only possible sin-bearer. He would pay the price for anyone who believed. This principle is surely suggested by the promise of 1 John 1:9, which proclaims, "...if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

As a matter of fact, He did die only for those who were elected of God. For only they will obey God's command to believe in Christ. And this includes both the believer of the Old Testament as well as all those who will believe right up until the end of time. This truth is surely evident in the declaration of the angel to Joseph, "*Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins.*" The phrase "*His people*" cannot refer to the whole human race. If it did, double jeopardy would occur, inasmuch as the Bible clearly teaches that the unsaved must pay for all their sins (Revelation 20:12-15).

Christ died for those who believe, but not one of these believed of his own volition. Only because God inclined their wills and opened their eyes did they respond to the Gospel. This gracious intervention of God occurred only in the lives of God's elect. These God irresistibly drew unto Himself (John 6:37,44). These were given to Christ by the Father (John 6:37,39, John 17:9,20), who were born not of the will of man, but of God (John 1:13).

Therefore, while in principle the atonement is available for each and every individual in the whole world, in actuality it covers only the sins of the elect. For only they will believe in Him. The dead Lazarus responded to the command of Jesus to come forth from the tomb because with the command Christ qualified him to come forth by giving him ears to hear, life to respond, and the will to obey (John 11:43,44). So likewise God qualifies those who are spiritually dead so that they will respond to the Gospel call.

Sorrowfully, the Bible declares that the rest of mankind remains under the wrath of God. When Christ went to the cross to pay for sin, He was ready to pay for anyone of mankind who would trust Christ as his Savior. But no penalty was paid by Jesus for those who would not respond obediently to God's salvation command. Therefore, they must stand before God's judgment throne on their own behalf when God judges the nations at the end of time. God declares,

"The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness" (Romans 1:18), and "*There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil*" (Romans 2:9). Furthermore, in Romans 2:5 God ominously decrees:

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up for thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

In Revelation 20:12,13 we read:

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

Had their sins been paid for, they would never have to stand for judgment and answer to God for each and every sin they had ever committed. God's wrath could never come upon them. Such condemnation, after Christ had already paid for their sins, would be double jeopardy. It would be a violation of God's perfect justice.

Anyone Can Be Saved

Who then can be saved? Anyone can who surrenders his life by faith to Christ as Savior and Lord. There is not one who ever honestly sought for Jesus who will be cast out. There will be no one at the judgment throne of God on the last day who will be able to argue with God that he had earnestly sought for salvation. While he may have sought salvation, it could not have been the salvation of the Bible. Rather it would have been a salvation of his own design. No one will stand before the judgment throne who had been following the Biblical prescription of a broken and a contrite heart, which is the beginning of true salvation.

Wonderfully, anyone can know he is one of God's elect by repenting of his sins and hanging his whole life on Jesus. God warns man to make his calling and election sure. By turning to Christ without reservation, in child-like trust, he is proving he is one of God's elect. After he has turned in obedience to Him and knows that he, too, has become born from above he will discover from God's matchless Word that his salvation was all of grace (Ephesians 2:4-10). It was altogether the work of God. If God had left him to himself, he would never have turned to Him.

That the Father decided to save some and let the rest go to Hell for their sins is God's business (Romans 9:14-23, Ephesians 1:4,5). He is the sovereign Creator and Redeemer, who is glorified by the salvation of those who believe (Ephesians 1:6). He is also praised by the wrath of man (Psalm 76:10).

The real wonder is not that He failed to save every last person in the world. The real wonder is that He saved even one out of the human race. The fact that He saved a vast company of believers from every nation and tribe and people is gracious love and condescending grace that no man will ever understand. This wonderful salvation is possible only because...

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways
My ways, saith Jehovah...(Isaiah 55:8)

A Summary Of What We Have learned

We have discovered that God indeed comes with a gracious offer of salvation to mankind, a gracious offer whereby He declares that He will save anyone at all who will come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed it is more than an offer. It is a command to believe on Jesus as Savior. Our salvation of course can be accomplished only through our Savior because there must be someone to pay for our sins. Jesus as our substitute did provide Himself as that payment. Because of His sacrifice of Himself, God comes with the gracious offer of salvation to this world.

We learned that because man is desperately wicked, because he is dead in his sins, he does not want to accept this offer of salvation; he does not want

to be obedient to the command to believe in Christ as his Savior. He refuses to surrender his will to God. In the hardness of his heart he wants to go his own way. "There is none that seeketh after God," the Bible sorrowfully declares.

We saw that even though man is dead in his sins he remains accountable to God. Regardless of his spiritual blindness, regardless of the fact that he is a slave of sin and Satan, he still has the responsibility to face God at the judgment throne and answer for all his sins. Then we saw that God, in His mercy, in His sovereign will, declared, "But I will build My church." It is God's purpose to have a people for Himself even if no one of his own desire will believe in Christ as his Savior. We saw that even before the foundation of the earth God named those whom He would save; and these He drew to Himself, opening their spiritual eyes that they might respond to the Gospel offer, so they did indeed become saved.

Then we examined the question, "Well then, can anyone be saved?" And the answer was, "Yes, indeed, anyone can be saved who will respond to the Gospel." But we learned that the only people who will respond in submission to God's Word, the Bible, who will obediently follow God's program for salvation, will be those whom God has drawn to Himself. There will be nobody facing Hell at the judgment throne who will be able to argue, "I wanted to be saved on God's terms but I am not saved because obviously I was not one of God's elect." Anyone facing judgment and Hell is there because he did not want God's salvation program. He may have wanted salvation on his own terms, but he did not want God's salvation, and therefore he still has to answer to all his sins.

God's Elective Program

As we go on in our study of salvation, particularly as it relates to predestination and God's elective program, let's look at these questions again on a little more formal basis, following the outline that the church has followed, under the acronym TULIP:

- T = Total depravity
- U = Unconditional election
- L = Limited atonement
- I = Irresistible grace
- P = Perseverance of the saints

Certainly the acrostic principles behind the acronym TULIP sound intriguing; but unless they are altogether Biblical, they shall not stand. In that view, we focus altogether on scriptural foundations.

CHAPTER 2 -- T = TOTAL DEPRAVITY

The matter of total depravity is a very ugly concept, and it is this doctrine that divides the church as no other teaching concerning salvation. Many, many people in the church can agree, "Yes, I believe that God draws us to Himself: I believe that once we are saved, we are always saved."

But they have difficulty crossing that line where they would acknowledge that man is so depraved, that he is so spiritually dead that he is incapable of taking that first step toward God. They really insist on the possibility of free choice or free will on the part of man to choose for Christ. They conclude that God has done all that He can do, and now it is up to man to take the next action.

Let's examine the Bible very carefully in regard to this matter because we want the Bible to speak to us. We are interested in knowing God's truth on this. Some of the verses we will look at will be a repetition of what we have already covered in

this study, but they bear repeating because they are so very important.

In Ephesians 2:1-5 we read:

And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation (conduct, behavior) in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace ye are saved...

In these verses God is speaking about someone who has become saved. He is not talking about the desperately wicked of the world who remain in their wickedness and end up in Hell, but He is talking about someone who actually has become a child of God

And what does He say about him? He was dead. He was spiritually a corpse, without any spiritual life of any kind. Notice the description, "*walked according to the course of this world.*" In other words, he had been living exactly like the world that remains in unbelief

Then God adds, "*according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*" By these words God is declaring that this person was a slave of Satan, walking after the ways of Satan. Remember that Jesus said to the Pharisees, "*Ye are of your father the devil.*"

Moreover, verse 3 declares he was living "in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." This is the terribly rebellious condition in which God finds us when He saves us. The description fits any unsaved in the world, even the most wicked. This is the way we are, the way God sees us before we are saved.

How can this person exercise free will? How can this person decide to come to God? He is spiritually dead, his will sold out to Satan. He is a corpse. While he might argue that he has the freedom to choose for God, in actuality he will never choose to come to God through Christ. In the freedom of his will he will always choose against God because in his depraved nature he is altogether in rebellion against God.

The terribly rebellious state of man's heart is further described by the language of Jeremiah 17:9, where God declares, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" Jesus pointed out the awful depravity of man's heart by the language of Mark 7:21,22

For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.

No wonder Jesus said of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:27

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

In these words our Savior was pointing out the unsaved condition of these church rulers. But the description of their hearts fits the heart of every unsaved person.

In Romans 3:10-18 God emphasizes and underscores the sorry state of mankind when measured by the standard of God's holiness. In verse 10 God declares, "*As it is written, there is none righteous, no*

not one." Thus we are made to realize there is no one in the world who is righteous, not a single individual. God has in view here the whole human race, including those who will become believers. The Bible continues, beginning with verse 11:

There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre. With their tongues they have used deceit. The poison of asps is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

This is an awful indictment of the human race. God is showing us what miserable sinners we really are compared with holiness of God. This language shuts the door on any possibility that anyone of his own free will would turn to God... "*There is none that seeketh after God.*" The language is that of a desperate sinner, one who is spiritually dead. His throat is an open sepulchre. That is, all the words of his mouth proceed from a grave of decaying flesh. What an ugly statement declaring our spiritual deadness. How can we say that any person would turn to God of his own free will? We have to absorb this terrible truth. It is God's truth, that we are spiritually dead before we are saved. We are so depraved in our nature that we would never seek Him of ourselves.

Our spiritual deadness is further emphasized in John 5:24, where God says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My Word and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death into life." We are dead in our sins. Only God can give us life.

The Gospel Is Preached To Dead People

This same truth comes to light in I Peter 4:6, where we read, "For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead." Of course we don't preach to the physical corpses; we don't go into a cemetery and preach to the bodies that are in the graves. We preach to someone who has life and breath, who has conscious existence. But God says here that the Gospel is preached to those who are dead. You see, we are spiritually dead before we are saved. Therefore, we of our own volition will never come to God.

Wonderfully, this verse tells what happens to those who do respond to the Gospel as they are experiencing God's salvation love. Verse 6 goes on, "...that they might be judged according to men in the flesh." That is, they still will experience physical death. But then the next phrase declares, "...but live according to God in the spirit." In their spirit or soul existence, where they have experienced the resurrection at the time they were saved, they will live to God.

In John 6:44 Christ declared, "*No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him.*" The word "*can*" in this passage is a word that signifies that no one has the power to come to Christ. No one has the strength to come to Him. Why? Because we are dead. Only because our Heavenly Father draws us, do we come to Him.

Remember, earlier in our study we mentioned Lazarus. Lazarus was in the tomb, and he had been dead for 4 days. He was a stinking corpse. Yet Jesus spoke to that dead man just as we speak to the spiritually dead, according to the language of I Peter 4:6. Jesus said to Lazarus, "*Lazarus, come forth.*" Did Lazarus have the ability to come forth? Could he come forth because he heard the voice of Jesus? No, he couldn't even hear the voice of Jesus. He was dead. He

could never come forth. One might go to a cemetery and call for a thousand years for people to come forth. But not even one person will even come forth because all in the cemetery are dead.

That is how dead we are spiritually. The corpse of Lazarus in the tomb is a picture of our spiritually dead condition before we are saved. God is using this particular historical event to teach us the spiritual truth of the nature of salvation.

That the death and resurrection of Lazarus is a picture of salvation is shown by the language describing this miraculous event. As Jesus is talking to Martha and Mary about the dead Lazarus, He said to them in verse 25 of John 11, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall live.*" This beautiful promise relates altogether to salvation. Jesus is going to raise Lazarus to prove that this promise is trustworthy. Even as Lazarus was raised physically, we who believe in Christ are to be raised spiritually. Lazarus had no power in himself. He was dead, so that he of his own will could not rise physically. Yet he did rise physically. So also we are spiritually dead before we are saved. We have no power whatsoever. Therefore we cannot rise spiritually. Nevertheless, as the Gospel comes to us, we will rise if it is God's will to raise us, even as Lazarus was raised from the dead.

This is the teaching of the Bible. We are dead, and our actions cannot contribute in any sense toward our salvation. There is no such thing as free will insofar as the Bible is concerned.

The Doctrine Of Free Will Is Antithetical To The Bible's Teaching Of Our Spiritual Deadness

I am afraid that the idea of free will is clung to so tenaciously by some because it affords them a little bit of credit for their salvation. Oh, we know that it is by grace that we are saved. We are ready to admit that. But oh, how we want to receive a little credit at least. Can't we have a little bit of recognition that we have contributed something toward our salvation? This is our nature.

Suppose we have baked a beautiful cake, or done something else that displays our handiwork. We have slaved over this, and our work is very lovely. Indeed then, we are very disappointed if our friends fail to commend us on the work of our hands. This is the way we are designed; we want some kind of commendation. And so we also want some kind of commendation with regard to our salvation.

If it was my free will that caused me to turn to Christ, then somehow I am a little bit better than my unsaved neighbor. After all, somehow I responded to the Gospel while he didn't, and therefore I can receive a tiny bit of credit, even though I know that basically my salvation depends on what Christ has done.

But the Bible says no. We are dead in our sins, and there is no way that we can be saved except that God will draw us. It is God's work altogether. Therefore, God declares, "A broken and a contrite heart I will not despise."

The Danger Of The Doctrine Of Free Will

I might point out something very ominous in connection with this doctrine of free will. Really, it is a very serious matter that we are discussing. The Bible shows why. In Numbers 15:32-34 we read about a person who picked up some sticks on the Sabbath Day:

And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath Day; and they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron and

to all the congregation, and they put him in ward because it was not declared what should be done to him.

This man apparently has committed a very, very incidental sin. He has picked up a few sticks. As near as we can tell, he has kept the Sabbath Day as was commanded, but he just picked up a few sticks. Certainly that isn't a very grievous crime, is it? But God indicates in verse 35...

And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp; and all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died as the Lord commanded Moses.

What a horrible penalty for such an incidental sin! Why is this? Why did God put this in the Bible? You see, this is a dramatic warning to us not to mix work with God's grace. Let me explain.

The Old Testament Sabbath Day was a picture of our salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. When the nation of Israel rested on the seventh day from all its labors, they were not to do any kind of work at all. So, too, when we are saved, we are to rest altogether in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has done all the work required to bring us to salvation. The Old Testament Sabbath Day therefore was a figure of the salvation that God would provide through our Savior. Until we are saved, we are working so that in some way we might obtain entrance into Heaven by our own actions. But once we are saved, we rest from our labors altogether and simply trust in Christ, who has done all the work. It is by resting in God's grace that we have been saved, just like the children of Israel who rested on the Sabbath Day.

Therefore, when this man picked up a few sticks, his action paralleled the action of someone who is saying, "Yes, I am saved by grace, but my work has contributed just a tiny bit. I can do a little bit of work toward my salvation." God ordained that the man who picked up sticks was to be stoned to death. To be stoned to death in the Old Testament was the equivalent of coming under the damnation of Hell. This is the grievous thing that happened to those who were particularly sinful. Their death was a picture of God's wrath that comes upon sin, that results in damnation in Hell. Thus by this account of the man picking up sticks God is really teaching that if we have a salvation program that is mostly grace, but also requires a little bit of our own work, then we still are under damnation.

This is an ominous thought. This is a terrible thing. But we don't have to worry about this if we'll just follow the scriptures, if we'll accept what we read in Ephesians 2 and Romans 3 and John 5:24 and these other passages, that we are dead and we don't have free will. It is God Himself who does the saving altogether. Only He is to receive all the glory for our salvation.

But What About Those Passages That Apparently Teach Free Will?

I know there are passages that seem to indicate that we do have free will. For example, in Revelation 22:17 God declares, "*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*" But this verse isn't indicating that anybody will of himself turn to the Gospel, which is the water of life. This verse is simply indicating that God's gracious offer of salvation is available to the entire human race. If any person does turn to Him, God will save him. When we read this verse in the light of the rest of the Bible, we know that no one of his own volition will turn to Christ. There is none that seeketh after God. Thus, while Revelation 22:17 stands as a promise of God, it will never prompt a response in anyone unless God Himself is drawing him.

Revelation 3:20 is frequently used by those who want to retain some aspect of free will. There God declares, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me."

This verse seems to indicate, when we read it quickly, that the action by the one responding to Christ is doing so of his own free will. But when we read this verse very carefully, we'll notice it says, "*He who heareth My voice.*" Can a dead man hear the voice of God? Could Lazarus hear the voice of Jesus? And the answer is, "Of course he couldn't hear the Savior's voice. He was dead." But he did hear the voice of Christ, didn't he? He did hear Christ's voice, and he did come forth.

Likewise there are those who are spiritually dead who of themselves cannot hear with understanding the Gospel call. Those who respond do so only because God gives them spiritual ears to hear. Even as He gave the dead Lazarus physical ears to hear so that he could respond, and gave him the strength to respond, so God gives us spiritual ears if He is drawing us to Himself. Revelation 3:20 is not teaching free will in any way. It is simply indicating that if we have ears to hear, then we will respond. But we know that those ears to hear must come from God Himself.

It is very significant that repeatedly in Revelation God declares, as He does in Revelation 3:22, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Only those whom God is drawing, those whom God is saving, will have that kind of ear. We see therefore that this verse also gives Biblical corroboration to the historical teaching to total depravity.

We must conclude therefore that the principle of total depravity is altogether Biblical. It is a teaching that will stand the closest scrutiny of the scriptures. But it is absolutely antithetical to the idea of free will. Any Gospel program that promotes the idea that I have a free will to choose God is contrary to the Bible. When we are unsaved, our will is sold out to sin and to Satan.

We might insist our will is free, but in our unsaved condition our will is always contrary to the will of God. We shall never will of ourselves to come to God because "*there is none that seeketh after God.*" This is what the Bible insists. If you want to call that free will, that we shall always of ourselves go against the will of God, so be it.

Call that free will if you like, but that is not the meaning ascribed to free will when people say, "I, because of my free will, decided to become saved." Their meaning is that by an act of their will, which is under no constraint of God, they can come to Christ; and indeed those who are saved did become saved because of an action of their will. Likewise those who remain lost of their own free will reject Christ, and God will never impose His will upon them to make them want to come to Christ. But that idea or doctrine is a Biblical impossibility. Moreover, it is a very, very dangerous doctrine, as we have seen.

But doesn't the Bible teach that we are to choose for Christ, that we are faced with the choice of believing or rejecting Christ? And doesn't this imply free will on the part of those who do make the right choice? When Joshua commanded ancient Israel to "choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15), was Joshua suggesting that man has a free will? When we read Joshua 24:15 carefully we discover that Joshua's command to choose was not to make a choice between God and Baal. Rather it was a choice between one false religion and another. This verse reads:

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your

fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

God does not give us a choice to believe in Christ or not. He commands the human race to believe in Christ. We read in I John 3:23:

And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ...

If any verses in the Bible do imply a choice is to be made, God always commands what that choice is to be. It is always that we should turn back to God. As we faithfully bring the Gospel, we should present this command of God that should be obeyed.

However, as we bring this command to believe on Christ, we must fully realize that the only ones who will obey this command are those whom God is drawing--those whom God has chosen to salvation. They alone will respond to the Gospel offer. We must fully realize that we have been commissioned by God to make this Gospel offer so that God's salvation program will come to fruition in the lives of those whose wills are being inclined by God to respond to the command to believe

Therefore we must never add to that Gospel presentation the statements that are so frequently made to the effect that the final choice is man's rather than God's? Too many preachers add such concepts as, "God has done His part and now it's up to you;" or "God by His grace has paid for your sins but it's up to you to accept His pardon;" or "God has done all that He must do; the rest is up to you;" or God is a gentleman. While He has provided for your salvation, He will not force you to accept."

All these statements imply that our salvation is based on God's work plus our work, that God's work will never be complete without our work. These statements are part and parcel with the concept that man has a free will. They do not recognize at all that our salvation is "not of works" (Ephesians 2:9). They do not recognize that man is dead in his sins. They do not recognize the awful import of a works/grace gospel

I am afraid that the common assertion of many today that man must "accept" the Lord Jesus as his Savior is based on the premise that man has a free will. The fact is, we receive Christ because God has given us Him as a gift. God inclines our will, God draws us, God gives us salvation. We receive this gift of salvation without any work or effort on our part.

Now then, which of these two hymns are you ready to sing?

"Twas not that I did choose Thee
For Lord That could not be;
This heart would still refuse Thee,
Hadst Thou not chosen me."

"Twas not that you did choose me,
For Lord that could not be;
Your heart would still refuse me,
Hadst I not chosen Thee."

The first of the two verses is the Biblical one. When "we have decided to follow Jesus," it is actually God's action moving us. We can take no credit whatsoever. The phrase accrues to the precious Lord Jesus Christ. God gives repentance! To God be the glory!

Let us now see what the Bible has to say about unconditional election. What does this phrase mean?

CHAPTER 3 -- U = UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Thus far we have examined the first principle that is suggested by the acronym TULIP, a word that outlines five principles that relate to the nature of our salvation. That first principle is the matter of total depravity. We have discovered as we looked in the Bible that indeed, we are dead in our sins. We are incapable of ever deciding to come to Christ. We are slaves of Satan. We obey the lusts of the flesh. We are as spiritually dead as Lazarus was physically dead in the tomb before he was raised.

But now we are going to examine the second principle that is a part of this acronym TULIP; namely, the principle of unconditional election. The subject of election is not a happy idea to many who are concerned with salvation because it brings with it the fact that God is the one who did the electing, rather than the fact that we have chosen for God. Man by nature does not like this particular point of view. This is so because it underscores the spiritual deadness of man. It robs him of any self-pride. It reminds him that he is not the master of his fate, the captain of his soul. But this is the point of view that the Bible very clearly teaches.

In examining this question of election we see first of all that it is required. That is, it is a necessary part of God's salvation program. Without it, no one would be saved. Let us see why this is so.

We have already discovered that man is altogether dead in his sins. He will not seek after God. Of his own volition he will never elect to come to God. Therefore, if Christ had gone no further than offering salvation to the world, there would be no body of believers. This gracious, loving offer of salvation could be proclaimed for a thousand years to mankind, but not one individual in the whole human race would respond of himself. As we have already seen so clearly, man is dead in his sins. He loves his sin too much. In his very nature he is altogether in rebellion against God. And so no one seeks after God. Therefore, if God had not acted in man's heart no one would become saved.

But Christ has determined that He would build His church. The gates of hell would not prevail against Him. Therefore, in order to build His church, He elected certain ones who were to be saved. Thus the truth of election is absolutely essential to God's whole program of salvation.

When Did God Elect Those Who Were To Be Saved?

We might wonder when God elected or decided whom He would save. When did this election take place? The Bible tells us in Ephesians 1:4 that He chose us in Christ from before the foundations of the world. In other words, God already decided whom He would save as part of the salvation program before man had ever been created, before man had ever fallen into sin.

In Revelation 17:8 God speaks of those whose names were not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world. He is speaking here of the wicked, those who are slaves of the Beast or of the kingdom of Satan. The fact that they were not written in the Book of Life from before the foundations of the world implies very strongly that the believers in Christ, who are not slaves of Satan, were written in the Book of Life from before the foundations of the world. That accords altogether with Ephesians 1:4, where we are told that "we are chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world." Therefore the Bible shows us that this election did take

place before time, before God had begun His creation.

Because God knows the end from the beginning, He knew that man, whom He would create perfect and without sin, would of his own volition rebel against God and be plunged into sin. Therefore our Heavenly Father made provision for this eventuality by giving to the Lord Jesus Christ those whom He planned to save. We read in John 6:37, "all that the Father giveth Me..." These were the elect who, before the foundations of the earth, had been chosen by God and had their names inscribed in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The next logical issue we should face concerns the nature of this election. We find this word election in some fifty places in the New Testament. It is found in the Greek language as three different greek words... ekloge, eklektos and eklego. These three words are translated either as elect or chosen in the New Testament.

We find, for example, that God says in Romans 11:5, "There is a remnant according to the election (ekloge) of grace". In II Peter 1:10 we read, "Make your calling and election (ekloge) sure."

Again He declares in Colossians 3:12, "Put on, therefore, as the elect (eklektos) of God..." or in Titus 1:1, "According to the faith of God's elect (eklektos)." We find this idea of election in Matthew 22:14, "Many are called, but few are chosen (eklektos);" and in I Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen (eklektos) generation..."

And again, we read in Ephesians 1:4, "According as He has chosen (eklego) us in Him..." He has elected, He has chosen those whom He planned to save.

The Biblical Doctrine Of Predestination

A corollary doctrine of the Bible describing God's elective program is predestination. Predestination, like the word election, is a very uncomfortable word for many. Many are hoping that the word predestinate is not in the Bible, that it is some kind of theological word rather than a Biblical word. They want nothing to do with it.

But the fact is that the Greek word *proorizo*, from which predestination comes, is found six times in the New Testament. We find it in Romans 8:29, where God declares that "those whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." We read it in Romans 8:30, where He says, "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and those whom He called, He justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

Further, we read of this predestination in Ephesians 1:5. There God declares, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Again, in Ephesians 1:11, "In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."

This word predestinate is found in two other places in the New Testament. In one, Acts 4:28, it is actually translated in our English language as "determined before." There God is speaking about the will of God that Christ would suffer for our sins, and so He is indicating that as part of His divine plan Herod and Pontius Pilate and others were gathered together against Him. In that context He declares in verse 28, "For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel (God's counsel) determined before (predestinated) to be done." So we see, God's counsel had predestinated beforehand what was to be done.

The last place we find this word *proorizo* (predestinate) is in I

Corinthians 2:7, where it is translated "ordained." "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained (predestinated) before the world unto our glory." Here He is speaking of the whole Gospel plan that was predestinated by God.

You see, in these verses we find that God has predestetermined from before the foundations of the world, not only every aspect of the salvation program, but also who were to be saved. He did not predestinate those whom He saw would of themselves come to Him. That's an impossibility because all mankind are dead in their sins. There is none that seeketh after God. But as He looked down the corridors of time and saw the miserable human race as it would become after the fall of Adam, He chose some of these miserable, rebellious sinners and elected them to salvation. He predestinated them to be saved. This is what the Bible teaches concerning salvation.

We must realize, if God had simply looked for those who would come to Him of their own free will and saved them, then He could never speak of them as being chosen. This would be incorrect language for it would not have been God's choosing but man's choosing. It would have been man who had elected to come to God and God would simply be recognizing those who would be saved. He could only speak of them as being the recipients of the grace of God and could not speak of electing those who were being saved.

But no, God uses the word elect because He chose out of the rebellious human race those who were to be saved. We read in John 15:16, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." This, you see, is what the Bible teaches concerning our salvation. We are the elect of God if we have begun to believe in Christ as our Savior and Lord.

Our Election Is Unconditional

We must remember, even as the acronym TULIP suggests, that the principle that is laid down in the Bible is unconditional election. That is, God elects us regardless of how terrible our sin really is. He does not elect us because we were good. He does not elect us because we were beautiful people. He elects us in spite of our sins. Remember, in Romans 3:10-18 we saw that God speaks about the whole human race, without any exception, in the most ugly language, to indicate the natural wickedness, the murderous, viperous nature of man. It is these kinds of people whom He elected to be saved.

The Bible does not teach that Christ came to save those who were good but that Christ came to save sinners. The Bible declares

in James 2:5, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" We are rich in faith, of course, because that faith is given to us as a gift. We read in Ephesians 2:8, "By grace ye have been saved through faith, but that not of yourselves. It is a gift..." In I Corinthians 1:27 God declares, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

In these verses God is very clearly indicating that in His choice of those whom He would save He is speaking of that which is despised, that which is of no value in itself, that which is foolish. That is our state when God saves us. Our election is absolutely and altogether unconditional. We did not deserve to be elected of God in any way.

Remember that we looked several times at Lazarus as he was in the tomb. There were many people in cemeteries in that day, as there are at any time in history. Christ could have gone to any one of those tombs and called to the dead person within the tomb to come forth, and that person would have come forth.

But Christ in His sovereign will decided to raise up Lazarus. He came to the tomb of Lazarus, and He said, "Lazarus, come forth." Lazarus did not meet any conditions at all in order to respond to this command, or to be the one who was elected to be raised from the dead. He was simply one of the dead. His body was corrupting. There was nothing that qualified him to come forth, nothing whatsoever; yet he did come forth when Christ elected to raise him and then commanded him to come forth.

Thus in the raising of Lazarus God gives us a dramatic picture of unconditional election. We are elected of God to be saved by Him. We come as we are, in our rebellion, in our perverseness, in our spiritual rottenness and spiritual bankruptcy. God declares, "*A broken and a contrite heart I will not despise.*" That's the doctrine of unconditional election.

But Doesn't The Idea Of Election Foster Fatalism?

Of course the question might be raised, "If God has elected from before the foundations of the earth those whom He would save, and if there is nothing that I can do about my election, then what is the use of trying to bow to command of the Bible to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? If I am elect, I will believe. If I am not elect, I won't believe. There is nothing I can do to make myself elect because this is altogether God's sovereign plan."

The fact is that when God commands us to believe, we are to obey that command. Occasionally, there is someone who does obey that command. Whether he is elect or not is none of his business at that point in time. When we hear the Gospel, we are to be faithful in obeying the Gospel by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will afterwards begin to wonder, "Why did I believe? Why did I turn to the Lord Jesus Christ when many others around me did not?" Then, when they examine the scriptures to find out why, they will discover it is because God had elected them. It is because God had drawn the sinner to Himself so that he became a believer. God had opened the spiritual ears and heart of this individual. God had qualified this person so that he would respond to the Gospel, even as He qualified the dead Lazarus in the tomb so that he would be obedient to the call of Jesus, "*Lazarus, come forth.*" This is the doctrine of election.

Moreover, as we send forth the Gospel, it's not our business to know who are God's elect. We know only that there are those amongst the unsaved who are God's elect. These are the lost sheep that the Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and to save. Christ knows who they are; and as we witness to the Gospel and send forth the Gospel, there will be those whom God will bring to Himself as they hear the Gospel presented by us. God will draw them through this Gospel. God will draw them as we pray for them. We don't know whether they are elect or not, but God knows. We will only discover the elect as we see those who indeed do become born again.

This is a wonderful doctrine, a marvelous promise. This insures success as we bring the Gospel. The success of our Gospel presentation does not depend upon our winning ways; it does not depend upon the splendid rhetoric that we can offer; it does not depend upon our salesmanship. Rather it depends upon God's faithfulness to His own

Gospel. Through the Gospel He will seek and save those whom He has predestinated to be saved. He will call them. He will justify them, and He will glorify them (Romans 8:30). This is the absolute promise of God. This is the teaching of unconditional election. What a wonderful doctrine this is! A pity it is that there are those who are afraid of this teaching.

If the doctrine of election and predestination is so beautiful, why then are so many afraid of it? I believe many do not like this doctrine because they would like to believe that God does not predestinate against the will of man. That is to say, man would like to believe that God predestinates those persons whom He knows will turn to Him. Man wants at least a bit of the credit for his salvation.

Moreover, man desperately wants to be sovereign in his own right. This was the nature of Lucifer when he fell into sin. He wanted to be a king. He wanted to be like God, as we read in Isaiah 14. So man, too, wants to be king on the throne of his life. It is reprehensible to him by nature to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. However, the doctrine of unconditional election, which the Bible very clearly teaches, underscores that God is sovereign. He saves those whom He will save! Under no circumstances is it man who does the choosing. It is God who is doing the choosing.

God's Will Concerning Salvation Is Completely Sovereign

God insists in Romans 9, for example, as He uses Esau and Jacob as a figure of His doctrine of predestinating election:

For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand; not of works, but of Him that called us; it was said unto her: the elder shall serve the younger; as it is written: Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

Now there it is, you see; God is indicating that He was completely sovereign in this. Again in verse 15 of Romans 9 He declares, "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*" We have here emphasized all these "*I wills*" because this is what God is emphasizing. He is the One that Makes the decision, and He adds in verse 16 of Romans 9, "*So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.*" This verse pointedly and plainly excludes man's will.

Further reinforcement for this marvelous doctrine is seen in verse 18: "*Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.*" There is the doctrine of sovereign grace as it works out in God's elective program.

In Romans we were reminded of the hymn, "*Thou art the potter; I am the clay; Mold me and make me, after THY will.*" This plea is based on the teaching of Romans 9:20-23:

Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.

Here, you see, God emphasizes the fact that He is supreme; He has the power, the right to save those whom He wished to save. God is under no obligation to save a single person in the whole human race. We deserve to go to Hell. We deserve to spend eternity under His damnation. The fact that He has saved some according to His divine choosing,

His elective program, is God's business altogether.

Furthermore, in John 1:13 God insists that we are born, not of the will of man. John 1:12 introduces this truth: "*But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.*" If we stop right there, it would appear as if the choice is altogether man's, those who received Him. But notice the qualifying statement in the next verse, "*which were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*" God is insisting that He does the electing. It is His will that decides who is to be saved. It is not our will that we would want to be saved because our will is altogether sold under sin.

The doctrine that salvation comes only to those who are elect of God is further taught in Acts 13:48. As the Gospel is going out producing converts in the early church, we read, "*As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*" That says it all over again, does it not? Not everybody was believing, but only those who were ordained by God to believe.

God Gives Us Repentance

It is true that God commands men everywhere to repent of their sins (Acts 17:30). It is easy to assume, therefore, that even though our salvation is all of grace, at least it is a product of my independent will that I have repented. I am the one who turned away from my sins. Logically I might conclude that because I have turned away from my sins, God will save me. Somehow I want to believe that repentance has to do with my will altogether, apart from any action on God's part.

But even this thought of independence apart from God's action will not be tolerated by the Bible. In Acts 5:31 we read:

Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

How plainly God declares that even our repentance is given to us of God. God requires that no conditions be met before we can be saved. God takes the most unworthy, rebellious, wicked sinner and gives him repentance so that God's salvation program can proceed in his life. Small wonder then that Ephesians 2:8-10 declares:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk them.

Can we see now that even the good work of repenting of our sins is also a gift of God?

God Gives Us Faith

Amazingly the Bible further strengthens the total role of God in our salvation as it discusses our faith. When we read Romans 4:3, which declares, "*Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,*" we might conclude that even though our works are not at all meritorious toward our salvation, in some way at least our faith must be counted toward our salvation. However, when we look at the Bible more carefully, we will discover that it was not Abraham's faith that was counted for righteousness, but it was God Himself who was counted for righteousness.

Let us develop this thought a bit. In Galatians 2:16 we read:

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.

Reading this verse very carefully, we see that God declares that it is "*by* (Greek dia - through) *the faith of Jesus Christ,*" and "*we might be justified by* (Greek ek - out of) *the faith of Christ.*" In other words, the basis of our salvation is not our faith but Christ's faith. Because He was perfectly faithful in caring out God's salvation plan, we are saved. No wonder Christ is called "*Faithful and True*" in Revelation 19:11.

Moreover we see that in Galatians 2:16 God is declaring that we are not justified by (Greek ek - out of) the works of the law. In John 6:28 the Jews asked Jesus, "*What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*" Jesus answered them in the next verse as He declared, "*This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.*" In this declaration the Lord Jesus is very definitely teaching that our faith whereby we believe on Christ as our Savior is a work. Therefore we know that we can be justified only by Christ's faith and not ours. For, as Galatians 2:16 has indicated, we cannot be justified by works of the law.

The grand truth of Galatians 2:16 is further strengthened by the language of Galatians 2:20, where we read, "*the life which I now live in the flesh I live by* (Greek en - in) *the faith of the Son of God.*" See also Romans 3:22 and Philippians 3:9.

Returning to Romans 4:3 and Abraham's salvation, we should now read Romans 4:5, where God declares:

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for (Greek eis - into) righteousness.

The phrase "*his faith*" can only refer to God's faith, that is, God's faithfulness which brings the believer into righteousness.

This then explains to us the meaning of the phrase we find in Romans 1:17, where we read:

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from (Greek ek - out of) faith to (Greek eis - into) faith.

God is teaching us here that the salvation of Jews and Greeks is out of faith (Christ's faith) into faith (our faith), which is a reflection or result of Christ's faith.

Thus we can understand the language of Ephesians 2:8, where God declares:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

In every aspect of our salvation we merit nothing at all. To God must go all the honor and glory. It is by virtue of Christ's faithfulness that we are counted righteous. His faith is given to us as a gift, so that we have begun to trust in Christ as our Savior.

One last verse, and then we'll be through with this principle of unconditional election, and that is John 6:37. Jesus declared there: "*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and Him that cometh to Me I shall in no wise cast out.*" Christ is here insisting that it is those whom the Father has given Him that will come to Him. There is no implication here that the whole human race would come to Him, but God has chosen out of the human race those whom He would save.

Therefore, the logical question follows, "If God has decided by His sovereign will to save some, leaving the others to face the Judgment Throne on their own account and be sentenced to eternal damnation in Hell because of their sins, then did Christ go to the cross on behalf of every last human being? Or did He pay only for the sins of those who actually would believe on Him--those whom He had chosen to be His own--a limited number?"

Historically, the church has spoken of this third principle as limited atonement

or particular atonement. That is, Christ's payment at the cross was effective for only those who were elect of God. There was no provision made for those who would not believe on Him.

You see, there are those who teach that Christ actually paid for the sins of each and every person in the whole world, and it is only our rejection of Christ that sends us into Hell. It follows along with the idea that it is by our own free choice that we turn to Christ. This supports the erroneous idea that God has done all that He could, and now it's up to us. These are some of the ideas we shall explore in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4 -- L = LIMITED ATONEMENT

In this chapter we shall examine the question of limited or particular atonement very carefully to see if it is a valid principle set forth in the Bible. First, let's look at Matthew 1:21. There God in very beautiful language is declaring particular atonement. He declared to Joseph through the angel, **"And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save HIS people from their sins."** Notice the phrase, **"HIS people."** Now who are His people? We saw earlier in John 6:37 that HIS people are the ones who were given to Christ by the Father. Thus we know that Christ is the Savior only of those who were given to Him by the Father. And, of course, to save them it was necessary that He pay for their sins, even as He did by going to the cross. There is no suggestion here that He laid down His life for every last individual in the whole world.

In John 10 Christ speaks about the sheep that He came to seek and to save. In verse 15 He declares, **"I lay down My life for the sheep."** Who are these sheep? In verse 14 He had declared, **"I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep and am known of Mine."** Now you see, these sheep are the ones that belong to Him. They are His. These are the ones for whom He lays down His life. He doesn't lay down His life for all people according to this passage, but He lays down His life for His sheep, and they will know Him. **"I am known of Mine."** They will come to Him. Paralleling again what we read in John 6:37.

Christ Prays Only For Those Who Are To Believe On Him

Secondly, we read in John 17, as Christ is praying to His Father in verses 9 and 10, "I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given Me, for they are Thine, and all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them." While in verse 9 Christ is speaking particularly of the disciples whom He chose, in verses 20 and 21 of John 17 Christ has ultimately in view far more than His disciples. In these verses Christ adds, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

That's a significant prayer, isn't it? For Christ had laid down His life for every last individual in the whole world, we would certainly expect that He would be praying for them. You would think, if their sins had been paid for, Christ would also make arrangements with the Father that they would come to Him. But here God opens the veil concerning the relationship within the Godhead, and Christ very clearly indicates He does not pray for the world. He prays for those who belong to Him and those "which shall believe on Me through their word." These would be His sheep. He is interceding only for those who had been given to Him by the Father. We read in Hebrews 7:25-26, where Christ is

presented to us as our eternal High Priest:

Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

Here the Bible specifically declares that Christ makes intercession for those that come to God by Christ; that is, Christ makes intercession for those whom He is saving. This is precisely what Christ is doing in His prayer recorded in John 17.

Furthermore, in John 17:2 Christ prays, "Father...as Thou hast given Him (Jesus is referring to Himself here) power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." Again in this immediate context He is speaking of the disciples. But He is enunciating a fundamental principle of God's salvation program. In this statement our Lord Jesus is singling out those who were given to Him by the Father (John 6:37). As Jesus discusses these who were given to Him, He emphasizes that He has provided eternal life for them. Eternal life is a gift to the believer provided by the atonement. (Must we believe there are some who have experienced the atonement without receiving eternal life? This would be the unbiblical conclusion we must come to if we believe that Christ paid for the sins of every human.)

Only Those Who Are To Be Saved Are Justified

Further still, when we look at the nature of salvation under the Biblical word justification, we find also that the idea of particular or limited atonement must be held as a Biblical principle. In Romans 5:18 we read, **"By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."** In Romans 5:25 we read, **"who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification."** Notice in these passages God is very clearly teaching that those whom He saved, He justified. We read, for example, in Romans 5:9, **"Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."** Thus God has established the principle that those for whom He died are justified by His blood, as the foregoing verses clearly teach. Thus if Christ had paid for the sins of every single human, we must conclude that all mankind stands justified before God. This is the inescapable conclusion we must come to if Christ had gone to the cross on behalf of every single human.

Continuing this line of argument we must recognize that to be justified means that one has been made just. His sins have been paid for, and therefore there can be no condemnation. Thus, to believe that Christ paid for the sins of every human being brings us to the conclusion that every human being has been made just by Christ's shed blood.

But this conclusion runs counter to the plain teaching of the Bible. In Acts 24:15 we read, "That there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." Also in II Peter 2:9 we read, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

These passages very clearly indicate that not only those who are justified will be resurrected, but there are also the unjust who will remain so right up until Judgment Day. According to Romans 5:18 and Romans 4:25 we discovered that when we are saved, we are justified by Christ's blood. His blood was shed so that we might become righteous before God. Therefore, if Christ shed His blood (which brings justification) for every human, how can there still be those who are unjust insofar as God's holiness is

concerned? This problem disappears when we recognize that Christ paid only for the sins of those who become saved.

Mankind Whose Sins Have Not Been Paid For Must Be Judged For Those Sins

If Christ has paid for the sins of every last individual in the world (or as some would say, "Yes, for all their sins except the sin of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ"), then we have to ask the fair question, "How can people be judged whose sins have been paid for?" Now we read very specifically in Revelation 20:13 that those who stand before the Judgment throne will be judged according to their works, every man according to his works. Man's works are to be judged to discover if they were done sinlessly; that is, perfectly in obedience to God's Word. And of course, since every work of man is at best tainted by sin, those who stand for judgment will be found guilty of multitudes of sins.

We read in Matthew 12:36, "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment, for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Of course unsaved men have no good thing within them. There is none righteous, and therefore everything they will give an account of will bring condemnation upon them.

In Romans 2 we read, beginning in verse 5, "After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds."

There it is, you see. God is insisting that mankind at the Judgment Throne has to answer for every sin, and every sin will be dealt with by banishment into Hell. There is no implication in the Bible that the only sin they will answer for at Judgment Day is the sin of rejecting Christ. They have to answer for every sin. Now if Christ has already paid for those sins by going to the cross (if we hold the view that He paid for the sins of every last individual in the whole human race), then it would be double jeopardy if these same individuals whose sins had been paid for now have to go into Hell to pay for these same sins. That just does not follow at all, does it?

In Colossians 3:25 God lays this principle down, **"But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong that he hath done, and there is no respect of persons."** Only because Christ has become the substitute for those who are to be saved is this requirement of God met. The Bible says very clearly in John 5:24 of the believers that we do not come into judgment.

In Ephesians 5:25 we read, **"Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it."** He gave Himself for the church, not for the whole world, not for every last individual. He gave himself for the church. Later in this study we will see that only the true believers in the church have had their sins covered by Christ's blood, even though the cross bears some relationship to the church as a corporate body.

We see, therefore, that the Bible does not endorse the doctrine that Christ went to the cross to pay for every sin of the whole human race, with the only sin that sends us to Hell being the sin of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. The sin of not believing in Jesus as Savior is included amongst all the other sins and simply adds to our punishment. Our every action is sinful, and any one of these sins is going to send us into Hell. And of course it is all these sins that will really bring God's wrath upon us. How important it thus is that we trust in Christ as our sin-bearer. Only through Him can we escape Hell.

But doesn't the bible teach that god would have all men saved?

But aren't there verses in the Bible that say something different? Don't we read in II Peter 3:9 that God declares, **"I would not wish that any should perish, but that all should come to Christ?"** Doesn't that imply that Christ has paid for everybody's sins? And what about I Timothy 2:4, where we read that Christ would have all men be saved? How can He desire this if He has not already paid for their sins? Again in I Timothy 2:6, doesn't the Lord declare that He gave His life a ransom for all? Or in I Timothy 4:10 doesn't God declare He is the Savior of all?

These verses certainly seem to indicate that indeed Christ paid for the sins of every last individual. But if that is so, then we are in trouble with the verses that we have already covered, which very clearly teach particular atonement. How can we reconcile these passages?

As we look at these verses we see a consistent use of the word "all"; "...all should come to Christ..." "...a ransom for all..." "...the Savior of all..." We must understand the Biblical use of this word, letting the Bible be its own dictionary. He wished that all should be saved. He gave His life a ransom for all. He is the Savior of all. Normally when we use that word all, we think of it as an all-inclusive kind of word. If there were ten people in the room, and we said, "they all have hats on," then we immediately get the picture that these ten people without exception had hats on. But in the Bible, when God uses the word all it is conditioned by the context.

For example, in Luke 2 God declares, **"A decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed."** We could conclude that **"all the world"** would include the North American Indians and Africa, etc. But the context shows us that the **"all the world"** to be taxed was that part of the world that was subject to taxation, namely, the Roman Empire. In other words, the word all was conditioned by the context in which it was found.

Likewise we read in Acts 2, as the Holy Spirit is being poured out, **"In the last days I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh."** We know from the Bible itself that God did not pour out the Holy Spirit on every last individual in the whole world that they would become prophets, or that they would prophesy; but He poured out His own Spirit on those who would believe. The **"all"** there is conditioned by the rest of the Bible, which declares that only those who are elect will believe. So the word **"all"** is much less than all-inclusive.

We read, for example, in I Corinthians 15:22, **"As in Adam all die..."** From the rest of the Bible we know that **"all"** is an all inclusive all. It includes every last individual in the whole human race, **"There is none righteous, no, not one."** But then the next phrase says, **"...so in Christ shall all be made alive."** If that **"all"** included every last individual, then that verse would be teaching universal atonement, and we know that is not so. Hell is going to be heavily populated by people who have not been made alive. They are spiritually dead. Therefore we must read that second phrase, **"...so in Christ shall all (who are to be made alive) be made alive."** That is, God is teaching that all the individuals He plans to save are saved by Christ's work. Other passages of the Bible show us that the ones He plans

Likewise, when God uses the language, "He gave His life a ransom for all," or "He is the Savior of all," or that "He wishes that all should come to a knowledge of the truth," we know that the "all" in these verses is conditioned by God's elective program. Only those whom He has predestinated, those whom He has elected, are the ones whom He has ransomed, of whom He has become

the Savior. These are the ones that God has in view when He uses this word "all." He gave His life a ransom for all His elect. He wishes that all His elect will come to Him.

But Doesn't The Bible Teach That Christ Paid For The Sins Of The Whole World?

But then there is a second kind of passage in the Bible that is frequently offered as proof that Christ indeed paid for the sins of every last individual in the whole world. We read in 1 John 4:14 that Christ is the Savior of the world. Likewise in John 4:42 we see the same phrase, that He is the Savior of the whole world.

In 1 John 2:2 the statement even appears stronger as we read, **"And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."** My, doesn't that really underscore the fact that He has paid for the sins of the whole world, every last individual in the whole world? In John 3:16 and 17 we apparently see the same kind of an idea, where we read, **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."** This too seems to indicate that He paid for the sins of every last individual.

In that regard, we must also consider the dramatic words of John the Baptist, as he greeted Jesus, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." By isolating these verses from the rest of the Bible, we could conclude that Christ did come and pay for the sins of the whole world. These verses, as they stand, certainly give that impression.

However, when we read these verses in the light of everything else in the Bible, we know that conclusion is not possible. If Christ had paid for the sins of the whole world, that is, of every last individual in the whole world, then as we have already seen, there could not be Judgment Day and Hell. Everyone's sins would have been paid for, and therefore there could be no such thing as an unjust person who must be sent to Hell. Since Christ would have died for every person, He therefore would have justified them by His blood.

Therefore we must look at these verses more carefully. Let us look at 1 John 2:2 more closely. As we do, we must remember that there is only one sin-bearer in this world, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is only one way that forgiveness of sins can be obtained, and that is through the shed blood of Christ. In 1 John 2:2 God declares, **"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."**

If we assume that He had indeed paid for the sins of the whole world, we run afoul of passages like Revelation 20:13, Matthew 12:36, Romans 2:5-6 and Colossians 3:25, which clearly indicate the unsaved must give an account of and pay for all their sins. None of these passages would make sense anymore if Christ had indeed paid for every single sin of the whole world; so we know that this cannot be the kind of payment God has in view in this passage?

In All The World Christ Is The Only Way To Salvation

Then how are we to understand this passage? We can understand these phrases if we note that in the first part of verse two God is simply declaring that Christ is the one who has provided for the salvation of those who believe. He is the propitiation for our sins. There is no one else who could provide the way back

to the Father, who has provided Himself as a substitute. Only Christ is the WAY.

In the second phrase, **"and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world,"** we see that God is simply expanding that fact by declaring that in the whole world there is no other method of salvation except through Christ. In the whole world there is no Savior except the Lord Jesus Christ. All the sins in the whole world which are to be forgiven are forgiven by the blood of Christ. This passage is not detailing the extent of God's salvation program in the world. It is simply indicating that for those who are to be saved Christ is the only propitiation.

Other passages declare to us who will be saved out of the whole world. They will be the elect. But in 1 John 2:2 God is simply declaring how they would be saved, and that is through Christ as the propitiation for their sins. Because we know that the unsaved of the world who remain unjust must stand for judgment and answer for every one of their sins and pay for their sins, we know that this verse cannot be teaching that their sins have already been paid for. God is simply declaring that those who will be saved out of the world, wherever they are found, can be saved only through Christ as the propitiation for their sins.

When John the Baptist declared, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world," he was simply declaring, this is the Lamb whereby salvation is possible. John the Baptist isn't going into the whole detail of that salvation. He is not indicating that there are God's elect, that there has to be belief on Him, and so on. He is simply making the declaration that Christ is the Savior who has come into the world. He is the only means whereby the sins of the world which are to be covered will be covered.

We see this truth very beautifully in John 3:16, where we read, **"For God so loved the world..."** He loved the world. His creation, and therefore He gave His only begotten Son, that out of this world whosoever believeth on Him should not perish. The declaration **"that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish"** automatically excludes the rest, does it not? That is the condition that God lays down. There must be belief on Him! And unless there is belief on Him they still will perish.

Why do they perish? They perish because of their sins. God had declared, **"The wages of sin is death"** (Romans 6:23). And so when God speaks of Christ as the Savior of the world, if we conclude that every last person's sins have been paid for, that will not be in agreement with all the other doctrines that point to the fact that there will be a vast company of people in Hell, paying for their sins.

Did Christ Pay For All Our Sins Except That Of Rejecting Christ?

Earlier in this study I indicated that there are those who believe that Christ paid for all our sins except the sin of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. This doctrine is suggested by John 3:18, which declares, **"He that believeth on Him is not condemned, But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."** This verse seems to indicate that the reason people are condemned is that they don't believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But even this passage will not withstand that kind of conclusion, because verse 19, which immediately follows, declares, **"and this is the condemnation...the light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."** Their sin, you see, is the love of darkness; and the love of darkness involves them in every kind of sin that is involved in the kingdom of darkness.

Verse 19 agrees altogether with those other statements of the Bible that indicate that men go to Hell not because they are sinners. Because they stand guilty before God, their failure to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ simply indicates that they have no covering for their sins. In Psalm 85:2 the Bible declares that **"thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people, Thou hast covered all their sin."** Christ's blood provides the covering whereby our guilt has been removed.

Moreover, when we conclude that Christ paid for the sins of the whole world, with the exception of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, then we have developed a gospel of grace that is again bordering on grace plus works. We're really saying that when Christ went to the cross, there by His grace He covered all our sins except one...the sin of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ.

That implies, then, that if the sin of rejecting Christ has not been covered by the blood of Christ, then the fact that I do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ becomes a good work of mine that is meritorious in saving me. We thus are declaring that God's grace covered all the rest of my sins. But because I have done the good work of believing on Christ, therefore I merit this salvation and all the grace that God applies to my life. We thus have placed ourselves in that terrible condition of developing a gospel of grace plus works, and that will send us to Hell for sure!

We must keep in mind, whenever we study any verses in the Bible that relate to salvation, that it is all of grace! Even the faith with which we believe is a gift of God. Actually it is not our faith that saved us, but the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only because He was faithful in going to the cross for our sins can we be saved. And the faith that we experience in our lives is really a reflection of the faith that Christ first demonstrated in paying for our sins. Both the faith which we see in our lives when we are saved, as well as the works that we do in our lives, are gifts of God. They are not meritorious in any way whatsoever!

But Doesn't The Bible Speak Of Those Who Are Sanctified And Yet Remain In Unbelief?

But there is one last group of verses that we ought to look at. They appear to indicate or at least can be misconstrued to teach that someone who is definitely unsaved still appears to be in a condition in which his sins have been paid for. The first of these is found in 1 Corinthians 7:15, where God declares, **"The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband."** Similarly, in Hebrews 10:29 God is discussing a man who knew the way of salvation and never did become a child of God. Then he deliberately turned away from the Gospel. And yet, in speaking of him God says, **"Of how much more punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing."**

These two passages are speaking definitely of unsaved people who are sanctified. It is this word **"sanctified"**, which suggests that somehow a work of grace has been done on behalf of the unsaved who remain unsaved.

Let us examine this question more closely. The word sanctification means to be set apart for the service of God. Certainly born again believers are set apart for the service of God. But what about those who are in the congregation, and thus are corporately of the Body of Christ, yet who are not true children of God? What about those unsaved members of a family in which there are saved individuals, which would identify that family corporately with the Kingdom of God? Did Christ pay for

their sins?

A third verse that is similar to this is II Peter 2:1. There God is talking about false prophets who are among the people. That is, they are members of the congregation. And they are bringing in damnable heresies, **"even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction."** The phrase **"that bought them"** certainly would seem to indicate that Christ had gone to the cross to pay for their sins.

We must look at these verses in the light of the discussion that we had earlier in this study, in which we saw that those who face Judgment Day must give an account of every sin. Because they must give an account of every sin, we know that they are not eternally Christ's people. They are not His sheep.

Certainly if we isolate these verses from the rest of the Bible, we might conclude that Christ had paid for their sins, as He did for the believers. Thus they would not go to Hell. And yet the very context of Hebrews 10:29 indicates that Hell and damnation must still be endured by this person...in spite of the fact that these verses speak of him as having been sanctified. Likewise, the language of II Peter 2 is very clear that the false prophets mentioned in this context are subject to eternal damnation.

Thus we see that while God speaks of certain individuals as being sanctified or having been **"bought"** of the Lord, they are still subject to eternal damnation. How can this be? How does the Bible reconcile these apparent contradictions? Let us continue to investigate this problem.

We must remember, as we look at these verses, that God is concerned about the church, in its corporate sense, as in its eternal sense. Those who have become born again believers are eternally members of the body of Christ. They belong to Him, and their sins have been paid for by Christ's blood. They are eternal members of the church Christ came to build. The organization in which these born from above believers are found is the congregation which is part of one denomination or another. And these congregations are the corporate expression of the Kingdom of God. The congregation is an organized, visible body of those who profess Christ.

Even though all those within the congregation profess Christ, they are not all necessarily believers. This is shown to us by the very verses we are studying. The false prophets of II Peter 2 were members of a congregation of believers. But they themselves were not saved.

An outstanding example of a congregation that had many unbelievers within it is that of national Israel. While there was a remnant chosen by grace within that congregation, the major part remained in unbelief. Thus they were still under damnation, even though as a whole body they were the corporate representation of the Kingdom of God here on this earth throughout the 2,000 years which preceded the coming of Christ.

Likewise in the New Testament God began to represent Himself organizationally or corporately in this world by the churches and the denominations that began to spring up after Pentecost. Each of these officially is identified with Christ, and yet each of these is composed of both believers and unbelievers.

We see this clearly as we read the first three chapters of Revelation, where God talks about the seven churches of Asia Minor. Each is represented in Heaven by a candlestick because they are Christ's church. Yet we see that God warns that in one church there is a Jezebel. And in another one they are following the Nicolaitans, who are heretics of some kind. This mixture of believers and unbelievers can be expected in every congregation even though, corporately

speaking, those same congregations identify with Christ.

Since each congregation was established, was set apart to serve Christ, every member of that church is looked upon as sanctified; that is, he is set apart for the service of God. Even a false prophet who is a member of the church is spoken of as having been bought by Christ. By this language God is indicating He went to the cross not only to save and pay for the sins of the born again believers, those who are His elect, but also in order to establish His corporate body, His churches, His congregations. In that sense, those who are members of the congregation have been bought.

But individually their sins have been paid for only if they personally have become believers. We saw this very clearly when we examined the Bible's teaching concerning the nature of Judgment Day. But corporately they are part of that body which has been bought as an organization by God (using the language of II Peter 2:1). Therefore, God can say that He has bought these false prophets.

In the same manner, the unsaved husband who is married to the saved wife is spoken of as being sanctified (I Corinthians 7:14). Because of one parent having become an eternal member of the Kingdom of God, the whole family has become corporately a part of the Kingdom of God even though the other family members may still be unsaved.

Thus, these verses that speak of unsaved persons being sanctified or having been bought are not teaching in any way that Christ has paid for their sins by His shed blood. They have been bought or have been sanctified only in the sense that they are members of the corporate body (that is, the organized church). And that organized church was established and exists because Christ shed His blood for the believers within those congregations.

I am convinced that when we examine everything that the Bible offers, we must conclude that limited atonement or particular atonement is the only answer that will correspond with all of scripture. You see, God has a very well-detailed and defined plan of salvation. He named those who were to be saved before the foundation of the earth and put their names in the Book of Life. He came to seek and to save those who were His sheep. It is all one complete design. It is true that the Gospel goes out to the whole world; and as we saw in the early part of this study, if anyone at all responds to Gospel, he WILL be saved. But we saw very clearly that nobody will respond except the Father draw him! And God will draw those whom He has elected in order that God's salvation program will maintain total integrity.

Having completed our consideration of the first three letters of our five letter acronym TULIP, let's go on to the fourth letter which is "I" and stands for "Irresistible Grace."

CHAPTER 5 -- I = IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

What does the Bible tell us about Irresistible Grace? Is it a fact that man can NOT resist the will of God; or on the other hand, is it a fact that man CAN resist the will of God? If God really wants somebody to be saved, is there anyone powerful enough to resist His will?

Now of course we know that we can never pit man against God, since God is infinite and omnipotent, all powerful; e.g., He speaks and the universe comes into existence...while man is a finite creature. There is no man who could frustrate the will of God. Everything that we know about God tells us that He is absolutely in control of every situation. BUT; Is it possible, as some would teach,

that God is the type of "gentleman" that wouldn't force anyone to be saved against his will?

If we hold the position that we can resist the will of absolutely nobody would be saved. Why is this so? Remember, we learned earlier in our study that "there is none that seeketh after God." We have already looked at the principle of TOTAL DEPRAVITY and discovered that man is dead in his sins and would never come to God. Even if the Gospel were preached for a thousand years or longer, nobody would come to salvation by his own choice. And so the idea that God is a gentleman and would not impose His will upon man's will is contrary to the Bible.

It is a fact, however, that thousands, and even millions, of people though out history ARE saved. God speaks of the saved as being as numerous as the stars in heaven, and as the sand on the seashore in number. This indicates that God has indeed imposed His will upon mankind in some way! And that is what we want to look at now, under the topic Irresistible Grace.

Those God Plans To Save Must Be Drawn To Him

In John 6:37-39 we read the significant truth that the Father has given to the Lord Jesus Christ certain ones who are to be saved. Verse 37 reads, "*all that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.*" In this verse the Bible teaches us first that there are certain ones whom the Father has given to the Lord Jesus. The second truth is that they "*shall come to Him.*" That is, it is God's plan that nothing can frustrate His will. Those whom God plans to save are given by the Father to Christ and they shall come to Him. There is no suggestion that these who were given to Christ can avoid being saved.

The fact is, John 6:39 states very implicitly, "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." In this verse Christ is declaring with absolute certainty that there will not be any defects in Christ's salvation program. Every individual God planned to save will be saved. God is giving us a solemn promise and declaration that His salvation program, in which He has decided whom He would in His sovereign will save from before the foundations of the world, would be accomplished. Nothing would or could frustrate the will of God! And so He irresistibly would have to draw us to Himself.

Philippians 1:6 states, "*Being confident...He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" Again God promises, God commits Himself to complete what He has begun. Can you see that the work that Christ began to do started even before Christ became SIN for us! Our names were identified with Him at the cross. Therefore, even before we were born, He had already begun His work of grace! As we are presented with the Gospel, and as God opens our spiritual ears and hearts to respond to the Gospel, God is continuing His plan of salvation for us. Philippians 1:6 declares that which He has begun will be completed. He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. God's plan will not be frustrated. It is an irresistible plan that is under the irresistible will of God.

Remember, in Matthew 16:16 Christ declared, "*I will build My church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*" What is the condition of the unsaved person before he is saved? He is a slave of Satan. He is under the dominion of darkness. He is a bond slave of his own sin. But Christ said, "*I will build My church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail...*" "Hell" cannot hold

these that I plan to save. No one can stop Me from what I intend to do.' And that is the reason that men and women are being saved. God is irresistibly drawing them.

Remember that Jesus said in John 6:44, "*No man can come to Me, except the Father draw him.*" Again, we see that it is required that God draw us to Himself. This is so because spiritually we are dead. As dead people we have nothing to offer for or against our salvation. Christ has set up His plan, and the Father draws us (yes, irresistibly) so that plan cannot be frustrated.

It is true that many, when they are first brought face to face with the Gospel, are offended by the Gospel. But every once in a while one of these will finally give in and admit he is a sinner: "Yes, I know that I am a sinner, and I know that I need salvation." -- What has happened? Who can resist God's will? When God wants to save a person, God begins to do His work of salvation within that person so that his heart is inclined to be obedient to the Gospel command...to believe on Him.

You see, we have as much to say about our new birth in Christ as we did about our first birth from our mother's womb. (Think about that for a moment.) Remember when you were born the first time? What did you have to do with it? Could you select your parents? Could you decide when you were going to be born? Could you decide if you wanted to be born? The answers to these questions are obviously and absolutely NO! You had nothing at all to do with it! You simply came into this world completely apart from your will.

Now, do you recall what Jesus said in John 3:6, as He talked to Nicodemus? He said, "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*" He is talking here about the NEW BIRTH and indicating that it is just as real a birth as the first birth. We had nothing to do with our first birth. God is the one who inclines our hearts. If left of ourselves we would never seek after Him, as we have so frequently seen in this study. We would go our own way, right up until the moment we die.

We don't want to turn to God. Our whole life is in rebellion against Him. But God decided to save us, in His own timetable. It may be when we are at middle-age, or it may be as an elderly person, close to our death bed. But if it's God's plan to save us, you can rest assured. He will draw us at the appropriate time. He will give us a will to believe, and a desire to turn away from our sins. Nobody can frustrate the will of God. Christ declared, "*I will build My church...*"

Remember what we read in Romans 9, where God said in verse 16, "*Then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that shall have mercy.*" Our will, ultimately, has nothing to do with it. What we think is an action of our will as we do respond to the Gospel is simply the fact that God has already imposed His will upon us and is irresistibly drawing us to Himself.

May I quote again from John 1:13, where God is speaking of those who have become sons of God? There He declares, "*Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" Could God be any plainer? If God waited for us and for our will to respond to the Gospel, we would never be saved! We would try everything possible to frustrate the Gospel because we, of ourselves, don't want to be saved. But when God says He is going to save us, you can rest assured He will save us! He will draw us irresistibly to Himself.

The Raising Of Lazarus Shows How Our Will Is Involved In Our Salvation

Let's look again for just a moment at

Lazarus in the tomb. He is dead. And Christ decides to resurrect him. And so Christ stands outside of that tomb and says, "*Lazarus, come forth!*" Now let's entertain an unreasonable notion for a moment. Picture Jesus hoping that Lazarus would really will to come forth, the idea being that if Lazarus didn't so will, he wouldn't come forth.

NO! That isn't what happened at all! Jesus stood outside of that tomb and said, "*Lazarus, come forth!*" And Lazarus did come forth! He came forth because Christ also gave him a will and inclined it with a desire to respond to that command. It was Christ's intention to raise Lazarus, and neither Lazarus nor anyone else was going to be able to frustrate Christ's plan to raise him.

And there we see dramatically a picture of our salvation. When Christ comes with the Gospel, as He comes to seek and to save that which was lost, you can depend upon it that everyone that He comes to save will be saved! There is no way that we can frustrate the will of God! Isn't that a marvelous doctrine?

Think about this...Suppose you had an unsaved loved one who was particularly rebellious against God, very wicked, and very hardened in sin...oh, so sinful! And you were hoping and hoping for this person's salvation, because you loved him dearly! You tried to witness to him, but he loved his sin so much that he didn't want to hear any of the Gospel.

And yet you know that God will not be frustrated by the wicked will of man. If God should decide to save this loved one, He would impose His will on the will of the loved one so that in due time this person would come to the Lord Jesus Christ. He would have a desire to come!

Isn't that a wonderful, wonderful blessing to know? Otherwise, you look at your friends and loved ones who are hardened in their sins, and you say, "Why pray for them? They'll never respond! They're far too wicked! Their consciences have been seared! How can it be that they would ever come to the Gospel?"

But praise God! God has given this avenue of prayer! And God has promised that the "effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

God expects us to pray for the unsaved. And we are to pray without ceasing. And God works through our prayers! We don't know if this loved one is elect or not; that is God's business. But we know that if he is God's elect, God will work through our prayers and God will impose His will upon the wicked, hardened, rebellious will of our loved one, so that his spiritual eyes will be opened, and there will begin to be a response to the Gospel. Oh, it is so marvelous! It is so heartening to know that God is in complete charge of the salvation program, and ultimately there is nothing that man can do that might frustrate Him in any way whatsoever!

And so this beautiful, beautiful principle that is laid down in the fourth part of the acronym, TULIP, Irresistible Grace, is so comforting to us! It gives us such great assurance when we know that Satan can never, never hold anyone in such terrible bondage that he would never be able to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Nobody can resist the will of God when He wants to save someone. God gives the faith, the repentance, Satan is absolutely helpless when he is up against the powerful intentions of a gracious Sovereign Almighty God! What blessed assurance we have! Praise God!

Once again a warning must be voiced. If we believe that man can resist God's will to save those whom He plans to save, effectively we have arrived at a gospel of grace plus works. For we are declaring that God has done what He must do and now it is up to us to take action, to do a work, that will complete this salvation plan for us. That work is to believe or

accept what God has offered to us. This is our work, for presumably God will not impose His will upon us. We can receive credit for this action of ours. Thus God has done His part and we have done ours. Together we have accomplished our salvation. Christ indeed has done the major work because He has paid for all our sins. But only because we of our own free will have accepted Christ does God's salvation program become effective for us. The very fact that we can frustrate God's plan to save us indicates the importance of the work we have done in accepting Christ.

But this whole line of reasoning will lead us to Hell. Our work has no bearing on our salvation. We are saved by grace alone. As we have seen repeatedly in this study, any salvation plan that includes even the smallest work on our part is not the salvation plan of the Bible. The only reason we turn to Christ is that the Father is drawing us. God is giving us the spiritual ears to hear and the regenerated heart to believe. It is of eternal importance that we understand that it is God who has irresistibly drawn us to Himself.

Well, this brings us to the last letter of the acronym TULIP, which is P and which stands for Perseverance of the Saints. Sometimes we refer to this concept as Once Saved; Always saved. Is this doctrine Biblical? In our next section we are going to focus our attention on this whole matter of what we could also call Eternal Security.

CHAPTER 6 -- P = PERSISTENCE OF THE SAINTS

Can one lose his salvation? This is a nagging question in the lives of many. Let us see if we can discover the Biblical teaching concerning the subject of eternal security, which is sometimes called the perseverance of the saints.

In answering the question of the security of our salvation, we should begin by an understanding of the nature of the salvation God has provided for us. The Biblical picture of unsaved man is that he is a sinner. He is a slave of Satan both in body and soul. He is altogether rebellious against God. In his whole being he is perverted and spiritually destitute (Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:11-20, Ephesians 2:1-3). As a result of his sin, he is under sentence of death. The Bible declares "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). The nature of that death is not only physical death, but also being eternally under God's wrath. There is no way to come into God's holy Heaven unless the penalty of sin, eternal damnation, first has been paid.

From What Has God Saved Us?

This brings us to the nature of the salvation God has provided for those who are saved. Christ has come as the Mediator, as the Redeemer, as our substitute to pay for our sins. In order for Him to do this it was necessary that He be a man like we are because it was man who sinned, and therefore it is man whom must pay the penalty for his sins. It was necessary for Him to be God because the wrath of God is so overwhelming and so terrible that, had He been any less than God, He would have been utterly consumed as He sought to pay for our sins.

As our Mediator, He became sin for us (II Corinthians 5:19). That is, He took upon Himself all the sins, the whole sinful nature, of those who have placed their trust in Him. As our substitute, burdened with our sins, He stood before the judgment throne of God and was found guilty. Because He had become guilty for our sins, God poured out upon Him the wrath that we should have suffered by spending an eternity in Hell. Only because He was the God-man could

He suffer so intensely that in the three days and three nights of the atonement He was able to completely pay for all our sins. What a wonderful Savior He is!

We, therefore, who have experienced this salvation, now stand before God as if we had just spent an eternity in Hell paying for all the sins we had ever committed. The criminal who has just come out of jail after paying in full the sentence demanded by the law for his crime now stands without any further guilt before the law for his crime.

Likewise the law never again can make any demands upon us for our sins. Never again is there any way that we could stand guilty before God, for every sin that we had ever committed or would ever commit has been atoned for by our Savior. He ransomed us from Hell by paying the price of Hell in our place. Therefore the Bible declares that there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). We are in Him because He was our substitute. When our Lord Jesus went to the cross it was as if we were hanging, there experiencing the wrath of God for our sins.

Since Christ has paid for all our sins, there is no way that we could commit a sin that would cause us to lose our salvation. Any sin we would do was already anticipated by Christ when He paid for our sins. As John 5:24 teaches, we do not come into judgment. Therefore we are eternally secure in Christ. Once we are truly saved, we can never lose that salvation because each and every sin we would ever commit has been covered by Christ's blood.

We Have Eternal Life

Moreover, the Bible teaches that as a result of our salvation some changes have occurred in us that have everlasting consequences and which further emphasize that we could never lose this salvation. John 5:24 teaches that we "have eternal life." If Christ had gone to the cross just to give us life, conceivably we could commit a sin and lose that life; but because He has given us eternal life, by the very nature of something that is eternal, it must be forever and ever. Thus there can be no sin that we could commit that could cause us to lose eternal life. This very statement, eternal life, implies that we can never lose this life that God has given us. We can never lose our salvation.

The phrase eternal life is not a philosophical term of some kind, thus having no real substance. Rather it is speaking of something that has become very substantive and real in our lives. It is related to the fact that in a very important part of our personalities we who are saved have become new creatures. We have been resurrected from being spiritually dead into eternal life. Let us see how this is.

The Bible teaches that in our essential beings we are body and soul. The Bible sometimes uses the word "spirit" in speaking of the soul or spirit essence of man. When man has conscious existence, as we all do on this side of the grave, we cannot see the soul of man. We are a completely integrated personality.

However, it is upon the death of an individual that a separation of soul and body does occur. At one moment there is a whole personality consisting of both body and soul. At the next moment there is only the body, which has no life in it whatsoever. Something has left that body. It is the soul, as real a part of that individual as his body, that has separated from the body and has left the body.

An example of the separation of soul and body is seen in the death of the thief on the cross. Jesus told the thief next to Him, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." A bit later Jesus declared, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." Shortly thereafter the body of Jesus was placed in a tomb. The body of

the thief was also buried. But both Jesus and the thief were present with the Father in Heaven. They went there in their soul existence.

The apostle Paul speaks of this separation as he, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, emphasizes "willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:8). Again, in Philippians 1:23,24 he confidently asserts "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." Furthermore we read in Revelation 20:4 of the "souls of them that were beheaded...; they lived and reigned with Christ..."

The reason the believer can and does go immediately into Heaven upon death is that at the moment of salvation he receives the resurrection of his soul. Before salvation both in body and soul he is spiritually dead. We saw this so clearly in the chapter on Total Depravity. This is why I Peter 4:6 declares, "for this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead." Obviously the Gospel is not preached in a cemetery where bodies lie. Rather it is preached throughout the world to those who are spiritually dead. But when he becomes saved, he experiences a resurrection. This glorious fact is taught so incisively in the Bible. In Colossians 3:1 God declares, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." Our Savior experienced the resurrection when He arose from the grave. Since we are risen with Christ, we too must have experienced the resurrection. In Ephesians 2:4-6 God insists, "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace are ye saved; and hath raised us up together..."

How beautifully God is teaching that we have been raised with Christ. Since He arose, that is, He experienced the resurrection, and since we arose with Him, therefore we too have experienced the resurrection.

But in which part of our persons have we experienced the resurrection? It was not in our bodies. That can be seen so readily. Our bodies go into the tomb at death to await the resurrection of the last day. The whole Chapter 15 of I Corinthians discusses the wonderful event of the resurrection of our bodies.

Rather, it was in our soul or spirit essence that we experienced the resurrection. This is why at death the believer can go immediately into God's presence. While he cannot go into Heaven or be with God in his body until his body is resurrected a perfect spiritual body (cf. I Corinthians 15:42-44), in his soul or spirit he can go immediately into Heaven at death. His soul was already resurrected from the moment of salvation.

This resurrection is called the first resurrection in Revelation 20:5, as God is explaining why the souls of the martyrs can live and reign with Christ. These martyrs have already experienced the resurrection of their souls, the first resurrection, and therefore can go into God's holy presence immediately upon death. In this connection, in Revelation 20:6 God emphasizes five characteristics of those who have experienced the first resurrection. They are (a) "blessed", (b) they are "holy", (c) on such the second death has no power (cf. Revelation 20:14, where God teaches that the second death is Hell), (d) they are priests of God: and (e) they reign with Him.

All five of these characteristics apply to those who have been saved. We are the blessed. Think for example of the Beatitudes of Matthew Chapter Five, where our Lord speaks of the various ways believers are blessed. We are holy (I Peter 2:9, "Ye are a holy nation"). We

are those who will not come into the second death, He.. (Romans 8:1 reads, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.") We are priests of God. (I Peter 2:9 reads, "Ye are a royal priesthood;" cf. Revelation 5:10.) We reign with Him. (Ephesians 1:20-22 shows us that Christ is seated at the right hand of God reigning over everything in this age as well as that to come. And Ephesians 2:6 declares that we are seated with Him.)

Therefore, we too are reigning as we serve as His ambassadors on this earth (cf. Revelation 5:10). Thus we can know that the first resurrection applies to the one who has experienced salvation.

This explains, also, why the believer has within himself a great love for God and an earnest desire to do God's will. We read in I John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." You see, it is in our soul that we have experienced the new birth, that we have been born from above, that we have experienced the resurrection, that we have become a new creation. Therefore, in our soul existence we will never wish to sin again.

Only because our bodies have not experienced the resurrection are we still troubled by sin. In our bodies, which are as real a part of us as our souls, we still lust after sin, and therefore we are commanded to crucify the flesh and its desires. In our soul, wherein we have already experienced the resurrection, and which is as real a part of us as our body, we never wish to sin again. God speaks about this struggle in the life of the child of God through the apostle Paul, as we read in Romans 7:21-24:

I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man (in his soul, where he has become born from above); but I see another law in my members (in his body, where he has not yet experienced the resurrection) warning against the law of my mind ("mind" in this context is a synonym for soul) and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

When we realize that the child of God had experienced the resurrection, not only can we understand the conflict that continues in the life of the one who has been saved, but we can also understand why the Bible declares in I Peter 4:6 that those who were preached to when they were spiritually dead might "live according to God in the spirit." In our "spirit" or "soul" we experienced the resurrection, and therefore we can live to God.

Now we can understand, too, why God declares in I Thessalonians 3:13 that when Christ comes He will come with all His saints. In I Thessalonians 4:14 this truth is further underscored as God promises at the coming of Christ that "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Those who have been saved eventually die; that is, they fall asleep (to use the Biblical language). But while their bodies are placed in the graves to await the resurrection of the last day, in their souls they continue to everlasting life. Death is simply the time when they change residence. At death they leave their bodies and continue to live and reign with Christ in Heaven.

All these marvelous truths and promises are certain and sure because at salvation we receive eternal life. How wonderful is the grace of God that He has provided such a magnificent salvation. Surely we should be able to see that one who is truly saved is eternally secure.

Before I leave the subject of eternal life I should comment on the future of the unsaved who remain dead in their sins. When they die there is likewise a

separation of soul and body. But they in their soul existence cannot go into the presence of God. They cannot go there because they have not experienced the resurrection of their souls. The Bible tells us they go to a place of silence (Psalm 115:17). "They will not have conscious existence again until they are raised at the end of time to stand for judgment. God speaks of this in Revelation 20:5, *"the rest of the dead"* (the unsaved) *"lived not"* (did not have conscious existence) *"until the thousand years were finished."*

In other words, when unsaved persons die, the next thing they will be aware of is the resurrection of the last day when they are raised to stand for judgment. How awful that judgment will be! How eternally important it is that we become saved while it is still the day of grace. *"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"* (Hebrews 2:3)

Returning to the matter of the eternal security believers enjoy, we find many other passages which teach this grand truth. In John 10:27-31 God declares that we shall never perish, and no one shall snatch us out of God's hand. In Ephesians 1:12 we have the promise that God has given the Holy Spirit to the believer as the guarantee of his inheritance. In Philippians 1:6 the Bible faithfully promises that God will complete His work within us. In the closing verse of Romans 8, God promises that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God. Specifically, we read these beautiful promises:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Verses 35 and 38-39)

Here we have the very confidence of salvation. As we consider these verses, how can we think even for a moment that we can lose our salvation?

But What About Those Verses Which Seem To Teach That We Can Lose Our Salvation ?

But aren't there verses that seem to indicate beyond the shadow of a doubt that, after all, we can lose our salvation? What about such passages as Hebrews 6:4-8 or Hebrews 10:26-27 or II Peter 2:20 or John 15:2,6? If we read these passages superficially, isolating them from the rest of Bible, we can indeed come to a conclusion that a believer can lose his salvation. However, when we read them and study them as we should, that is, viewing them in the light of everything else the Bible teaches, we know that under no circumstance could they be teaching that we can lose our salvation. If they are teaching this, then we would have a major contradiction concerning all the other passages of the scripture that indicate the nature of our salvation and the promises of God concerning the eternal character of our salvation.

The Body Of Christ - Individual And Corporate

But these passages that seem to teach the possibility of the loss of our salvation must be faced. They, too, are part of the Bible. We can understand them if we will keep in mind, as we saw earlier in our study, that the Bible presents the body of Christ or the church in two ways. Sometimes, when the Bible is talking about Christ's body or the church, it is speaking of individual believers who personally have become born again.

These individuals are, of course, eternally secure in Christ, as we have seen from the foregoing passages.

The Bible also, however, presents the body of Christ as a corporate body, that is, as an organized membership of those who have declared their desire to serve God. This corporate body is seen in the congregations and denominations and groups of believers which have been formed throughout the New Testament period and who declare that they will serve the Lord Jesus Christ. But within this corporate body of church members there are many who are not born again. Corporately they have become citizens of God's Kingdom by virtue of their church membership.

But personally they have not become new creatures in Christ. Personally, their sins have not as yet been paid for. They have never personally accepted the fact of their spiritual bankruptcy and the fact that it is only by grace that they can be saved. They are those who believe that because they have joined the church, because they are seriously attempting to live a holy life, therefore they are worthy before God. They have a knowledge of many things that the Bible teaches. They know the Bible declares that mankind is sinful and is under the wrath of God. They know that Christ is the only way. But personally, individually, this has never become an intrinsic, intimate part of their lives. They are yet in their sins.

Israel - An Example Of God's Corporate Body

Israel of old is an excellent example of this. Every Israelite was convinced he was saved, that he was acceptable to God. He believed this in view of the fact that Israel was the chosen race, in view of the fact that He kept the ceremonial laws. But the Bible teaches that most of Israel at any time in its history was unsaved.

Hebrews 3:15-19 declares this most graphically, as God states that they could not enter into His rest because they believed not.

This passage remembers ancient Israel in the wilderness on the way to the land of Canaan. They were intimately associated with God as He guided them in the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They drank the water that miraculously come from the rock. They tasted of the manna that came from heaven. They were enlightened concerning the will of God. They were under the personal leadership of that great type of Christ, Moses. But most of them were not saved. The Bible sadly records "that they could not enter in" (Hebrews 3:19). It explains further that "the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:2).

Corporately they were members of Christ's body. Corporately they had become identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. Corporately they were the bride of Christ. Corporately they were well acquainted with the promises of God. Corporately they experienced many blessings of God in their lives. But personally they were not saved. They individually had not trusted God with saving faith. Therefore they were still subject to Hell.

So is the case in the church today. There are those who are members of the congregation in good and regular standing. They may teach Sunday School. They may be pastors. They may pray fervently. They may read the Bible. They may do all the things that true believers do. But if they have not become new creatures in Christ, they still are not saved. These are the people whom God has in view in such passages as Hebrews 4:4-8, Hebrews 10:26-27, II Peter 2:20, and John 15:2,6. Like Nicodemus, who was a faithful member of the Jewish congregation of his day,

they must still be born from above before they can enter Heaven.

Obviously, those in the congregation who have not experienced the new birth and yet believe they are saved rightly should believe they can fall from grace. The salvation they are following is one in which they are expecting to be declared worthy before God because of their church membership or because of their actions as seemingly committed Christians. When they stop living this way, they no longer are identified with the body of Christ. The fact is they were never saved.

The Teaching That We Can Lose Our Salvation Is A Dangerous Doctrine

The doctrine that we can fall from grace or lose our salvation is indeed very dangerous in the sense that effectively it makes our works a ground for salvation. If we believe that somehow by God's grace we are saved, but now, being weak in ourselves in departing from the law of God we would stand guilty before God, effectively we are declaring that a condition of our salvation is our good works. In other words, we think we are saved by God's continued grace in some sense, but in actuality we are attempting to gain salvation by living some kind of holy life.

We therefore have effectively designed our own salvation plan whereby we can merit God's continued favor and salvation by our acts in doing good works. Our salvation, therefore, is no longer a gracious bestowal of God's grace, God's unmerited favor upon hopelessly bankrupt sinners, but is something we have earned because of our holy lives. We have then fallen into the snare of the Jews of whom God speaks in Galatians 5, who were insisting that a requirement of salvation was circumcision. There God declares that those who believe this are then not under grace but under the curse of the law. Ephesians 2:8-10 clearly indicates that by grace we have been saved, not of works.

That our works could never save us is clearly indicated when we realize that the Bible teaches our best works are as filthy rags in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6). In James 2:10 God declares that if we have broken one of the smallest points of the law, we are guilty of the whole law of God. In other words, if we think for a moment that we can be saved by doing good works, we have elected to follow a salvation plan whereby we would have to be absolutely perfect before Him. If we deviate in the slightest from the perfection of God's law, we immediately come into the condemnation of sin and will be cast into Hell. Praise God that our salvation is of grace! The works that we do are a result of God's grace in our lives.

Some are afraid that if we teach that we cannot lose our salvation, someone who is a believer will become a very profane, wicked person in the security of believing that every sin has been paid for. He therefore will wish to enjoy the pleasure of sin.

Anyone who has become a true child of God will realize the impossible nature of this statement. He is a new creature in Christ, living with an eternal resurrected soul. Sin has become abhorrent to him. He doesn't require the threat of God's condemnation to be motivated to live a holy life.

In the eyes of an unsaved person, who lusts after sin both in his body and soul, sin is very attractive. But in the life of the true believer, who has received his resurrected soul, there is a severe conflict within his own personality when he sins. In his new soul he feels violated if he gives in to the lusts of his sinful body. He finds that his highest pleasure is in obedience to God because this is the

kind of life in which his soul has pleasure.

Moreover, God indwells him. He has become the property of God, in view of the fact that he was ransomed by Christ. God therefore will begin to deal with him if he continues in sin. It is thus impossible for a born from above believer to backslide, to again live as the unsaved person that he was before he had become a new creature in Christ.

Peace With God

We therefore see very conclusively that there is no question at all about the eternal security of our salvation. What a tremendous comfort to us who have experienced God's saving grace in our lives! We never have to live with that feeling that possibly we might commit a sin of which we are not aware, or for which we have not specifically asked forgiveness, and thus end up in Hell in spite of the fact that at one time we were saved. We live with the peace of God in our hearts that we eternally are sons of God. We live with that tremendous joy that all our sins have been paid for. We will never have to answer to God for our sins. We will never stand before the judgment throne of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, as our substitute, as our Mediator, has already stood condemned before God on our behalf. As our sin-bearer He has already borne the wrath of God we so rightly deserved. What a magnificent salvation God has provided for us! On that note we conclude our consideration of Eternal Security, which is also referred to as the doctrine. Once saved, always saved. We have considered it under the topic of the Perseverance of the Saints, which was the P part, or the last letter of our acronym, TULIP. This finishes our study of TULIP.

CHAPTER 7 -- CONCLUSION

We have come to the end of our study of the magnificent salvation program God has provided. We have seen that God indeed has a well-meant offer of salvation that goes to the whole world, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. We have seen, however, that because man is dead in his sin, completely rebellious against God, totally a slave to Satan, of his own will he will never respond to the Gospel. But Christ has, before the foundations of the earth, developed a very intricate and detailed plan of salvation wherein He has named those whom He would save. Therefore, as the Gospel goes out into all the world, Christ is seeking out those whom He has planned to save; and indeed He will save them!

This shows us that God is sovereign in these things, and nothing can frustrate God's eternal will. Again the question ought to be raised, "Where do I stand if I am unsaved and an not one of God's elect? Is there any possibility that I can be saved?" The answer we must come to is that the election program of God is God's business rather than ours. If we are unsaved, there is only one way to become right with God, and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. By recognizing our sins and throwing ourselves on the mercies of God, trusting in Christ as our Savior, whether we think we are elect or not, whether we think we are predestinated or not, we will find the only hope there is, in the precious blood shed by Jesus at the cross.

If a person is elect unto salvation, God will incline his will, and so he will want to be saved. He won't ever want, in his born again soul, to sin again, and if a person is not predestinated unto salvation, he will not be the least bit interested in God's salvation program. He might try to design one of his own, but he won't care about God's plan.

I am reminded of the time that the reformer Martin Luther, when he was still a young lad, read St. Augustine's

writings concerning election and predestination, which in turn were based upon the Biblical writings of Paul. Luther struggled in anguish with the horrible thought that perhaps he was not one of the elect who were predestined unto salvation...as much as he wanted to be faithful and saved...just think of it! What if he wasn't one of the elect?

He brought this concern in anxiety and tears to his beloved pastor, who told him, "Stop worrying, Martin, about these lofty theological matters! Instead, look to the precious shed blood of Jesus at the cross, which was shed for your sins! That is where forgiveness lies! Look to the blood of Jesus shed at Calvary for the forgiveness of your sins and for your salvation!" Yes, it is true, that is where salvation is to be found. So keep your eyes upon your precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Find your salvation and forgiveness in His shed blood at the cross of Calvary!

The advice given to Luther is also good advice for us when we struggle with such questions. You see, at the point where we are feeling anxiety, God is in fact calling. At that point, don't worry about predestination and election! Just trust Jesus! He came to seek and to save that which was lost. When you recognize that you ought to go to Hell for your sins, and yet you don't want to, but would rather spend eternity in joy praising our wonderful God in the fellowship of the saints, then simply throw yourself on the mercy of God and cry out to Him for His loving salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ. You can depend on the fact that YOU WILL BE SAVED!

God clearly teaches that if you seek with all your heart, you will be saved. "Seek and ye shall find." "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." ***But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (right, privilege) to become the sons of God; to them that believe on His name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.***

After you are saved, you will want to study the Bible; and when you read it, you will realize that when you wanted to be saved it was really because God was drawing you. He elected you. He did His work of grace within your heart. (You had become "born again...of the will of God.") The doctrine of election does not frustrate the Gospel call in any way at all. It is rather the insurance program that guarantees that the Gospel program of God will be successful. In a deeper sense of speaking, actually, it is the shed blood of Jesus that guarantees that the Gospel program of God will be successful. To be saved, you must yield, as God turns you from your own salvation program to make you a part of His salvation program. If you do yield your will in repentance to God through Christ, as God empowers you to do so, then the blood of Jesus shed at Calvary in accord with God's program of election and predestination will absolutely guarantee that you will be saved.

I trust that this study will have helped us all to gain a greater appreciation of what a great and wonderful loving God we have! He is sovereign in every area of our lives. Praise God for His magnificent salvation program!

APPENDIX 4 – SUNDAY THE SABBATH?

By Harold Camping

The Bible Is Without Error

In its original autographs, or manuscripts, the Bible is the infallible Word of God. It is completely inerrant. It has no errors of any kind whatsoever. This is so because the original

manuscripts were God breathed. Holy men of old spoke as God the Holy Spirit moved them. Thus, God is the author and we may never question what He has written.

However, we must always remember that a translation is not the original language and, therefore, is not as trustworthy as the original language. The translators were not inspired. They were fallible men who performed the awesome task of translating the original God breathed writings into another language. Because they were not inspired by God and because of grammatical differences between languages, they are not able to produce a perfect translation. However, in spite of these difficulties, the translation identified as the "Authorized King James Version" was produced with such accuracy that we can ordinarily trust the translation to be the Word of God.

It is true that some translators did their work more faithfully than others; nevertheless, of all the translations that are available today, I have no doubt that the King James translation is the best and the most accurate translation. If I had to trust in any English Bible, I would trust far more quickly in the King James Bible than in any other. This is particularly true because it can be shown that the Greek manuscripts (Textus-Receiptus Text) that were used in the translation of the King James Bible were more consistent with the original writings than the manuscript copies used in almost all other translations of the Bible.

We must remember that even the King James Bible is a translation, and now and then, the translators did not do quite as good work as they could have done. We do not know why God has allowed it to be this way, but it is a fact. However, by God's mercy, we are able to check the translators' work. We can go back to the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and the Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament. That is why concordances and Interlinear Hebrew/English Old Testaments and Greek/English Interlinear New Testaments are so important and helpful.

The original manuscripts of the Bible were almost entirely written in the Hebrew and Greek languages. We do not have the original manuscripts, but we have reason to believe that the Hebrew and the Greek manuscripts from which the King James Bible is translated are so accurate that for all intents and purposes we must set the presumption that they are infallible.

Occasionally a writer in a commentary struggles to understand a verse. He looks at the original Hebrew, and he may conclude that the scribe may have made an error in connection with a word that is part of a verse because it is difficult to understand. He may then suggest that if one letter of one word in the original Hebrew is changed very slightly it will become a different letter and, therefore, the word will be a different word. This in turn will give a different sense to the verse, and we can understand the verse much better.

Such a suggestion must never be countenanced. When looking at the original language manuscripts, we never question a single letter of a word. God insists on this principle in Galatians 3:16, where He speaks of a verse in the Bible in which the word "seed" appears. He emphasizes that the word "seed" is singular, not the plural word "seeds." Thus, God is pointing out that in the original manuscripts every word and every letter of every word is infallible.

The Puzzle of the Word "Sabbath"

In this study we will carefully examine one word that greatly confounded the translators. Amazingly, this problem is found not only in the King James Bible

but in every other English translation, and not only in the English translations but also in the German, the Dutch, the Spanish, and in virtually all translations. It is not only found in those Bibles that were translated from the Textus-Receiptus text but also in those that used the Nestle or Westcott Hort text.

The problem has to do with the translation of the Greek word "Sabbath." Somehow the translators were puzzled when they came to this New Testament word, and because of a lack of understanding, they hid an important and beautiful teaching of the Bible.

Most surprisingly, any student of the Bible can use a concordance together with a Greek copy of the New Testament and quickly discover the existence of this problem. Thus, one wonders why the translators had not long ago made necessary corrections in their translations. We can speculate that possibly they were tremendously concerned that the ceremonial laws recorded in the Old Testament that looked toward the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ were completed in Christ. Thus, they wanted to make sure there would be no misunderstanding about the fact that we are now in the era of the New Testament, and the Old Testament ordinances like the Sabbath are no longer to be observed. Later we will suggest other possible reasons for the inadequate translation of the word "Sabbath."

Let us examine this problem and learn the important truth lost to a high degree to the church because of the faulty translation of the word "Sabbath."

Singular and Plural Words

We must begin by examining the usage of the word "Sabbath" in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the word "Sabbath" in the original manuscripts is sometimes a singular word and sometimes it is a plural word. Is it permissible to take a singular word of the original manuscript and translate it as a plural word? The answer is "No. Absolutely not." If God had wanted it in the plural, He would have written it in the plural. As we saw earlier, God insists on this principle in Galatians 3:16 where God speaks of a verse in the Bible where the singular word "seed" appears. He makes the emphasis that it is the singular word "seed," not the plural word "seeds."

Likewise, is it permissible to translate a plural word to make it singular in the translation? The answer is "No." If God had wanted it to be a singular word, He would have made it singular in the original. But that is precisely what the translators frequently have done with the word "Sabbath." We can readily find verses in which the word "Sabbath" in the original was singular but was translated as a plural word, and we can find verses in which the word "Sabbath" in the original was plural but was translated as a singular word.

An example of this is found in Matthew 12:1 where we read: "At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn; and His disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat."

The translators have indicated that the word "Sabbath" is singular, but the Greek text uses the word "Sabbath" in the plural. How could the translators have committed this error?

Moreover, the Greek text does not have the word "day." It simply says "Sabbaths." While the addition of the word "day" in the English may not be as serious as the substitution of the singular for the plural, it is still a curious and unwarranted addition to the original text. There are instances in the Bible where the Greek speaks of "the day of the Sabbath," but how can it be that the translators dared to introduce the word "day" in this verse when it is not in the original?

When we correct these two errors of the translators, we will find that the King James Bible should read, "And at that time Jesus went on the Sabbaths through the corn; and His disciples were an hungered." Thus, we learn that it was an habitual practice of Jesus and the disciples, on the Sabbath, the seventh day Sabbath since it is still the Old Testament side of the cross, to go through the corn and pluck the ears.

In Matthew 12:2 we read: "But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day."

Here the translation has the correct gender and number; the word "Sabbath" is a singular word, but again the translators added the word "day," which is not in the original. The word "day" is not found in this verse. As we continue our study we will discover many other examples of this puzzling kind of translation. However, the first verse we wish to examine is Matthew 28:1, for this verse together with other similar verses will help us get to the root of the problem raised because of the faulty translation of the word "Sabbath."

This study is not intended to denigrate the King James Bible. The King James Bible is the Bible, and we better listen to it. It is the Word of God. Ordinarily, it is very trustworthy, but in this very narrow window of the word "Sabbath" there are problems. When correction is made in the use of the word "Sabbath," we discover that it is a beautiful word that gives us aid, and comfort, and security. It is designed by God to identify with the first day of the week so that we might have maximum blessing in our lives.

"Week" or "Sabbaths"?

Matthew 28:1 is translated: "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week [the translators italicized the word *day* to indicate it was not in the original], came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre."

The translators correctly translated the Greek word "opse" as "end." It is a word also translated as "even" as in Mark 11:19, "And when even was come, he went out of the city." Since the seventh day Sabbath ended at sundown, on Saturday, when it had become dark, the Sabbath Day was past. Therefore, the first few words in Matthew 28:1 are correctly translated "in the end."

The translators also correctly translated the Greek word "mia" as "first." The Greek word "mia" is translated as "one" more than 50 times in the New Testament. It was also translated as "first" eight times in the New Testament. For example "mia" is used in Titus 3:10 to say, "A man that is an heretic after the first [Greek "mia"] and second admonition reject."

As we go on in our study, we will see that both the translation "first" and the translation "one" apply to the Greek word "mia" used in Matthew 28:1.

But it is the Greek word "Sabbaths" that is found in Matthew 28:1 that surprises us. Amazingly, the Greek shows that the verse really says, "In the end of Sabbaths [plural], at the dawning on toward the first of the Sabbaths [not "week"]." The second word "Sabbaths" in this verse is identical to the first word "Sabbaths." Why did the translators change the second "Sabbaths" to "week"? First of all the word "week" is singular whereas "Sabbaths" is plural. As we have seen, the Bible specifically prohibits a change of this kind. Moreover, God very carefully used precisely the same word "Sabbaths" both in the phrase "the end of the Sabbaths" and in the phrase "the first of the Sabbaths." Why did they change the plural word "Sabbaths" in the phrase "the end of the Sabbaths" to a singular word "Sabbath," and why did they change the word "Sabbaths" in the

phrase "the first of the Sabbaths" to the phrase "to the first of the week"?

We can speculate why the translators might have been tempted to change the second word "Sabbaths" to week. Christ went to the cross on Friday and was in the tomb on the Old Testament Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. But Sunday morning? How can this Sunday be a Sabbath when the Sabbath is past? And so the translators guessed or decided not to translate that second use of the word "Sabbaths" as "Sabbaths." They concluded that it must mean the word "week." They had no Biblical validation for this. If God had wanted to use another word to avoid the use of the word "Sabbaths" in connection with Sunday, He would have used another word. But God used the word "Sabbaths." We wonder why?

The Self Righteous Pharisee

Before we answer that question, we should look at Luke 18:9-12, where Jesus is commenting about a self righteous Pharisee. Verses 11-12 declare: "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."

This is not a correct translation of what the Pharisee said. The word "week" in this statement is the word "Sabbath" (singular genitive of the second declension, in this instance). It is indeed curious that the translators translated the plural word "Sabbaths" found in Matthew 28:1 as "week." Yet in Luke 18 they translated the singular word "Sabbath" also as "week." Thus, they are not at all consistent in their translation. In the Luke account the word "week" is singular as is the word "Sabbath," but we can find no Biblical justification for translating the Greek word "Sabbath" as "week."

An argument is made that the use of the plural "Sabbaths" as it is found in Matthew 28:1 somehow means "between the Sabbaths," which then allows a change from "Sabbaths" to "week." But there are only six days between the Sabbaths. Therefore, "week" and "between the Sabbaths" could not be synonymous. There is no Biblical warrant for this. Moreover, in Luke 18:12 the word in the original is "Sabbath" (singular). Yet the translators dared to translate this also as "week." We, therefore, have additional evidence of their confusion in dealing with the word "Sabbath." Luke 18:12 should be translated, "I fast twice in the Sabbath."

With this corrected translation, we can understand what the self righteous Pharisee is saying. The seventh day Sabbath was a holy day to Old Testament Israel. God did not provide manna on the Sabbath; they had to gather a double portion the day before. They were to do no work of any kind on the Sabbath; they were not to cook, they were not to make a fire. Thus, it was a logical day to try and prove "how holy I am," as did the Pharisee. While others ate the food that was prepared the day before, he said, "I'm going to fast," and everyone will say of me, "Isn't he holy. He's fasting."

Fasting was very important to ancient Israel. For instance, we read in Isaiah 58, "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?" The Pharisee skipped not one but two meals on the Sabbath. He fasted for two meals and there is a possibility that the Jews ate only two meals on the Sabbath. Therefore, it appeared that he was a very holy man in that he ate neither of these meals. He was showing how super holy he was because he observed the Sabbath day in a super holy way. In any case, the phrase "I fast twice in the week" is not a faithful translation of the Greek. It should be translated, "I fast twice in the Sabbath."

Is the Hebrew Word for Sabbath Also the Word for Week?

An additional possible rationale might be suggested as to why the translators of the King James Bible substituted the word "week" for "Sabbaths." Theologians have held that the Hebrew word for "Sabbath" also may be translated as "seven" or as "week." Furthermore, because the New Testament Greek uses a transliteration of the Hebrew word "Sabbath" to describe a Sabbath, it would seem to logically follow that even as the Hebrew word for "Sabbath" also means "week," then the Greek word for "Sabbath" also may be translated "week."

This rationale can be shown to be faulty for two major reasons. The first reason is that the Hebrew word for "Sabbath" and the Hebrew word for "seven" or for "week" are different words. The Hebrew word for Sabbath is ZPC (shabbath with the Hebrew letters Schin, Beth, He). The Hebrew word for "seven" or "week" is DPC (shawboah with the Hebrew letters Schin, Beth, Ain). These two words are not interchangeable. They are different words. Therefore, in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament the word "seven" or "week" is never used in place of the word for "Sabbath."

This truth is further emphasized when we realize that the first day of the seventh month as well as the Day of Atonement, which was the tenth day of the seventh month, were called Sabbaths in Leviticus 23. In the same chapter, both the first day and the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles are called Sabbaths. The emphasis in these cases is not on seven.

Secondly, it must be noted that while the Greek word for "Sabbath" is a transliteration of the Hebrew word "Sabbath," it became a Greek word when it was used in the New Testament, and the grammatical rules for Hebrew cannot be used in trying to understand the Greek. Even if it were true (and it is not true), that the Hebrew word for "Sabbath" could be translated as the word "week" in the Old Testament, it would not follow at all that the Greek word for "Sabbath" could also be translated as the word "week" in the New Testament.

The Old Testament Sabbaths End

Returning to Matthew 28:1, let us carefully examine the phrase that has the first use of the word "Sabbaths." It says, "In the end of the Sabbaths." How long had the seventh day Sabbath been observed? All through the Old Testament era, and it had been particularly articulated on Mount Sinai, and spelled out in the ten commandments: God's command was that man should work for six days and rest on the seventh day; it is the Sabbath.

God gave a reason why they were to do this: It was a picture of the coming of the Lord Jesus. A man rested from physical work on the Sabbath even as he is to rest in the Lord Jesus and cease from trying to become saved by spiritual work. He was to trust entirely on the saving work of the coming Messiah.

God declares in Ezekiel 20:12: "Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them."

God is instructing us that the Old Testament Sabbaths were signs pointing to the fact that salvation is entirely of Jehovah. This explains why Deuteronomy 5:15 declares: "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day."

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, from the house of bondage, He was

pointing to the spiritual reality that salvation is of God. Egypt is used in the Bible as a figure or type of being in bondage to sin and to Satan. Even as ancient Israel was brought out of Egypt only by God's almighty power, so we who are saved are freed from bondage to sin and Satan by God's power. Even as ancient Israel could take no credit whatsoever for their escape from Egypt, so we who have become saved can take no credit whatsoever for our salvation.

Thus, the Hebrew word "Sabbath" is also a Hebrew word for "rest." It ordinarily is used to focus our attention on the spiritual rest we receive in salvation.

The law of the Sabbath rest was to be so rigorously adhered to that, as we read in Numbers 15, when a man picked up a few sticks, Moses went to God and asked what to do to the man. God said he was to be stoned to death for picking up a few sticks! And he was stoned to death. Through this God illustrates the dynamic principle that the only way to be saved is to trust in the coming Messiah. Who was typified by the seventh day Sabbath. We are to look only to Him, and the moment we trust our work in the slightest degree as a basis for salvation (even though we believe we are saved by God's grace), we are still under the wrath of God. This is the same principle that is taught in Galatians 5 where God instructs us that if an individual trusts in his physical circumcision as a basis for having become right with God, he has fallen from grace; that is, one is either saved solely by the grace of God or he is not saved at all. Indeed, the seventh day Sabbath of the Old Testament typified Jesus Christ as our Savior.

On the last Sabbath of the Old Testament era, Christ, Who is our Sabbath, had in one sense completed the work God had assigned to Him in bearing the wrath of God on behalf of all who were to be saved. Late Friday afternoon, He uttered the dramatic words, "It is finished." And on that last Sabbath His body rested in the tomb.

Amazingly, even as God rested on the seventh day from His work of creating this universe, so Christ in a real sense rested on the seventh day from His work of creating the Kingdom of God through His shed blood.

In another sense His work would not be finished until He arose from the grave on Sunday morning for He was to be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth and three days and three nights included that last Sabbath.

The point, however, of Matthew 28:1 is that this Sabbath during which Christ rested in the tomb was the last Sabbath of the Old Testament era. The phrase "In the end of the Sabbaths" could be expanded to read, "Now that the era of the Old Testament Sabbaths has come to an end inasmuch as Jesus Who was typified by those Sabbaths had finished His work and was now resting from His labors." The last seventh day Sabbath like all the previous seventh day Sabbaths pointed directly to the cross where Christ alone did all the work that was necessary to save those who believe on Him.

Christ rose from the grave on a Sunday morning and the era of the Old Testament Sabbaths came to an end. The Old Testament ordinance commanding the keeping of seventh day Sabbaths ended.

God is instructing us that never again are we to observe the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week. Never again is man to observe a Sabbath day that has the same meaning that it had in the Old Testament. It is the end of the Sabbaths. All the Sabbaths that had come before now have come to an end. The burnt offerings, the blood sacrifices, the Passover, and all the other ceremonial laws were no longer to be observed because they were completed in Christ, and the seventh day Sabbath had been

completed in Christ and was never again to be observed. This is why we read in Colossians 2:16: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days."

The new moons, the feast days, and the Old Testament Sabbaths, of which the seventh day Sabbath was the most prominent, were a shadow of Christ, Who was to come.

A New Era of Sabbaths Begins

Notice what follows and how beautiful the language is: "In the end of the Sabbaths, as it began to dawn toward the first of the Sabbaths" (Matthew 28:1). What does that mean? It means that God has a new era of Sabbaths. It is Sunday morning; it is the dawning of a new era of Sabbaths. "As it began to dawn toward the first of the Sabbaths." It is not just one Sabbath that is beginning. God is teaching that there is a whole series of Sabbaths to come. God is saying, by His own definition, that these new Sabbaths are each and every Sunday.

As we learned earlier, the third century church had grasped this principle fairly well. But theological writings from three or four hundred years ago or thereabouts showed that the church through the years had lost much of this understanding. Occasional references to Sunday as the Sabbath day were made; for example, the Westminster Confession refers to the Sunday Sabbath but invalid reasons are given. They indicate that in the New Testament it is called the Lord's Day. They also missed the point of the true nature of the Sunday Sabbath even though they came very close to truth. As we once again examine the original Greek manuscripts a little more carefully we can discover the truth God has given to us. God is saying that the Saturday during which Christ was in the tomb was the end of the Old Testament era of Sabbaths. The next day, which was Sunday, is the first Sabbath day of a new era of Sabbaths. From now on, each and every Sunday is the Sabbath.

The Sunday Sabbath Thoroughly Documented

One might conclude that we are building a very great principle on the teaching of one verse, Matthew 28:1. But when we continue to investigate this truth we find that it is thoroughly documented in the Bible. Mark 16:12 records: "And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun."

Again we must look carefully at the Greek and then we discover that this verse is actually saying, "And when the Sabbath was past . . . very early in the morning the first of the Sabbaths." The teaching of this verse is identical to that of Matthew 28:1. The last Old Testament Sabbath is past because it is Sunday, the day Christ rises from the dead. This Sunday is the first of a new era of Sabbaths. For the second time God insists on a new era: it is the first of the Sabbaths. Now remember, this is Sunday, this is not Saturday. This is not the seventh day of the week, this is the first day of the week, and God insists this is the first of the Sabbaths. In Mark 16:9 we read: "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils."

In this verse the word translated "first" is the Greek word "protos," which more than a hundred times is translated "first." The word translated "week" is the Greek word "Sabbath." A correct translation of this verse is, "And rising early on the first sabbath, he appeared." God is clearly indicating that the Sunday on which Christ arose is called the first

Sabbath. Thus we have complete assurance that in Matthew 28:1 and in Mark 16:1, where the Greek word "mia" is translated "first," that the word "first" is a correct translation. Because that first Sunday Sabbath was one of the many Sunday Sabbaths that would follow, it was one of the Sabbaths as well as being the first of the Sabbaths.

We very clearly see, therefore, that not only in Matthew 28:1 but also in Mark 16:1 and in Mark 16:9 God is emphasizing this new era of Sabbaths.

Furthermore, in Luke 23:56 we read: "They returned [that is, from where Christ had been buried], and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath [not the Sabbath Day], according to the commandment."

Six days they were to work, and the seventh day they were to rest; they wanted to anoint the body of Jesus but they had to wait until the seventh day Sabbath was past. They had to stay in their homes and rest on this day.

Then in Luke 24:1 we read from the Greek manuscripts: "Now upon the first of the Sabbaths [not "week"], very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre." This is exactly the same language we found in Matthew 28 and Mark 16. For the fourth time, God insists that the Sunday morning after the cross begins a new era of Sabbaths. It is the first of a whole series of Sabbaths that is going to come. It is amazing how God has locked this principle in and that we have overlooked it for so many years.

In John 19:42, God again speaks of the death of Christ, "There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand." This was Friday, when preparation was made for the Sabbath that was to come. Then in John 20:1, God records: "The first of the Sabbaths [not "week"] cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre." Do you see that? The first of the Sabbaths this is the way the original manuscripts were written.

What is God teaching us? He is teaching that the Old Testament Sabbaths ended at the cross when Jesus was in the tomb. He is teaching that a new era of Sabbath days began when Christ rose that Sunday morning. In Colossians 2 we read that the Old Testament Sabbath was a sign, a shadow. Colossians 2:16:17: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbaths; which are a shadow of things to come."

These verses are speaking of the Old Testament signs or ceremonies that were conducted in anticipation of the coming of Christ; they were a shadow of what was to come. These signs or shadows include the seventh day Sabbath. But as we are learning, this shadow or sign of the Sabbath continues into the New Testament until Christ, Who was typified by that Sabbath, is placed in the tomb. With that action, the sign the seventh day Sabbath is completely fulfilled in Christ and the sign is no longer to be observed.

The Passover Ends / The Lord's Supper Begins

The ending of the sign of the seventh day Sabbath is parallel to the disposition of other signs that were completed in Christ. For example, another important shadow of the Old Testament that pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ and the atonement is the Passover. When did Jesus end the era of the Passover? In the Upper Room. He ate the Passover. At the same meal, He instituted the Lord's Supper. The last Passover and the institution of the Lord's Supper are as close together as language can make them. So, too, we find in all four Gospels, the movement from the Old Testament Sabbath to the New Testament Sabbath is in very close proximity.

The Passover and the Lord's Supper have a lot of things in common: They both have to do with eating; they both have to do with the atonement; and yet they are vastly different. The Old Testament Passover was eaten by the whole family, whether the people were saved or not, whether they were elect or non elect. All of the congregation were to eat of the Passover, which was a sign that indicated that in the coming Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, they could find salvation. They had to kill a lamb; its blood had to be shed. They had to physically eat of the lamb.

In the Lord's Supper, the whole family does not partake, only the believers do. If anyone who is not a true believer partakes of the Lord's Supper, he brings judgment upon himself. There is no blood shed, as they did in the Old Testament when they killed the lamb and ate of it. In the Lord's Supper, we have bread and wine or grape juice. It is a memorial service that looks back on the cross. We remember the Lord's death until He comes. It looks back and it also looks forward to the marriage feast of the bride and the Lamb when our salvation will be completed.

Thus, we have two signs an Old Testament sign and a New Testament sign and they are intimately related and yet they are quite different. At the cross, the atonement was accomplished and something dramatically changed; we have to relate to that by a change in the character of the sign.

Circumcision Ends / Baptism Begins

The same is true of the sign of circumcision. In the Old Testament, in a family in which the father believed, all the males were to be circumcised. It involved cutting off the skin of the reproductive organ, which pointed to the seed Who would come. It pointed to the fact that the blood of this seed Who is the Lord Jesus had to be shed; it pointed to the fact that their sins had to be cut off. To become saved required the circumcision of the foreskin of the believers' hearts.

In the New Testament, we are not to use circumcision in any way as a religious sign because it involves the shedding of blood. It would be a denial that the seed has come. So God introduced another sign to replace the sign of circumcision. The New Testament sign that is to be put on the family of believers is water baptism. So when Lydia was saved, all her house was baptized.

Again we discover that there are great similarities and great differences between the before the cross sign of circumcision and the after the cross sign of water baptism. One is an Old Testament sign that points to the coming of Christ and the other is a New Testament sign that looks back on the fact that Christ has come.

Saturday Sabbath Ends / Sunday Sabbath Begins

Likewise God teaches us and this is a huge principle there was an Old Testament Sabbath day that was rigorously kept in a certain way as a sign or shadow pointing to the Christ Who was to come. It was a sign that was to be observed by all believers. But now God has introduced a New Testament sign, a New Testament Sabbath day, that is to be observed by all New Testament believers. It is closely linked to the Old Testament Sabbath day and yet in many ways it has different principles.

Christ Himself Observed the Last Saturday Sabbath

Let us try to discover the change in the keeping of the Sunday Sabbath compared with the keeping of the Saturday Sabbath. On the last of the Old Testament Sabbath days, Christ was

lying in the tomb. In His spirit essence, He was in heaven. We do not understand all the implications of this, but there was nothing active going on that day; it was the Sabbath day, it was a day of rest. God is rigorously applying that principle as Christ was resting in the tomb.

We read in Acts 2:26:27: "Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

In His work of redemption He strictly observed the seventh day Sabbath as He rested in the grave. In all likelihood, this sheds light on the fact that His body did not decay in the tomb. Notice how Acts 2:26 relates to the following verse (27), which indicates Christ's body did not become corrupt in the tomb.

If His body had decayed in the tomb, it would have indicated that in His identification with believers, whom He had come to save, there was still some active work going on by Christ. But the Bible says "He rested." His body did not become corrupt.

The importance of the Old Testament Sabbath is also seen dramatically as God the Creator rests from His labors of creation on the seventh day Sabbath.

It is obvious that the Saturday Sabbath of the Old Testament must have been tremendously important. After all, God Himself, both in creation and in the atonement observed that sign by resting from these activities on the seventh day. Since it was so dramatically important to Almighty God, it certainly must be dramatically important to all of mankind who are expressly commanded to rest on the seventh day Sabbath.

God Observed the Sunday Sabbath

On Sunday morning, the first of the Sunday Sabbaths, God observed that day as He did the work that is to be featured on that day. It is on that day that Christ rose from the grave. God Himself did the work of raising Christ from the grave on that Sabbath day. Thus, Christ completed the work required for our salvation on the New Testament Sabbath day. As we examine this work of Jesus of rising from the dead on this first Sabbath of the new era of Sabbaths, we obtain an indication of what we are to focus upon each Sunday. The focus should be on the work of raising people from the dead. That is, we are to be concerned with the preaching of the Gospel so that people might become saved.

Those who trust in Christ will experience the resurrection, which we experience when we become saved. How are we to experience salvation? Romans 10:13:17 instructs us:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

In this instructive passage, we find that God links salvation to the preaching of the Gospel. Where and when is this Gospel to be preached? We can find our answer as we study the activity of the New Testament church.

The Sunday Sabbath The Time for the Congregation to Worship

The Sunday upon which the church of Troas was meeting was not the first of the Sabbaths; it was one of the Sabbaths.

Therefore Acts 20:7 should be translated "And upon one of the Sabbaths."

In Acts 20:6:7, we read of the church at Troas gathering together on the first of the week to break bread. It was at that time that Paul preached to them, and he left the city the next day to continue his travels. The phrase "first of the week" is the same in the Greek as that which we have been examining in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20:1. The Greek word that was incorrectly translated as the word "week" is "Sabbaths." Thus, we could translate this phrase "first of the Sabbaths." However, as we learned earlier, the Greek word "mia" that translates as the word "first" also can be correctly translated as "one." [NOTE: "mia" is used in lieu of the cardinal "protei." For comparison, see Mark 16:9, "protei." In more than 50 New Testament verses "mia" is translated "one."] In the four Gospels, as we have seen, the Sunday that Christ arose was one of the Sabbaths but more importantly it was the first of the Sabbaths. This was so because that Sunday was the first Sunday of the New Testament era of Sabbaths.

In the New Testament, God has organized the external body called the church. He has given us rules for the church; the church is not appointed by man, it is not a manmade organization. It is a divine organization, created by Christ going to the cross. He has laid out the qualifications for elders and deacons and said how they are to oversee the congregation. He has ordained that believers are not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25), which means the congregation is to continue all the way to the end of time. He has given all kinds of rules concerning the New Testament church, and in Acts 20 He tells us when that church is to come together. When? On one of the Sabbaths. What Sabbath is this? The seventh day Sabbath? No. We read in Matthew 28 that it was the end of the Sabbaths, so what other Sabbath is there? The new era of Sabbaths, which calls for Sunday to be the Sabbath. This is why the church has been meeting together, since before the Bible was completed, on Sunday. Very correctly, they have been following the edict of the Bible. God has given us the New Testament Sabbath day so that we can gather together as a body of believers to break bread. We shall see that the phrase "to break bread" has to do with preaching.

Significantly, God instructs us that on this Sabbath Paul preached until midnight. This strongly implies that even as the seventh day Sabbath was to be observed as a 24 hour period, so is the Sunday Sabbath to be a 24 hour period.

Our first awareness of this Sunday Sabbath is in the four Gospels. In John 20 we discover that Jesus had risen while it was still dark. Since God's work of resurrection is entirely involved with the new Sunday Sabbath, we can see that the Sunday Sabbath is to begin while it is still dark, thus reinforcing the 24 hour nature of the Sunday Sabbath.

The Work of the New Sabbath: Picking, Rubbing, and Eating Corn

Now that we have learned this tremendously important principle that God has declared Sunday to be the New Testament Sabbath, we can begin to understand some of the seemingly strange things that Jesus did and said in connection with the Sabbath. We will learn that these happenings point to the Sunday Sabbath.

In Matthew 12, we read of Jesus violating the seventh day Sabbath. God says in verse 1, "At that time Jesus went on the Sabbaths through the corn; and

His disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat." The same event is recorded in Luke 6, where it adds that they plucked the ears of corn, rubbed the corn, and then ate of the corn. Returning to Matthew 12:2, "But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath." Were they correct? They were absolutely correct insofar as the Old Testament Sabbath day was concerned. According to the Old Testament Sabbath, the disciples should have gone through the cornfield on Friday, the day before the seventh day Sabbath, and gathered the ears of corn. On Friday they should have rubbed them so that all they had to do was eat the corn on the Sabbath. According to the ten commandments, they had no business going through the cornfield and picking that corn on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were correct. God had specifically commanded that in the wilderness, Israel was to gather twice as much manna on Friday so that there would be no gathering on the Saturday Sabbath.

The concern of the Pharisees appears to be legitimate for another reason. If I can pick and rub an ear of corn on the Sabbath, why not do it also for a friend, and as long as I'm doing it, why not do it for a whole village? Why not bring a threshing machine and thresh all the corn or grain and harvest it on the Sabbath day? What is Jesus teaching by this strange action on the Sabbath?

We know that something dynamic is happening here. The shadow of the cross is becoming very brilliant. It is almost time for the new era, and Jesus is beginning to give the rules for the new Sabbath that He will institute because He is going to the cross. Even as Jesus introduced the Communion Supper before He went to the cross, so Jesus is beginning to teach rules concerning the New Testament Sabbath before He went to the cross. We know these rules relate to the new Sabbath because they are a distinct change from the Old Testament Sabbath rules.

We read in Matthew 12, verse 8, "For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." Christ has a right to change things and these changes relate entirely to the cross. As Lord of the Sabbath, He has the right to make changes concerning the Sabbath.

Interestingly, in the account of this event recorded in Luke 6:1 we read: "And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands."

The phrase "the second sabbath after the first" has greatly puzzled theologians. Nothing in the context explains what is meant by this. But when we realize that Jesus is beginning to give us rules concerning the Sunday Sabbath, this phrase is easily understood. It is a warning instructing us that a Sabbath other than the first Sabbath should be kept in mind in understanding the spiritual meaning of Luke 6. The first Sabbath is the Old Testament seventh day Sabbath. The second Sabbath is the New Testament Sunday Sabbath. In this account of the picking of the corn, our Lord is teaching us concerning the focus of the Sunday Sabbath.

We will discover that even though Jesus had not yet gone to the cross, He was already giving instructions for the keeping of the Sunday Sabbath, which would become the Sabbath when Jesus arose from the grave. As we have already emphasized, that this was Jesus' plan of teaching is seen, for example, in the fact that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper before He went to the cross.

We will carefully study the accounts of this corn harvesting event so that we can understand how they apply to the new

Sabbath that is to be observed each Sunday.

Harvesting and Eating Corn Equals Hearing and Studying God's Word

First of all, we know that picking and eating corn has nothing to do with the Gospel. We also know that everything in the Bible does relate to the Gospel. Therefore, the phrases that appear to have no relationship to the Gospel must be understood as parabolic or allegorical phrases. Simply stated, they are earthly stories with heavenly meanings.

What does corn or bread or anything that is eaten have to do with the Gospel? What is the spiritual meaning? Christ is the bread of life. When we see the word "corn," or "wheat," or "grain" or "bread", it has to do with Christ or His Word, and we eat of that. To pick and eat corn means to have one's spiritual hunger satisfied; spiritually we should have a hunger for Christ and His Word. Where do we find that bread? In the Word of God. How are we to work to get that corn or that bread of life out of the Word of God? We are going to research the Scriptures; we are going to sit under the hearing of the Word.

Wonderfully, God has established His plan for picking, rubbing, and eating ears of corn: That is, His plan for us to hear and study the Word of God. God established the congregation, and we learned from Acts 20:67 that the congregation met together on one of the Sabbaths to break bread. That is, the congregation is to meet together on Sunday to hear the Word of God. Significantly, we find in the language of Acts 20:67 both the coming together of the congregation to break bread and the activity of Paul preaching. In the feeding of the 5,000 (Mark 6:35-44), the bread that was broken typified the Word of God that is given to those who spiritually hunger after righteousness. The breaking of the bread by the church of Troas, as recorded in Acts 20:7, identifies with the preaching of the Word by Paul. Therefore, one of the chief activities of the believer on Sunday, the New Testament Sabbath, is to congregate together to study and hear the Word of God, explained. Thus, God ties the picking, rubbing, and eating of corn on the Sabbath with the breaking of bread or the preaching of the Gospel on the Sabbath.

We have learned that the first activity identified with Sunday, the New Testament Sabbath, is that of preaching the Word so that the congregation might experience the resurrection, even as Christ arose on the first of the Sabbaths of the New Testament era. It is also the day that should be especially set apart for the study of the Word of God.

The Work of the New Sabbath: Healing the Sick

In Luke 6:10 our Lord is establishing further principles to be observed in connection with the New Testament Sabbath. There we read:

And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched Him, whether He would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, He said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

The picking of corn by the disciples as recorded in Matthew 12 was a distinct violation of Old Testament Sabbath law, but Christ introduced this activity on the Sabbath because He was introducing a new Sabbath that would become effective immediately after the cross.

Let us recall what we saw in connection with the picking of corn on the Sabbath. It was called the second Sabbath after the first. We saw that this was a veiled reference to a new era of Sabbaths. Likewise, in connection with the healing of the man with the withered hand, God uses the phrase in Luke 6:6 "on another sabbath." The word "another," too, is surely a clue that points to another era of Sabbaths, and these new Sabbaths would have rules that are different from the Old Testament Sabbath rules.

Furthermore, since the record of the healing of the man with the withered hand follows the record of the picking of corn on the Sabbath, we can be quite certain that it, too, has to do with the new Sabbath. This will become clearer as we discover the spiritual meaning of the healing.

Healing the Sick Equals Sending forth the Gospel

Physical healing in itself has nothing to do with the Gospel. But we know that God used the physical conditions of disease, leprosy, blindness, and death to illustrate man's spiritual condition of being spiritually dead, a leper, blind, etc. Thus, the act of healing a man with a withered hand is a picture of or represents the act of someone becoming saved. So, too, Jesus on the Sabbath healed the blind man (John 9:1-14), the impotent man by the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-16), the woman with the 18-year spirit of infirmity (Luke 13:1-16), and the man with the dropsy (Luke 14:1-4). Who spiritually has any of these afflictions? Anyone who is unsaved. Every unsaved person is lame, is spiritually dead, is blind, is a leper.

Luke 6 and these other records of healing on the Sabbath teach that the work of the believer on the New Testament Sabbath is to spread the Gospel so that the spiritually lame might be healed. In other words, the purpose of Sunday, the New Testament Sabbath, is first of all to make sure of our own salvation; second, to grow in sanctification as we study the Word; and third, to get on with the task of sharing the Gospel with others. When we gather together in congregational worship we should be preparing to go out and share the Gospel with others.

God Anticipated the New Sabbath on the First Day of Creation

God anticipated the work of the New Testament Sabbath in Genesis 1. On what day of the week did creation begin? The first day of creation was Sunday. What did God do on the first day of the week? What did He say? "Let there be light." On the first Sunday, God worked to bring light into existence. Spiritually, to what does light refer? It can refer only to the Gospel. Jesus is the light of the world and the sending forth of the Gospel is the sending forth of that light into the world.

Whenever we share the Gospel, we bring the light into the world. In Genesis 1 God had already established this for the New Testament Sabbath when He said on the first day, "Let there be light."

We have already discussed the fact that Christ arose from the grave on Sunday, the first of the New Testament Sabbaths. Thus, God is demonstrating by His actions the activities He expects for Sunday, the New Testament Sabbath. The activities include both the work of becoming raised from the dead (accomplished by the hearing of the Word) and the sending forth of the Gospel (let there be light). Amazingly, as we learned earlier in connection with the

seventh day Sabbath, God Himself rigorously observed this day both in His work of creation as well as in His work of redemption. He rested on the seventh day Sabbath from His work of creation. He rested in connection with His work of redemption when His body rested in the tomb. God established the character of the New Testament Sabbath as He did the work of creating light on the first Sunday of creation and as He arose from the dead on the first Sunday after the cross.

The Bible has more to say about God's actions on Sunday, by which He instructs the New Testament believers concerning their conduct on Sunday.

God Pours Out the Holy Spirit on the New Sabbath

We are all acquainted with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit as this event is recorded in Acts 2. While it is not the purpose of this study to show this, the fact is that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is entirely related to God's program of evangelizing the world. The evidence of this is clearly seen in that 3,000 people from many different nations were saved that afternoon.

What day was this when the Holy Spirit was poured out? It was Pentecost, and Pentecost was the eighth Sunday after the cross. On the first Sunday, Jesus was resurrected. On the eighth Sunday, God began His work of resurrecting (saving) the peoples of the world. Thus, God in a third dramatic way points to the purpose of Sunday as a day to share the Gospel so that others might become saved.

In an interesting and significant way, God definitely focuses on the words "first" and "one." Creation began not only on the first day of the week, it began on the first of the first days. Likewise, Christ not only arose on the first day of the week, but on the first Sunday of the New Testament era. Pentecost was not only on Sunday, it was the eighth Sunday. Because seven connotes completeness or perfection, the number eight becomes like the number one in that it is the first of another seven.

We learn from God's examples in creation and redemption that Sunday is the Sabbath, when we are to make sure of our own salvation and to go into all the world with the Gospel. But the Bible has more to say about the Sunday Sabbath.

The New Sabbath: A Time for Ministering to Others in the Congregation

Jesus gives us another illustration of New Testament Sabbath activity in Matthew 12:11, where He records: "And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?"

To what could a sheep in a pit refer? Sheep surely refer to fellow believers. To be in a pit refers to being threatened by hell, and we are threatened by hell when we are church members who are still unsaved. Undoubtedly Jesus is admonishing believers to encourage and pray for others in the congregation and our own family members who are sheep that may have fallen into the pit.

We who remain faithful are to spiritually bring them out of the pit, so to speak, by patiently witnessing to them and being concerned with their salvation. The program of the Sunday Sabbath day not only concerns me and my salvation but also the salvation of others in the congregation who might not be saved, those who are weak Christians, and those who are troubled by their sins.

The New Sabbath: We Bring Our Offerings

God gives us further instruction concerning the Sunday Sabbath in I

Corinthians 16:12: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

The phrase "upon the first day of the week" must be corrected to be more faithful to the context. The word "week" is the Greek word that can only be translated "Sabbaths." The Greek word "mia" that has been translated "first" must be translated "one" rather than "first" for the same reason that it should have been translated "one" in Acts 20:7. The Greek word that has been translated "upon" (Greek "kata") followed by a word of the accusative case, should be translated as a preposition of succession (throughout). [See Greek lexicon about Smith, page 232.] The phrase makes abundant sense and is altogether faithful to the immediate context as well as to the whole Bible if it is translated "throughout/every* one of the Sabbaths, let every one lay by him in store, as God has prospered him." [* See John 21:25, Acts 5:42, Acts 8:3, Acts 14:23, etc., where "kata" is translated "every".]

Thus, God is setting forth the principle that on each and every Sunday we are to bring our offerings. This is why throughout New Testament history the churches have received offerings at each Sunday worship service. Do you know of any church services that are held on Sunday where they do not pass the offering plate? They do it because it is commanded here. The church does that right. The congregation meets together, an offering is collected.

To summarize, we have learned that the purpose of meeting together on the Sabbath is to bring the Gospel so that those in the congregation who are unsaved might become saved. It is for the purpose of exhorting and assisting the weak Christians. It is for the purpose of rekindling the spiritual fires so that we are ready to go on with the task of bringing the Gospel.

The focus of the seventh day Sabbath was on rest. No work of any kind was to be done because it was pointing to the spiritual rest we have in Christ in that He did all the work required to save us. But the focus of the New Testament Sabbath is not on a cessation of physical labor; rather, the focus is on intense spiritual activity: worship, preaching, and teaching the Word of God, Christian fellowship, spiritual assistance to members of the congregation, and sending the Gospel into the world.

By God's mercy, He has given us a day with the command to use it for these spiritual activities. What a blessing this is! In our culture, we can work three days and have enough money to have food on the table for the week. We can work a couple more days and begin to save for a television or a new suit of clothes or a new pair of shoes or something else. However, throughout history, in most cultures and certainly in many cultures today, a man had to work six days a week from sunup to sundown to scratch out enough money to put food on the table. But when the Sabbath day rolls around on Sunday, the Christian has a change of activity, an entire change. He forgets about his God given responsibility to earn a living for his family, and he concentrates all day on the spiritual, which God knows we all need so badly.

One might easily say, "In our day we listen to Family Radio six or seven days a week. Daily we are blessed by spiritual activity. In a real sense we are worshipping every day, so we do not have to pay much attention to the first day as the Sabbath." This thinking is reasonable but it is not Biblical.

Who established the first day as the Sabbath day? God did. He has His own purposes and reasons for it. We must not

think that because we go to a prayer meeting on a Wednesday night, and we have something else on Friday night, and we have a Bible study on Tuesday morning, and so on, and we listen to the "Open Forum," that we do not have to worship and observe Sunday as the Sabbath. Christ has ordained it as the Sabbath. And what a blessing it is. It means that on Sunday, I do not have to mow my lawn. I should have mowed it. It is too long, and the neighbors are uncomfortable about the way I keep my yard, but I will wait until tomorrow.

Sunday is a day set aside that God wants me to use for spiritual activity. I went to church this morning to worship and fellowship with other believers. Wasn't it wonderful that I did not have to rush away to paint my house? I did not have to rush away to listen to a ball game. I am comfortable. I can visit and fellowship and look around for someone whom I may be able to assist spiritually. I can invite a few people over whom I would like to encourage, and we can have a cup of coffee together. Or maybe it has been a long time since I went to the nursing home. There are many lonely people there, and this is the day that I can go and visit them. God has given me Sunday for these activities. I haven't written to 'Aunt Sue' for a long time. Maybe it's been a long time since I've written to someone who has been struggling, someone who needs a word of encouragement. I can sit down and write to that person and also to many others.

Can you see what God has done for us? God has given us a tremendous day. Now the moment that I start using that day to listen to the ball game or go on a picnic or paint my house, am I engaging in the kind of activity that God has ordained for that day? The answer is No. Absolutely Not.

You might say, "Wait a minute. I can paint my house, and at the same time I can meditate on the Scriptures." Well, I can't. I don't know what kind of painter you are, but when I am painting, I am concerned that there are no runs and no holidays, no this or that. And I don't want paint all over my shirt. And that's where my mind is. Maybe you are a better painter than I am, but the fact is that I have no business engaging in a task or a job like that. Now it is true that if I come out of church and I have a flat tire, well, I am going to change my tire, of course. I have to get home. But while my wheel is off, I'm not going to get any ideas that now I can put a new set of brakes on. Do you see the difference?

In the measure that we steal from the Sabbath that God has given all of us, in that measure we deplete ourselves spiritually because we are going contrary to God's rules. We will never have God's blessings when we go contrary to God's rules. Show me a family where they are watching the ball game every Sunday afternoon and you cannot show me that that family is a real spiritual family you will not be able, this cannot be the way it is. The family that is desecrating the Sabbath in this way will be a family that is trying to live like the world just as much as they can and yet claim to be a Christian family. It does not compute; it will not work. God has ordained the first day as the Sabbath whether we like it or not. If we recognize this and observe it as the Sabbath, as God has ordained it to be observed, there can be nothing but spiritual blessing in our lives. Can we see how our family will be when we make that day the whole day, from midnight to midnight the Sabbath? Can we see that as the family and congregation plan spiritual activities in accordance with what the Bible teaches that they will experience rich spiritual blessings? Can we see what a powerful impact that this can have on our families? If we cannot see it, it is still a fact, because God has so declared it.

Sabbath and Rest Re-Examined

When we examined God's usage of the word "Sabbath" in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, we discovered it also could be and indeed is translated "rest." This is very understandable because the seventh day Sabbath focused entirely on rest. The rest God had in view was that of trusting in the Lord Jesus to do all the work of saving us. "Rest" and "Sabbath" were synonymous.

It is quite a different situation when we examine the word "Sabbath" as it is used in the New Testament. As we have indicated, the Greek words "Sabbaton" (the singular Greek ending, "omicron nu") and "Sabbata" (the plural Greek ending "omega nu" or "alpha") are transliterations of the Old Testament Hebrew word "Sabbath." "Sabbaton" and "Sabbata" by God's careful design are Greek words and not Hebrew words. Therefore, while the Hebrew word for "Sabbath" is identical to a word for "rest," the Greek words "Sabbaton" and "Sabbata" are never translated "rest." The Greek words that are translated "rest" are always different words. Therefore, the idea of rest has nothing to do with the Sunday Sabbath. As we have seen, Sunday is a day for work to be done, intense spiritual work.

A Sabbath Rest

There is another Greek word that comes from a transliteration of the Hebrew "Sabbath" that distinctly conveys the idea of "rest." It is the Greek word "Sabbatismos" that is found only in Hebrews 4:9, where we read, "There remaineth, therefore, a rest [Greek *sabbatismos*] to the people of God." The word is entirely different from "Sabbaton" or "Sabbata" inasmuch as they are in the neuter gender while "Sabbatismos" is in the masculine gender. "Sabbatismos" is properly translated "rest" because of the immediate context in which it is found.

We can easily see why in this context God introduced the word "Sabbatismos," a transliteration of the Hebrew word "Sabbath" that definitely means "rest." The Book of Hebrews, more than any other New Testament book, shows that the Old Testament ceremonial laws were types and figures pointing to Christ and salvation in Him. In Hebrews 4 God is using the word "rest" as synonymous with salvation in Christ. This was precisely what was in view in connection with the Old Testament sign of the seventh day Sabbath.

Thus, the fourth commandment of the decalogue still applies dynamically to us, but it does not apply in the sense of how we are to physically observe one day a week. That sign was completed at the cross. Rather, we are to see only the spiritual dimension; we are to remember that we are not to trust in any work we have done as a means of obtaining salvation. We are to trust in our Sabbath, our Rest, Who is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the "Sabbatismos," the Rest that is available to all who trust in Him.

This "rest" is not typified by the Sunday Sabbath. The Sunday Sabbath is a day of intense work not physical to satisfy our material needs but spiritual as we worship, as we feed on the Word, as we evangelize, as we engage in all manner of spiritual activity. How wonderful it is that our Savior has given us the Holy Day of the Sunday Sabbath.

One of the difficulties that has plagued the church in its understanding of the Sunday Sabbath is a continuing attempt to introduce the seventh day Sabbath idea of "rest" into the Sunday Sabbath. This multiplies the confusion. As we have learned, the concept of "rest" has everything to do with the seventh day Sabbath, but it has nothing to do with the Sunday Sabbath. On the Sunday Sabbath we are simply to substitute intense spiritual work for the secular work we had been doing the other six

days.

The Between Sabbath

In Acts 13 God records an interesting experience of the Apostle Paul in Antioch of Pisidia. Because he had been commanded to bring the Gospel first to the Jews, he came into their synagogue on the Sabbath Day (verse 14). He would have preached to them on the Saturday Sabbath because this was the day on which the Jews gathered together to worship. But verse 42 reads: "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath."

The Gentiles of the city obviously also wanted to hear the Gospel that Paul was preaching. Why did they ask him to preach to them the next Sabbath? The translators gave us the phrase "next sabbath." In the original Greek, however, the phrase is not "next Sabbath." Rather it is the phrase "the between sabbath." The Greek word that is translated "next" is the same word that is found for example in Acts 12:6 where we read that Peter was sleeping "between" two soldiers. In fact, it is a word that is always translated "between."

When the translators found this word in Acts 13:42, they were puzzled. What is a "between" Sabbath? When they came to verse 44, they found that God did use a Greek word that should be translated "next." Acts 13:44: "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God." Therefore, they assumed that the "between sabbath" of verse 42 could somehow also be translated "next sabbath."

If the translators had realized that God had named Sunday as the Sabbath, they would have understood what was being declared in verse 42. The Jews were still rigorously observing the seventh day Saturday Sabbaths. Between these Sabbaths there was another Sabbath on which the Jews were not worshipping. It was the Sabbath that immediately followed the Jewish Sabbath. It was the Sunday Sabbath. And so on Saturday, Paul preached to the Jews in their synagogue, but on the next day the Sunday Sabbath that was between the Jewish Sabbaths Paul preached to almost the whole city. Note again how God joins the preaching of the Word with the Sunday Sabbath. Note, too, verse 48: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." In this verse we again see the working of God on the Sunday Sabbath as He saved people by the preaching of the Word.

Further Instructions Concerning the Sunday Sabbath

When we carefully read the Scriptures, we cannot help but be struck by the activity going on during the first Sunday Sabbath. Surely God has recorded this for a number of reasons, one of which is to teach us how we are to be busy on this day.

For example, in Matthew 28, we read in verse 7, Jesus' words to the women, "Go quickly, and tell His disciples." In verse 8, God declares, "They departed quickly . . . and did run to bring His disciples word." Then in verse 9 we read that Jesus met some of the disciples and they "worshipped Him." Verse 10 declares, "Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." Verse 11 completes this action as the Bible declares, "Now when they were going."

We must be impressed by the language of these verses which describes the worship of Christ. His commands to go to others with His Word, and the immediate obedience of the women and

the disciples who ran to carry out His commands.

So, too, each Sabbath we are to worship our Lord, and we are to go forth with the precious Gospel of salvation.

More than a Sabbath Day's Journey

In Luke 24, God impresses upon us the kind of activity in which the true believers are to be engaged on the Sunday Sabbath. In His encounter with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, God assures us it took place on this first Sunday Sabbath. Verse 13 records: "And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs."

The phrase "the same day" leaves no doubt that this incident took place the day Jesus arose from the grave. The threescore furlongs, which was a distance of more than seven miles, assures us that great physical energy was being expended in walking. It is a much longer distance than a Sabbath Day's journey, which was under two miles (Acts 1:12). Verses 15 to 27 of Luke 24 record the preaching of Jesus to them. Verse 33 records that they "rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem." We are assured that on this first Sunday Sabbath, these two disciples traveled very extensively to bring the Word of Christ to others and that Christ was busy ministering the Word of God to His disciples. Again our Lord has given us superb instruction concerning the activity the believers should be engaged in on the Sunday Sabbath.

We Are Not Under the Law We Are Under Grace

It is interesting that many people who object to the teaching of the Sunday Sabbath attend churches which try to be very moral. Most good, middle of the road, conservative churches try to have a very high degree of morality. And so they teach that thou shalt not commit adultery. They teach that you're not to steal. In other words, there are certain rules that you follow. They believe that these rules are based on the Scriptures, and indeed, these rules are the rules that God has given us.

But the moment that the idea is presented that there is a Sunday Sabbath that must be kept, immediately, the thought is expressed: "Oh, I see, you're under the law. I see, you don't realize we're under grace." Unfortunately, these dear souls never ask the question, "How is it that when God says: Thou shalt not commit adultery, and I rigorously try to obey that, I'm not under the law when I try to do that." Why is it that when the Bible talks about a Sabbath that we are to keep, suddenly, we're under the law.

The real problem is, I believe, that adultery is offensive. To steal is offensive. Even unsaved man intuitively knows that these things are offensive. Even without realizing that the Bible commands these things, many obey the Biblical command concerning adultery and stealing. Unfortunately, many seem to think: "But on the other hand, Sunday is such a wonderful day for me! It is my day! It is the day that I have for me! Oh, yes, it's nice that I can go to church on Sunday morning, and fellowship with my friends. But then I have the rest of the day for me! I can spend the afternoon watching a ball game or engaging in a ball game. It's a wonderful day to catch up on the hobby that I have been working on, to catch up on my chores that I didn't get done the rest of the week. It is my day! And so don't you trample upon my toes insofar as Sunday is concerned, making it the Sabbath, because you're putting us under the law."

These dear people have a total misunderstanding of what it means to be under the law. To be under the law means

that we're still unsaved. Every human being that is unsaved is under the law. The law is looking at them, and declaring: "The wages of sin is death." And the death that God has in view is eternal damnation. Every time an unsaved person lifts a finger to do something that is slightly contrary to the Word of God anything, anything at all like telling a 'white' lie, or thinking an evil thought, or doing anything that is not entirely to the glory of God, whatever it may be, the law says he is guilty. And the law is going to have its due. The law is going to bring this unsaved individual to the judgment throne on the last day, and he is going to be found guilty. What is the penalty demanded by the law? Eternal damnation. Away with him, into hell. That is the condition of the unsaved; they are under the law.

If we have come under grace, the law cannot find us guilty, because to be under grace means that every sin that I have ever committed, past, present, future, has already been carried by the Lord Jesus on my behalf. He was found guilty on my behalf. He fully met the demands of the law. He endured hell for me. He, as it were, spent an eternity in hell in my place, so that the penalty has been fully paid. The law can no longer make demands upon me. Any true child of God automatically is never again under the law. They are under the grace of God, which is a gift of salvation, which God has given.

Some might think, "Well, then, why do I say that I should not commit adultery? The Bible, the law of God, says thou shalt not commit adultery. I'm under grace. Why don't I go out and commit adultery? The Bible says thou shalt not steal? Why shouldn't I go out and steal? After all, I'm saved, all of my sins are paid for, now I can go and steal all I want. Certainly I don't have to keep any Sunday Sabbath: that's the law of God. I don't have to keep that at all. I'm not under the law."

Wait a minute. When I became saved, something happened to me. I was taken out of the dominion of Satan and I was transferred into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because I am in the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is now my King. He is my master. He is the One I want to obey. How do I know how He wants me to live? Well, He's given us the rule book of the Kingdom. It is the law of God, which is called the Bible. I'm going to read it very carefully. How does Jesus want me to live as His subject in view of the fact that He is my King? Oh, I see. I'm not to commit adultery. I'm to do everything to the glory of God. Now if I don't, if I think for a moment adulterously or if I do something and it's not quite to the glory of God, the law has no hold on me to threaten me with hell. I'm not under the law, I'm under grace. On the other hand, because I've become a child of God, I have a tremendous desire in my life to do the will of God. I'm going to be very uncomfortable when I start thinking wrongly. I'm going to be very unhappy when I start going my own way. I'll find as I go along that I'm always happiest when I'm doing it God's way.

In the Kingdom of God, the rule book indicates that God has established a church. He has established the external congregation over which He has put elders and deacons to have the spiritual oversight. He has listed qualifications for these elders and deacons, and He's instructed us that we are not to neglect the assembling together of the saints. I want to be part of a congregation if at all possible, because that is what God calls for in His Kingdom. Where do we read about it? In the law of God. When is this congregation going to meet? Does God give us any more help on this? He set one day aside, Sunday. He set one day aside, so that I can use that as the day for worship. He has established the congregation so that I can worship God,

study the Word, share the Gospel, encourage others, have fellowship, and engage in all the spiritual activity or the spiritual work that God calls for on the Sunday Sabbath. And as I obey God's laws concerning the Sunday Sabbath, I'm no more under the law than when I try to live a holy life insofar as sexual purity or anything else is concerned, because God has given commands concerning the Sunday Sabbath. It is simply that because of my love for Christ I want to do it God's way, and I find as I do it God's way, I experience blessing in my life.

My Holy Day

One of the most incisive statements of the Bible concerning the observance of the Sunday Sabbath is found in the Old Testament. Isaiah 58:13 declares: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words."

We know that this verse is speaking of the Sunday Sabbath because the whole chapter in which it is found is speaking of the New Testament activity of bringing the Gospel. Verse 6 for example declares: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke."

When we look at this language in the light of the rest of the Bible, we realize that all the phrases in this verse identify with bringing the Gospel so that men might be saved. It is the Gospel that frees people from the bondage of wickedness, that takes away from them the heavy burden of sin and guilt, that sets them free from the oppression of sin and Satan.

Likewise verse 7 also relates entirely to the bringing of the Gospel. It reads: "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

The hungry with whom the Bible is concerned are the spiritually hungry, and the bread that is to be given to them is the bread which is Christ, the bread of life. The poor are the spiritually impoverished who are to be brought into our house, the house being both the body of believers and, in a real sense, into God Himself (Psalm 91:9). To cover the naked is to bring the Gospel to them so that their spiritual nakedness might be covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness.

All this activity identifies with God's plan to evangelize the world, a plan that became operational when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). It is a plan that identifies with the Sunday Sabbath because the day of Pentecost was Sunday.

Verse 12 of Isaiah 58 speaks of the building of the old waste places, and raising up the foundations. This is the same kind of language used in Acts 15:16 where God declares: "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up."

The setting of this verse is that the Gospel is being preached to the Gentiles, and they are being saved. The tabernacle that is being built is none other than the body of believers who are the temple of God (II Corinthians 6:16).

It is in this setting that God placed Isaiah 58:13. It is noteworthy that there is no expression of rest in this verse. "Rest" is the great emphasis of the seventh day Sabbath as it pointed to the salvation that would be provided by Jesus our Savior. In Exodus 20:9-11, God emphasizes that we are to rest from

our physical labors as God rested from the work of creation on the seventh day Sabbath.

In Deuteronomy 5:12-15 God says that no work is to be done on the seventh day Sabbath because we have been brought out of Egypt by a mighty hand, which is a portrait of salvation. Before we were saved, we were spiritually in bondage to sin and Satan; we were brought into the blessedness of salvation, and no longer in bondage to sin and Satan, solely by the activity of Christ. We are not to think for a moment that any spiritual work of ours contributed one smidgen to our salvation.

The emphasis on the work of salvation is further made in Ezekiel 20:12 where God declares: "Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." Note that this verse, too, emphasizes His work of salvation to which the seventh day Sabbath pointed.

In Isaiah 58:13 God does not at all use language that points to "rest" or the idea that God sanctifies or saves us. Rather, the emphasis is on doing it God's way and finding and doing His pleasure. The language is negative not doing thy own ways but the focal point, without question, is on doing the way of the Lord, on doing His pleasure and His will. The Sabbath is a holy day set apart for His service. Only by doing it His way will it be a Sabbath that is a delight.

The language of this verse is remarkable as it relates to the problem of today's Sabbath observance. Never in the history of the New Testament church has Sunday been used as it is today for man's pleasure, to serve man's will, to satisfy man's ways. Sunday is a day when the restaurants are overrun with "Christians" who seek the pleasure of fine food (thus causing many others to violate this day as they prepare and serve food). It is a day for paying homage to professional sports as so many "Christians" watch their favorite and not so favorite teams play. It is a day for hobbies and for picnics. It is a day when very few seriously ask the question: What is God's good pleasure for this day? It is a day that has become my day, with the emphasis on me and mine. Unfortunately, few people regard Sunday as God's holy day, which has been beautifully set apart so that we can earnestly, zealously, sincerely, and faithfully serve our Savior.

APPENDIX 5 – FAITH STUDY

This message on Faith, was transcribed from a Bible study given by Mr. Harold Camping. On February 14, 1999

Physical Healing is a Picture of Salvation

Let's consider the following passage as we continue our study of the book of Acts:

Acts 14:8-10 "And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: {9} The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked."

When we look at this man in Lystra, who was crippled from birth, we know that we are not concerned about his physical healing when we look for the spiritual message of the Gospel. Now it is true of

course, that if we have an illness or if we have financial problems or whatever we might have, we can go to our Savior in our anxieties, as we read below:

Philippians 4:6 "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

We can pour it all out to the Lord, but that does not mean He is going to heal us. That does not mean He is going to send a check our way. That does not mean He is going to take care of our problem like we would like to see it. It may be that He wants us to live through that problem for His own purposes. It may be a chastisement or it may be for other reasons.

God is really underscoring that this man was a cripple since birth. Notice three times in verse 8 He describes how lame he was: "there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet" [that is, he had no strength in his feet] "being a cripple from his mother's womb who never had walked". Now is there any question at all about this man being a hopeless cripple? God is really driving home the point that he is a cripple. He has been a cripple since the moment he was born.

Now tell me, as we look at the picture of salvation here, what does this lame situation point to spiritually? Of course, it points to the fact that we are dead in our sins. And when did we first become dead in our sins? Remember Psalm 58 that says:

Psalms 58:3 "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

In other words, our spiritual illness began right from birth, actually from conception; because Psalm 51 says we are conceived and born in sin.

Psalms 51:5 "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Right from the moment of conception the infection of sin has thoroughly permeated our being as that is the way we are. And you know, when God is healing a lame person it reminds us that this is what was quoted to John the Baptist when he was in prison after he had baptized Jesus. He must have wondered, "Is Jesus now the Messiah? What am I doing in prison?". Then Jesus reminded him of Isaiah 35:

Isaiah 35:5-6 "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. {6} Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."

We are going to come back to this verse a little later when we see the reaction of this man after he had become healed. But that is our condition before we are saved, we are spiritually lame (and in other places God indicates we are spiritually dead). We have no strength in ourselves. And here is a lame man that has been lame from his mother's womb; and that meant that there were no doctors, there was no methodology, there was no program that he could follow in order to be healed of this lameness. It was something that had become an integral part of his life, and he would go to his death with that. This is exactly like sin in our life, the infection of sin. We are conceived and born with that infection of sin, and it stays with us until we die. It even goes beyond that -- it brings us to the judgment throne of God and brings us under the wrath of God forevermore. That is the awful illness that is being pointed out here by this lame man.

The Gospel has Power to Save

Now comes the solution in verse 9, and this is very curious language:

Acts 14:9 "The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and

perceiving that he had faith to be healed,"

"The same heard Paul speak." Now one of the parts of God's program of salvation is the hearing of the Gospel. Never will anyone become saved, as this man would not become physically healed, without hearing the Gospel. That happens to be a condition that God has imposed upon his salvation program. Now he did not have to do this. God is God, and He could save any way that He wishes to save. But in God's divine economy He has set up a program where one must hear the Gospel before there is going to be salvation. That is the reason why a ministry like Family Radio exists. That is the reason that we have tracts that can be passed out. That is the reason we encourage speaking the Gospel to our family members or to our neighbors who are still not saved. Because without the hearing of the Gospel there will not be salvation. That is God's divine economy. It is through the word of God that He brings about healing. So God underscores this as he says, "the same heard Paul speak". Well, so far that is easy to understand.

But then it goes on, "who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed." Now we see that there is a contact between this man. It does not say who is looking steadfastly upon whom. Whether it is Paul looking steadfastly upon the one who is to be healed or the one to be healed is looking steadfastly upon Paul. We really cannot tell who is steadfastly beholding whom. It could be either way. Lets put it this way, both are looking at each other very intently. In other words, contact has been made. And one of the things that happens when we share the Gospel is there is contact at some point. That Gospel is going to hit into the heart of an individual and that individual in turn is going to begin look at that Gospel in a way they have never looked at it before. This is the way God uses the Gospel. There must be contact between the Gospel and the one who is to become saved.

The Concept of Faith

But now the next phrase is a tough one. It is the one we have to spend some time with.

Acts 14:9-10 "The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, {10} Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked."

"Perceiving that he had faith to be healed said" [that is, Paul said] "with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet, And he leaped and walked". Now when we read this sentence it is very obviously teaching that a precondition for the healing of this man was that he had to have faith to be healed. Let's put it another way. Supposing Paul had looked at this man and he did not have faith to be healed, could he be healed? Was the faith of this man a condition that had to be there in order that healing might occur? Now this is not an incidental question because faith is a area of life, or an area of teaching, that is not very well understood.

In Luke chapter 8 there was a woman who had an issue of blood:

Luke 8:43-48 "And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, {44} Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. {45} And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? {46} And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. {47} And when the woman saw that she

was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. {48} And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

Actually in the literal language it is "thy faith having saved thee." You see God is locking it in; and there are three or four other references I could easy make to show that God is underscoring thy faith. He perceived that he had faith to be healed. So if we would isolate these verses from the rest of the Bible -- and it would be a great temptation to do this because in the first instance we like this idea -- this means that I had something already going in my life that made it possible for God to save me. As a matter of fact, this agrees entirely with such statements as "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" [Acts 16:31]. So this seems to mean that -- like this impotent man that was lame in his feet or this woman that had the issue of blood -- if only I could start believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, begin to trust Him, then I could become saved.

After all, we are people who trust. We had faith when we went to bed last night that, unless the Lord returns, we were going to have daylight in the morning. Now, did any of you doubt that? Did any of you go to bed last night and think "I wonder if there is going to be another day tomorrow?". No, the answer is we knew that for each day there is daylight again.

Whenever you looked in the mirror of your car as you were backing up, you trusted that mirror. If you did not see anybody behind you, you put your foot on the gas and backed up. What are you trusting? What if that mirror was giving you wrong direction and there was a car behind you? Smack, you would have an accident. No, we live by faith. We trusted that mirror was giving us right instruction, and so, based on that, we backed up our car. And so on, and so on. Our whole life is built on faith.

Therefore, it certainly is entirely logical for man to say, "Well all right, I will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." I have to have faith, and then God will heal me or then I will become saved. That is the kind of thing that we can expect from mankind. We operate by faith. This is the way we live out our lives. It is by faith.

And so man thinks, "O Lord, I am going to start trusting you, and then the Lord will look at me and He will perceive, like Paul looked at this impotent man, that I have enough faith to be healed." So, according to this logic, faith becomes the instrument or the means whereby we are healed. As a matter of fact, language is even written into a lot of the theological statements concerning the nature of salvation that faith is an instrument through which God heals. But that faith, however, was not our faith -- it was given to us by God. God had to first give it to us and He worked through that faith to save us.

Faith is a Work

Now, the fact is when we study the Bible very carefully, we find that faith is a work. That is something many theologians have missed. In fact, I have missed it all my life until just recently as I have continued to study the Bible. Faith is a work that we do, and I will show you very clearly that it is. The moment that we recognize that it is a work that we do, then we know that it cannot be a precondition for salvation. Then we know that this faith that is displayed in the life of this impotent man cannot be a precondition for his healing. Because God insists:

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: {9} Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Salvation is not of works. Now it is true that once we become saved, or even as God is drawing us, that good works begin to show up in our lives. Let me explain what a good work is. Until we are saved, or until God begins to do any work in our lives, there is no good works in our lives. We do not want to do God's will. We are in rebellion against God altogether. But, you know, when God desires -- and He can do this ahead of salvation -- God can begin "to will and to do of His good pleasure", as we read in Philippians 2:13. He can draw us according to John 6:44:

John 6:44 "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

And so in the life of an individual we begin to see good works. We begin to see a fear of God. We have talked about this again and again as we have been going through the book of Acts. It is such an important piece of information that it has to be hammered home and repeated again and again. These good works can be seen in the life of one that is still not saved because God is drawing that individual. God is beginning to give that person the desire to do His will, and yet he is not saved. On the other hand, God may take a person who never has done any good works of any kind and instantly save that person.

So how are we going to understand all of this? Well let me first me go through four passages that clearly indicate that faith is a work. One of the passages is 1 Thessalonians 1:3:

1 Thessalonians 1:3 "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

Notice it says, "your work of faith". All right, there it is identifying work and faith together. Now look at a passage in John 6:

John 6:28-29 "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? {29} Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

In other words, believing is a work. Well then, we can go to the next passage:

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Faith is the "substance". Now, work that we do has substance and anything that has substance is work. And so "faith is the substance of things hoped for". It is an evidence in our life of something, the evidence of things not seen; but in itself it is a work.

The last passages are in James 2:

James 2:17 "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

James 2:20 "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

James 2:26 "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

Three times God says that faith cannot exist without works. The two are totally tied together and He says in verse 20 that, "faith without works is dead". He says it again in verse 26, "so faith without works is dead". Then to make sure we do not misunderstand this, He says,

James 2:22 "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?"

Since the word "wrought" comes from the same word as "works", we could say "Seest thou how faith works with his works [and the word "his" would have to be "Christ's" in this context] and by works was faith made perfect". Now, here again you see faith works. There is no question at all that faith is a work.

Well, that puts us in a terrible quandary; because Paul saw the faith of this man and perceived that he could be healed. In other words he saw the works of this man and perceived that he could be healed. Therefore, it really looks throughout that faith somehow has to be there in order for us to have salvation.

Salvation is by the Faith of Christ

Now the fact is, of course, that that is not the way it happens because our salvation is not of works. Let me quote again Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith" [that is through a work] "and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works". So, now we read in Galatians 2:16:

Galatians 2:16 "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law" means he cannot be justified by his faith because that is a work. "But by the faith of Jesus Christ". What is the faith? The work of faith, that is "by the work of Jesus Christ". In other words, any faith that is utilized by God to save us is Christ's faith, Christ's faith. It always is Christ's faith. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ"

It is an interesting fact that in almost all the translations the translators have changed this to say, "but by the faith in Jesus Christ". And yet the Greek will not permit that. It is by the faith of Jesus Christ. But they want the faith in Jesus Christ; because they believe that our faith is an instrument through which God works to save us. But that can't be! We can't have a work in our life that is an instrument through which God saves us. That is not a possibility. There can be nothing in our lives that produces salvation.

The proof of this, if you have any doubts about this at all, is the story of Lazarus in John 11. This is one of the most dramatic and wonderful evidences and proofs and illustrations and teachings describing salvation. When Lazarus was a stinking corpse in the tomb Jesus said, "Lazarus come forth," and Lazarus came forth. Was there any faith in that corpse? Was there any work that corpse could do? Was there any response that corpse could make? And the answers are absolutely not, nothing, nothing. That corpse was as dead as dead can be. A stinking corpse. Yet when Jesus said, "Lazarus come forth", Lazarus came out of that tomb!

So there we have the clearest illustration in the Bible showing that salvation cannot be preconditioned by anything. Not by our faith. Not by our good looks. Not by our integrity, nor by anything that exists within our lives. There is no precondition because a dead corpse cannot meet any precondition. It clearly indicates that the whole salvation plan has to be God's. Therefore, when we read these sentences where it says that "he perceived he had faith to be healed". Or "by thy faith thou hast become saved". We know that we cannot be looking at a precondition or an instrument through which God works to salvation. God requires no instrument.

Again, I think about these dear people that believe that you have to "accept" Christ, and their little babies are left out of the loop totally. They might have a child that is born with a very limited mind that could never reason, never talk, never think out anything. He would be left out of the loop; because he cannot "accept" Christ. He has to have faith, he has to have something in his life before God is going to save him. Yet these babies in the womb, these children or adults (they even grow to be adults without a mind) cannot do that. In order

to get around that, they concoct some more wrong doctrines by saying, "Well, you know, there is an age of accountability. Those little children are not accountable to God. They are safe and secure the way they are." There is no biblical basis for that at all, none at all. They have to strain and force and cudgel the Bible in order to try to make it work out. They do not dare read Psalms 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

But the fact is God does the entire work of salvation without any preconditions. He can save that baby in the womb. He can save that little child and can save that person without a brain. He can save anybody that He wants to save. Because if He can raise a dead corpse from the grave, as He did Lazarus, He can save anybody that he wishes. That is exactly what salvation is all about.

Let's finish Galatians 2:16 where God is underscoring this: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law". Therefore, our faith, which is a work, cannot enter into the salvation program, "but by the faith of Jesus Christ". Now "even we have believed", that is, we had faith in Jesus Christ. Now, when we became saved, God gave us a brand new resurrected soul, and in our new resurrected soul we want to do the will of God. That is a "want to" that is totally a part of our new personality.

To do the will of God means to do the work of God. And one of the works that will show up immediately in the lives of those who have become saved, if it has not been showing up earlier, is that they have become to trust in Christ. We have believed in Him. That is why the Bible calls us "believers". Because faith is the major work that shows up in our lives. We have come to trust Jesus Christ as our Savior and our Lord. It was not a condition for our salvation. He could have begun to put that work in our life ahead of time; but that was not the instrument, that was not the condition, in order that we might become saved. But when we do become saved, that good work will be seen in our life just as every other good work. As we read in 1 John 2:1 John 2:3-4 "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. {4} He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

The fear of God, and all these other things, will be seen in our lives when we have become saved. The that is why it goes on in Galatians 2:16 "we have believed in Jesus Christ". Now here we have the preposition "in". That is, we have entered into Jesus Christ because by His faith He has saved us, and He has made us a "new creature" in Christ [according to 2 Corinthians 5:17] so that we have a desire to do the will of God.

Then it goes on, "that we might be justified by the faith of Christ". It was not our believing that justified us -- it was the faith of Christ -- "and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Trusting in God is a work of the law -- that is, it is a command. When God commands someone "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" He is saying, "you have to become saved." He is telling that individual, "you have to have your sins washed away." "You have to repent of your sins." These are all commands that God gives. And no unsaved person can do this of himself. God has to do it within him. These are all works of the law to have these things happen, and Christ had to do all the works of the law.

Go back to Revelation 19 where God assigns to the Lord Jesus Christ the name "Faithful".

Revelation 19:11 "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful

and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."

Now the word "Faithful" is an adjective; but it is similar to the noun "faith". Christ's name is Faithful, and His name is True; and He is called the Word of God in verse 13:

Revelation 19:13 "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God."

These are all names that God assigns to the Lord Jesus Christ so we might know something about Him.

Christ Does All the Work of Salvation

So we see, therefore, that the matter of our salvation is totally, totally -- without any exception of any kind -- dependent on the work of Christ who is the Faithful One. He had the faith that all of this would be accomplished for us and is bringing it to pass.

So now, when we go back to Acts 14:9, we can ask the meaning of the statement, "Perceiving that he had faith to be healed." Now remember we are looking at the spiritual dimension here. This man represents any of us before we are saved. Does God look at us and see some kind of faith that somehow we can become saved? The only faith that he can see in our lives that has anything to do with salvation is the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In other words, if we are going to look at the spiritual application, God has given this man a trust in God. That trust will not be the means or the instrument by which he will become saved; but it is the evidence that God is interested in this individual. But when God heals this man it is completely apart from any faith that is in his life. It is totally the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ operating to heal this man. So Paul "Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked".

We saw in Isaiah 35 a description of sending forth the Gospel into the world:

Isaiah 35:5-7 "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. {6} Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. {7} And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes."

In other words God is saying, "You see this is a fulfillment of my prophecy, that indeed there is going to be salvation coming." Therefore, God utilized this individual, to show us that He is the Savior. But He has set it up in such a way -- and God has written the Bible in this way -- that unless we read it very carefully we can get the impression that it is something that we have that causes our salvation. However, that is an impossibility. It is the faith of Christ, and only the faith of Christ.

Grace versus Works

For example, go for just a moment to Romans 3 to read a couple more verses to develop this:

Romans 3:21-22 "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; {22} Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference."

Now here again we might get the impression that there is a precondition that they believe. No, it is upon all them that show the evidence of that salvation, in that they have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The believing that they do is the good work that shows up in our lives just like all the other good works; and so we are called believers.

Again we can look at Romans 4:3:

Romans 4:3 "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

I struggled with this verse as much as any verse in the Bible. What is the "it"? Abraham believed God and "it". And anyone reading that would say that well "it" is his faith that was counted for righteousness. But immediately we say, "No, that's not possible. That's not possible". Because faith is a work, and no work that we do can be counted for righteousness. Well then, what is the "it"? Abraham believed God and GOD. The Hebrew [in Genesis 15:6] does not even have the word IT. The word is just put there to make the sentence work out. But the sense of the verse is "Abraham believed God, and God was counted unto him for righteousness". Or it could be "the faith of Christ was counted unto him for righteousness". That ties into Romans 3:22, where it speaks about the faith of Jesus Christ which is the righteousness of God.

Romans 3:22 "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference."

Now let's go on with Romans 4:4:

Romans 4:4 "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt."

Consider the phrase "to him that worketh". For the one who is trying to work out his salvation, it is not "of grace, but of debt." And elsewhere the Bible says, if you are trusting in what your work has done, then you have fallen from grace, you are under the law:

Galatians 5:4 "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

And so it is imperative that we understand that salvation is altogether of grace. That is, it is a gift of God, and we make no contribution. So God says in verse 5:

Romans 4:5 "But to him that worketh not, but believeth [i.e., has faith] on him [i.e., has come to salvation in Christ] that justifieth the ungodly, his [Christ's] faith is counted for righteousness."

Christ's faith is counted for righteousness. Our faith cannot be counted for righteousness. God put all these him(s), and it(s), and he(s), and so on, in the Bible so that we have to look at it very carefully. These are testing stones in the Bible whereby you are going to be tested. Are you going to be trusting finally in something you have done? Because if you do, then you have fallen from grace, you have a "works-grace" Gospel and that is not the Gospel of the Bible.

And again let me go back just to remind you once more (I remind myself about this all the time), if you have any doubts about what I am saying, go back to Lazarus in the tomb. "What did he contribute? Nothing! Therefore, any time I arrive at an idea that there was something in my life that God used as an instrument, or as a means, or as a precondition that caused him to save me, I know that I am on the wrong track. There was nothing there, the work is totally that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we can look at Romans 5:1-2:

Romans 5:1-2 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: {2} By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

"Therefore being justified by faith". Who's faith? Have you got it now? "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith". Who's faith is it now? Who did the work? The faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

We have read Ephesians 2:8-9 a couple of times already. "For by grace are ye saved through faith". Who's faith? Again, it is the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. It has to be through the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ because faith is a work and Christ has done the work. Salvation is through the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ "and that [faith] not of yourselves:". You see it is not your faith, it is not something you have done. It is the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. "It is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast."

Now to close off this little discussion. If you go to James chapter 2, there are a couple of verses that puzzle a whole lot of people and that have puzzled me in the past. In fact, Martin Luther thought the book of James did not belong in the Bible because he thought it was contrary to everything the Bible teaches. You know, he was the one who said, "the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). Incidentally, who's faith do we live by in that statement? By our faith? No, by Christ's faith. In fact, that quotation comes from Habakkuk:

Habakkuk 2:4 "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."

So who's faith can it only be? Christ's faith is the only faith. And so we read the following in James 2:

James 2:21 "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?"

Well, now that certainly sounds heretical, doesn't it? Was he justified by his works? No, not by his works, but by the works of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who did the work to justify him. Remember, it is always Christ who did the work. It is His faith. Every aspect of the atonement is Christ's work. We could paraphrase this, "was not Abraham our father justified by all the work that Christ did in saving him?". The evidence is that he offered up Isaac, his son, upon the altar. In other words, he became obedient. Remember faith is the evidence of things not seen:

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

When we become saved, the evidence of salvation is that we have become to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. The good work of faith is seen in our life just like all the other good works should be seen in our life; and the evidence that Christ had worked to save Abraham was that he faithfully obeyed. He was entirely obedient to God in offering up Isaac. So James says:

James 2:22 "Seest thou how faith wrought [worked] with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?"

That is, the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was a work, worked with His works of going to the cross, paying for our sins, and all the other things He did in connection with the atonement. The words, "and by works" (meaning the works of the Lord Jesus Christ) "was [Christ's] faith made perfect?" The whole focal point is on the Lord Jesus Christ. The next verse says:

James 2:23 "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it [God or the faith of Christ] was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God."

That is, Abraham's faith was counted for him only because Christ had done all the work -- He was perfectly faithful in paying for the sins of Abraham. Therefore, Abraham had come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

James 2:25 "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?"

Again, who's works? Her work? Absolutely not. She was justified by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ had saved her, and the evidence (remember

"faith is the evidence of things not seen") was that, "when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?". In other words, she was obedient. She had come to trust in the God of Abraham, the God of the Bible -- Jehovah God.

Faith is God's Work

So we must understand this principle -- and this is a big, BIG principle -- that we must never countenance any idea that anything that is in our lives is a precondition for salvation. That is an impossibility. There are no preconditions. Secondly, any faith, any believing that we have, is never something that is a precondition for salvation or an instrument for salvation. It is the result, it is the evidence, that God is already working within us, and it will be locked in when we become saved. We will from then on have an ongoing, earnest desire to be obedient to Him, to trust Him, because we have been given eternal life. We have been given a brand new resurrected soul in which we never want to sin again.

APPENDIX 6 – THE PHENOMENON OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES

By Harold Camping

In the Bible, God repeatedly describes the nature of the sin of the church. Much that is unbiblical goes on in congregations and denominations today. This is not apostasy in sects and cults, which obviously are under the power of Satan; rather, it is in evangelical, Bible-related churches. To our utter consternation, these sins apply to a high degree to many of the most conservative contemporary churches and denominations.

In the Bible, we can learn how God plans to eventually destroy the New Testament church as it becomes increasingly sinful. It will not be by political action. It will not be by an ideology like Communism. It will be by satanic activity working through false gospels that look so much like the true Gospel that even the elect would be deceived, if that were possible.

God Uses Satan to Destroy

The Bible discloses that right near the end of time, Satan will become the dominant ruler within the congregations. In II Thessalonians 2, God speaks of the man of sin taking his seat in the temple. It will be seen that the man of sin can be only Satan. Matthew 24:24: "For these shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

In Revelation 13:7, God informs us: "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." Revelation 13 speaks of the beast that comes out of the earth. This can be only Satan and his dominion, as he rules through false gospels. By this means, he is able to destroy the churches that are under the judgment of God. Thus, he is able to overcome the saints, the true believers, within the congregations.

Destruction of the New Testament church is not through political action but through the action of the church itself as it becomes apostate. Clues and guidance as to how this will materialize can be learned from God's dealings with ancient Israel, because Israel is a type, figure, or representation of the New Testament church. What happened in the nation of Israel gives insight as to what will

happen to the congregations of our day.

Do you recall that after the death of Solomon, God divided the twelve tribes of Israel into two nations? Ten of the tribes became a nation called Israel which had its capital in Samaria. Two of the tribes, Judah and Benjamin, became the nation of Judah which had its capital in Jerusalem. God had set up a testing program for both of these nations. The testing program involved contemporary nations. During the days of the demise of the ten tribes, the testing program involved the nation of Assyria. The nation of Israel looked with longing at the beautiful horses and the beautiful apparel of the Assyrians and decided that their gods must be victorious gods. They began to play spiritual harlotry with Assyria. They began to run after the gods of the Assyrians, a nation whose language they did not understand, and God used the Assyrians to destroy Israel.

Then the nation of Judah began to play spiritual harlotry with the gods of the Babylonians and the Assyrians. They looked at the success of these nations (the beautiful horses and the beautiful apparel), and all that went along with it, and Judah began to lust after their gods. Babylon, too, was a nation whose language they did not understand. It was this nation that destroyed Judah in 587 B.C. This is the scenario that God gives to guide us into truth concerning the destruction of the New Testament church.

God's Long-Term Testing Program for the Church

The principle of a testing program is found repeatedly in the Bible. Israel, for example, was tested by God when Moses left them for forty days to receive the tables of the law on Mt. Sinai. Israel failed the test by making and worshipping the golden calf. As a result, God's wrath came upon them and about 3,000 men were killed (Exodus 32).

The number 40 in the Bible, or a multiple of ten of the number 40 such as 400, may be a clue that a testing program is in progress. Israel was in the wilderness forty years after coming out of Egypt. They failed the test; few of them trusted in God. The Bible records in Joshua 5:6:

For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD swore that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD swore unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

Significantly, it can be shown that there were exactly 400 years from the time when Israel came out of Egypt (1447 B.C.), and Saul became king over Israel (1047 B.C.). The latter occurred in the days of Samuel, who was the last of God's prophets to judge Israel. When Samuel was old, Israel came to him and asked for a king to rule over them. I Samuel 8:4-7:

Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

Saul became king exactly 400 years after Israel, under the direct rule of God, came out of Egypt. They failed the test in that they did not want God to rule over them directly.

Another interesting testing program in

relation to the number forty is in the Book of Jonah. Jonah was instructed to cry against Nineveh because of their wickedness (Jonah 1:2). Jonah 3:4: "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

Wonderfully, the people of Nineveh were victorious in their test. Jonah 3:5 and 10 report: "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. . . . And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

Perhaps the greatest testing program of all occurred in the New Testament, when the Lord Jesus Christ took on a human nature and was tested. Luke 4:1-2:

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

The first Adam was tested in the Garden of Eden, and the second Adam, Christ, was also tested. The first Adam failed the test by disobeying God and thus plunged the human race into sin, but our Lord was victorious in the test. He remained entirely obedient to God. His perfect obedience has made the incomprehensible Kingdom of God a reality for all who believe on Him. Obviously, the principle that God tests the human race is firmly established in the Bible.

The end-time church, too, is faced with a testing program. Unfortunately, the Bible reveals that the end-time church in large measure will fail its testing program, just as Adam and Eve failed in their day and as ancient Israel repeatedly did. The church will fail the test and will come under God's wrath, just as God's judgment came when Adam and Eve failed the test.

God's Final Testing Program

The testing program that identifies with the end-time church will be focused on a nation whose language the congregation does not understand. God gives at least two prominent clues in the Old Testament as to the nature of the final testing program. The first clue is in Deuteronomy 13:1-3:

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

God clearly says that He is proving, that is, testing the congregation through the activity of a false prophet within their midst. We should know about the character of this prophet and the nature of his teaching.

The introduction to Chapter 13 of Deuteronomy is the last verse of Deuteronomy 12, where God admonishes the congregation: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." God says that man shall not add to nor take away from the Word of God. To recognize the Word of God as His Word and have an intense desire to be obedient to it, is, in fact, worshipping God. On the other hand, to believe that there is an additional source of divine information (to believe that a dream, vision, or tongue is from God when, indeed, it is not), that effectively is worshipping a god other than the God of the Bible.

God gives the same warning in the New Testament, in Revelation 22:18-19:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

"**This book**" can be only the Bible. The Bible alone and in its entirety is the Word of God. Any additional articulated, verbalized message supposedly from God which is delivered through a dream, vision, or by any other means, is an addition to the Bible. Because God is not adding anything to the divine revelation which is the Bible, if one listens to these messages and believes they are of God, he effectively is worshipping a god other than the God of the Bible. God warns in verse 18 that anyone who commits this sin is subject to the plagues written in the Bible; that is, he is subject to eternal damnation.

Deuteronomy 13 says the false prophet is a dreamer of dreams, that is, he is convinced that what he hears in his dreams is of God. The sign or the wonder, the prophetic statement of his dream or vision, comes to pass; therefore, he believes he has received a supernatural visitation, but because the message he received was not from God, it had to be from Satan. When he teaches that the message he received in a dream or vision was from God and, therefore, is the Word of God, he is encouraging people to go after a god other than the God of the Bible. This is a deadly serious sin within the congregation. Deuteronomy 13 says that this prophet is to be put to death even if he is a loved one of someone in the congregation.

The key phrases in these verses in Deuteronomy 13 are, "for the Lord your God proveth you" (or tests you) and "to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." These phrases teach something about God's final testing program for the church. God clearly says that He will test the congregation by allowing those who say they declare the Word of God but who are false prophets (because their source is other than the Bible), to be within the congregation.

I Corinthians 14 Gives a Clue Concerning the Final Testing Program

The second Old Testament clue to the final testing program that will come against the church is that which came against ancient Israel. The signpost to this clue is in the New Testament, I Corinthians 14:21: "**In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.**"

To understand this clue, one must know the setting in which it is found. I Corinthians 14 discusses the phenomenon of tongues, which was present in the church at Corinth. Certain individuals there received from God, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, messages in a language (a tongue), which neither they nor anyone else in the congregation could understand. In I Corinthians 14:2 God speaks of these as "**in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.**"

Additionally, within that congregation God gave certain individuals the gift of interpretation. By means of this God-given gift, the message received in the tongue was made understandable to the congregation. I Corinthians 14:5 informs us that when the tongues message was interpreted, it edified the congregation.

This was a valid spiritual event in the church at Corinth. They had only that part of the Bible which is now called the Old Testament. God was still breaking the silence between the supernatural and the natural when He gave messages to

Paul, John, Peter, and Agabus (Acts 11:28). Because these messages were from God, they were an addition to the Word of God. The New Testament had not yet been completed; even with these additions, the churches of that day had an incomplete Word of God.

During the same time when it was possible for the apostles to receive direct messages from God, there were individuals in the church of Corinth who received messages from God in a tongue. The messages could have been in the form of a prayer, praise, or a revelation. Howbeit, it was a message from God, therefore, it was an addition to the written Word of that time.

In the center of the discourse on the phenomenon of tongues (I Corinthians 14:21), is a reference to the Old Testament law wherein God had written that through tongues He would speak to the people and they would not listen. God speaks about tongues in Deuteronomy 28. Moses addressed Israel when they were about to enter the promised land. He warned them that they would not be content with the Gospel he brought them, "**Because thou servest not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things**" (Deuteronomy 28:47). The result of their rebellion against God was punishment. This is declared in the remaining verses of Deuteronomy 28. Verses 48 and 49 summarize the warning:

Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth: a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand.

This is the passage of law referred to in I Corinthians 14 in regards to the tongues phenomenon. The ten tribes of Israel were destroyed by their enemy the nation of Assyria after Israel had engaged in spiritual harlotry with the Assyrians. As a result of their spiritual rebellion, God caused the nation of Assyria, a nation whose language Israel did not understand, to destroy them. God gave a final warning of this a few years before it happened. The warning is found in Isaiah 28:11-12.

For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear.

The sequel to God's judgment on Israel occurred 122 years later. The nation of Judah ran like a harlot after Babylon, a heathen nation whose language they did not understand, and Babylon is the nation that destroyed Judah in the year 587 B.C. A few years earlier they had been warned by the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah 5:15-17:

Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD; it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. Their quiver is as an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men. And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword.

God is focusing on a nation "**whose language thou knowest not.**" This passage, too, is referred to in the ominous language of I Corinthians 14:21.

Two Important Principles

Deuteronomy 13, Deuteronomy 28, I Corinthians 14, and God's judgment are obviously tied to the end-time church

when two important principles are considered.

The first principle is that ancient Israel was a picture or type of the New Testament church. God's judgment on Israel for their spiritual adultery sheds light on the nature of God's judgment on the New Testament church for its spiritual rebellion.

The second principle is that God sets up testing programs for mankind. In Deuteronomy 13 it is seen that within the church a testing program will involve false prophets who receive supernatural messages. These false prophets will encourage the congregations to go after other gods by revealing their supernatural experiences, which come from a source other than God. These two Biblical principles give understanding as to how God judges the end-time church.

Tongues: End-Time Testing Program

The question might be raised: Why does God write extensively in I Corinthians 12, 13, and 14 about the phenomenon of tongues? One might be surprised to read in the Bible about this temporary phenomenon. A few decades after this phenomenon occurred in the church in Corinth, the visions of the Book of Revelation were received by the Apostle John on the Island of Patmos. The Book of Revelation closes with the warning that anyone who adds to its words will be subject to plagues; therefore, there can be no further revelation from God by visions, voices, tongues, or anything else. Thus, the phenomenon of tongues that occurred in the church at Corinth would also have come to an end. From that time to the present day, do not expect God to bring a message by these means or by any means other than what He has given us in the Bible.

It appears that the phenomenon of tongues from God was short-lived and confined only to the church at Corinth. It was an incidental matter even in that day; thus, the question persists: Why did God write extensively about it?

The answer lies in the realization that these three chapters of I Corinthians discuss the matter of tongues as God's testing arena for the end-time church. God planted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden, and it was the testing arena of our first parents. Satan saw his opportunity in that testing program to tempt and enslave man in sin. In the warning and testing program of Deuteronomy 13, God allows a false prophet to deceive some people within the congregation. God sets up the testing programs, but it is Satan who uses the tests as opportunities to lead people astray.

God has established the phenomenon of tongues, recorded in I Corinthians 12, 13, and 14, as a testing arena for the end-time church. God gave the true gift of tongues briefly in the church at Corinth so that the end-time churches' fidelity or infidelity to the Word of God could be discovered.

Adam and Eve were permitted to eat of every tree of the garden except one. God provided lavish blessings of fragrant and delicious fruits of the trees to satisfy the physical needs of man. Lucifer wanted man to serve Satan rather than God, and he tempted Adam and Eve into thinking they were missing something important if they did not taste the fruit of the one tree that had been placed off-limits.

Throughout the Bible, the church is reminded of the lavish blessings that attend salvation. The blessings are far more than anyone deserves; they are so wonderful that our hearts should continuously praise God. One minor, incidental blessing, briefly enjoyed by a few people in the church at Corinth (that is, being able to receive an additional message from God in an unknown language), was given before the magnificent blessings of the whole

Word of God were available. God maximized His communicative blessings to mankind by giving us the entire record of His will (the New Testament and the Old Testament), and He placed off-limits the minor blessing enjoyed by the church at Corinth.

God, in His wisdom, retained the record; indeed He prominently displays the record of the phenomenon of tongues in the Bible. Its placement there makes it a testing arena for the end-time church, just as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the testing arena for the beginning of the human race.

Satan Uses Tongues to Destroy

Satan uses this testing arena as his final opportunity to win a decisive victory over Christ by defeating the external church. He defeated Adam and Eve by encouraging them to eat of the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden. Likewise, he encourages the end-time church to enjoy the forbidden gift of tongues.

When God set up the testing arena in the Garden of Eden, He used language that made it easy, or at least paved the way, for Lucifer to tempt Eve. God did not give the forbidden tree a foreboding name like "**forbidden**" tree. God gave this tree the intriguing name "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Certainly, such a title would cause Adam and Eve to wonder what mysterious power the fruit of this tree possessed. This is evidenced by Eve's reaction to Satan's enticements, in Genesis 3:6:

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Satan stimulated Eve's lustful thinking by making reference to the name God had given the tree. In Genesis 3:5 Satan declared to Eve: "**For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.**" Surely in giving this tree the name "**the knowledge of good and evil,**" God gave Satan a theme that he could use to tempt our first parents into sin.

God, of course, is not the author of sin, nor is He in any way guilty of sin. God did, however, design an insistent and valid testing program, in that the fruit appeared to be especially luscious ("**the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes,**" verse 6), and in the name that the tree was given.

God also made the testing arena for ancient Israel quite intensive. The ten tribes of the northern kingdom, called Israel, were destroyed by the Assyrians, a nation whose language they did not understand. While Israel was failing the test, God blessed the nation of Assyria: they conquered Syria (II Kings 16:9), and appeared to be the nation with all the answers. Ezekiel 23:5-6:

And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours, which were clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses.

"**Aholah**" is another name for the capital of Israel, which was in Samaria. Assyria and its political successes and worldly achievements appeared to be the nation to emulate. Similarly, Judah, the southern kingdom with its capital in Jerusalem, was enamored by the beauty, power, and successes of both the Assyrians and the Babylonians.

The beauty, power, and political successes of Assyria and Babylon were the results of God's blessings. These wicked nations were in total rebellion against God, yet God brought them to power and made them attractive to serve as testing programs for Israel and Judah.

Israel Goes to Assyria for Help

The Bible gives a vivid illustration of how God allowed a wicked nation like Assyria to appear to Israel to be a success story. During the days of Isaiah, Jerusalem was threatened by Israel and Syria. The situation was grave. II Chronicles 28 discloses the wickedness of Judah's King Ahaz, and the resultant punishment God brought upon Judah by Israel and Syria. II Chronicles 28:5-6:

Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter. For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers.

The king of Judah, a wicked man named Ahaz, and all of Judah should have cried to God for help. They should have repented in sackcloth like Nineveh did when Jonah preached to them. They should have cried out to God as King Jehoshaphat did when the Moabites and the Ammonites came to destroy Judah (II Chronicles 20). Instead the Bible records that Judah went to Assyria for help. II Kings 16:7:

So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me.

They could not have more dramatically displayed their complete lack of trust in God. God rescued sinful Judah by wicked Assyria, as II Kings 16:9 declares: **"And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin."**

Assyria conquered Syria. Until recent times, Syria had not been an independent nation. God used Assyria to destroy the ten tribes; they no longer existed as an independent kingdom. These two nations, Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel, therefore, were removed as a threat to Judah by the strength of the heathen nation Assyria.

The point of this information is that God brought successes to Assyria to intensify the testing program that was coming against Judah. The successes of Assyria in its flower, and Babylon in its flower, suggested that their gods were more powerful and more trustworthy than Jehovah God. God, for His divine purposes, gave Assyria the victory, but Judah was convinced that the superiority of the Assyrian gods made them victorious. This spiritual mentality is seen in the citation of II Chronicles 25:14 where another king of Judah, Amaziah, worshipped the gods of an enemy called Edom or Seir. This verse declares:

Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them.

II Chronicles 28:22-23 records similar action by the wicked King Ahaz:

And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel.

God Intensifies the Final Testing Program

When God sets up a testing program, He strengthens the test by His choice of words or by allowing the enemies of God to appear to be successful. The same principles apply to God's final testing program for the end-time church in relation to God's Word, the Bible, and in relation to the successes that God allows the enemies of the Gospel to enjoy.

Three examples of words that God uses to indicate the severity of the test for the end-time church are offered. First, God says that those who spoke in tongues in the Corinthian church were edified as they spoke these mysteries in the Spirit (I Corinthians 14:2-4). Surely anything that serves to edify or build up the faith of the individual believer is to be sought after but the context in which these words are found warns the reader to be careful.

Second, God Declares In I Corinthians 14:39, "forbid not to speak with tongues." Does This Teach That Speaking In Tongues Is Sinful?

The third example requires more explanation. In three of the four gospel accounts, Matthew, Mark, and John, the sin called blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is mentioned. It is also referred to in I John 5 as a "sin unto death." This sin is unusual in that those who commit it can never have forgiveness; that is, they can never become saved. Moreover, this sin is unusual in that God protects mankind from it to the point that it is virtually impossible to find anyone who has ever committed this sin.

However, the scribes of Jesus' day committed this sin. Mark 3:22 says of them: **"And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils."** In response to this grievous sin Jesus declares in Mark 3:28-29,

Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.

In verse 30 He explains that the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is to believe that Christ was under the power of Satan rather than under the power of the Holy Spirit. The scribes who hated Jesus and desired His death had committed this dreadful sin; they were convinced that He was of Satan. They had no desire to look upon Him as their Messiah.

The Bible mentions only that the scribes in Mark 3 and Matthew 12 have committed this sin. The most hardened sinner today ordinarily would not become convicted that Jesus received His power from Satan. There may be those in the world who have committed this sin, but if they have, they will never worry about Christ being their Savior. Anyone who has the slightest interest in Jesus as Savior could not have committed this dreadful sin.

Why did God put an extensive record of this sin in the Bible? Its presence in the Bible has produced much sorrow for true believers who have been incorrectly taught that the sin of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is to reject Christ. Many true believers when young repeatedly rejected Christ. They have become saved in their later years, but are haunted by the question: Can I be saved? One reason for recording this sin in the Bible is to increase the severity of the testing program of the end-time church.

A simple extension of the incorrect idea of what blasphemy of the Holy Spirit means could be the wrong conclusion that anyone who believes that a church is under the power of Satan has committed this terrible sin. In other words, it might be said that if someone examines a

particular gospel or church and decides that it is of Satan, by that judgment he is in danger of having committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This conclusion is erroneous but widely taught by those who believe in tongues. Few dare to make the judgment that a "tongues gospel" is of Satan. Almost no one dares to conclude that a gospel can be a product of Satan when it claims that Christ is the Savior. As a result, the "tongues gospel" is protected from criticism even by those who want to remain true to the Bible. In fear of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, they are forced to acknowledge that even though they disagree with many doctrines of the "tongues gospel," it must be considered an aspect of the true Gospel. This, in turn, encourages many people to follow the "tongues gospel." Thus, God has built characteristics into the tongues testing program that make it appear safe in its identification with the true Gospel.

The correct understanding of the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is to believe that Jesus, when He came as the Savior, was under the power of Satan.

The Success of the Tongues Movement

An ever-increasing number of individuals and congregations all over the world fail this end-of-time testing program. The tongues movement, also called the "charismatic movement," is sweeping through churches like wildfire. Virtually every denomination has churches that have welcomed it with open arms.

For generations, attempts have been made to unify various faiths and denominations; however, no attempt has made progress like the charismatic movement. Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, all gospels that identify with the Christian ethic, find brotherhood under the charismatic banner. To those who embrace the tongues phenomenon, it appears to be a wonderful demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible guides us into truth; we can know the facts. The church has become increasingly apostate. Consequently, God is blinding people so that they believe this movement is of the Holy Spirit. They do not realize that it is of Satan. By means of this phenomenon, Satan appears to be defeating the true Gospel to a degree never before realized.

Indeed, God brought judgment on the Old Testament church (Israel and Judah), by nations whose language Israel did not understand, nations with whom Israel had engaged in spiritual harlotry. God used these nations to destroy Israel and Judah. Likewise, churches and denominations of today are engaging in grievous spiritual harlotry by blindly running after gospels that feature an unknown language called "tongues." These false gospels are being used of God as a judgment on the church. Expect to see the church destroyed by them.

Congregations will continue to exist. They may appear to be more vibrant and spiritually successful than ever. It may appear that the cause of Christ is advancing all over the world: Crusades attended in ever-increasing numbers, churches filled to capacity, seminaries with more prospective preachers. Nevertheless, it must be realized that the church is under God's judgment. The abomination of desolation increasingly stands in the holy place. The man of sin increasingly takes his seat in the temple.

Two important characteristics always appear to be present in the tongues movement: First, acceptance of the principle that God is still speaking today. Additional revelation, it is believed, may be revealed through an unknown language called tongues, a vision, a dream, or by hearing a voice. Invariably where there is an interest in dreams and visions, there is an interest in tongues.

Likewise, wherever there is an interest in tongues, there is an interest in dreams and visions. The true Gospel is circumscribed by the authority of the Bible alone and in its entirety. The "tongues gospel" has as its authority the Bible plus the messages that supposedly come from God in a tongue, dream, vision, or voice. It is easy to know that it is not the true Gospel, and if it is not the true Gospel, it is a false gospel.

Signs and Wonders

The second characteristic of the tongues movement is an interest in signs and wonders. There is a conviction that God is performing miracles today, as our Lord and the twelve apostles did signs and wonders. Miraculous healing is most commonly expected. The sign of people falling backward (being "slain in the spirit" as some call it), is evidence of a supernatural event. While so-called miraculous healing can be explained in earthly, physical terms, falling backwards appears to be unexplainable from an earthly, physical vantage point.

The phenomenon of someone appearing to receive a message from God in a tongue or vision, etc., may actually have a physical explanation. It could be an hallucination or it could be related to the individual's subconscious mind. Also, it could be supernatural activity induced by Satan; he captivates the hearts of those who are not content with the true Gospel. When it is a supernatural activity, it should be called a sign or a wonder because God calls the activity of speaking in tongues a sign in I Corinthians 14:22.

Significantly, the Bible makes reference to "signs and wonders" in connection with the end of time. The fact that these references have nothing to do with the true church is of great importance. Every reference relates to satanic activity. For example, in Matthew 24:24: **"For these shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; inasmuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."** This verse indicates that false prophets will come with a gospel that is so much like the true Gospel that even the elect would be deceived, if that were possible. The elect are the true believers; they were chosen by God to salvation. They cannot be deceived because God will hold them fast. False prophets can be recognized by their signs and wonders. In II Thessalonians 2:9 God warns of the man of sin who will take his seat in the temple: **"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders."**

In Revelation 13, in reference to Satan coming as a false prophet, God warns in verses 13-14:

And he doth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

In Revelation 16:14, God speaks of satanic activity just before Judgment Day:

For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

God shows in these references that He will bring His judgment on the end-time church through false gospels that feature miracles. Do not be surprised that signs and wonders are prominent in churches with false gospels. When Christ came with the true Gospel, He attested to its genuineness by performing miracles. John 20:30-31:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

As Satan comes at the end of time with his false gospels that feature tongues, he, too, attempts to attest to their genuineness with signs and wonders. Only two miracles are credited to him in the Bible: First, his ability to break the silence between the supernatural and the natural with messages in tongues and visions; and second, he can supernaturally cause people to fall backward. To add further credence to these gospels, Satan comes with lying signs and wonders; that is, his adherents will claim to do miracles and believe miracles have been done, when there has been no miracle.

Modern means of communication such as television enhance the spread of these false gospels. People who worship in churches that are reasonably faithful to the true Gospel may become familiar with the blandishments and enticements of false gospels in the privacy of their homes. With no one knowing, they drink deeply of the poisoned water, and as the plague enters their churches, they are prepared to accept it as an aspect of the true Gospel. Right before our eyes, church after church capitulates to gospels that do not consider the Bible alone and in its entirety to be the true Gospel.

The destruction of the church, to a high degree, is accomplished through the testing program of tongues. In blindness, a church will fail the test as Satan deceives the congregation into accepting the false gospels of tongues and signs and wonders. Thus, congregations will continue to exist during the final tribulation period, but they will be increasingly false. True believers will either voluntarily leave or they will be asked to leave when the congregation begins to follow a false gospel. Those who remain within the congregations in reality will be serving Satan even though they think they are serving Christ.

Fire from Heaven

In Numbers 16 we read of the rebellion against Moses led by three men, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. We read in Numbers 16:2-3:

And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?

The consequences of this rebellion were that the earth opened up and swallowed the families of the three men and the destruction by fire of the 250 men who rebelled. Numbers 16:35: "And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense."

However, the next day the Israelites complained to God. Numbers 16:41: "But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD." As a result of this added rebellion on the part of Israel, God sent a plague into Israel that began to kill the Israelites in great numbers. Only the timely intervention of Aaron in making an atonement for Israel kept God from killing all of Israel. We read of this terrible judgment and its remedy in Numbers 16:45-48:

Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them

as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

In this account, rebellious Israel is representative of mankind, who have rebelled against God. The plague that killed a great many of the Israelites and the fire that came down and destroyed the 250 men point to the judgment of God that will destroy all of the unsaved. The atonement offered by Aaron as well as Aaron himself, as he stood between the dead and the living, represent Christ who stopped the wrath of God from falling on all those for whom He made atonement. Thus, we see much of the Gospel of salvation in this account.

Does Satan Make Fire Come from Heaven?

In Revelation 13:13, the Bible discloses that the beast "*maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.*" Does this mean that at some point in time, Satan will be able to literally make fire come down from heaven? Allow me to suggest that this phenomenon is presently happening in many places in the world, but it is not a literal fire, it is an activity that is the equivalent of calling down fire from heaven. Let us search the Bible to see how this can be.

In two outstanding examples in which Satan, through his emissaries, threatened believers, fire came down from heaven to destroy the wicked ones.

In II Kings 1, we read of the wicked king of Israel sending a captain with 50 men to take Elijah. In the face of Satan's open assault on believers, Elijah, who represents believers, called down fire from heaven and the captain and 50 men were destroyed.

In Revelation 20, we read of Satan assaulting the camp of the saints by means of the nations from the four corners of the earth, and fire came down from heaven to destroy these nations.

There was another time when Satan assaulted the kingdom of God and fire should have been called down from heaven to destroy him. Instead, a different action was taken to show that Satan could have been destroyed by fire. That action, therefore, became the equivalent of calling down fire from heaven.

The event was when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Judas and the temple soldiers came to take Jesus. Satan himself was there, because a bit earlier, he had entered into Judas (Luke 22:3). Satan was so much a part of what followed that Christ called Judas a "*devil*" (John 6:70-71). Jesus asked Judas and the temple soldiers, "*Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.*" Jesus then answered, "*I am*" (John 18:4-5).

At that moment, following the action of Elijah as recorded in II Kings 1, and the action against the forces of evil as recorded in Revelation 20, Jesus should have called down fire from heaven to destroy the enemies who would bind Him, but Jesus could not take this action. He declared to the temple soldiers, "*this is your hour, and the power of darkness*" (Luke 22:53). Christ could not destroy these enemies because it was necessary that He be bound and go to the cross to pay for our sins. Only then could He be our Savior.

Jesus showed that He was willingly being bound and that it was God's will that He be taken, but Christ could have destroyed these enemies. Instead of bringing fire from heaven, when Jesus said, "*I am,*" He caused them to reel backward and fall to the ground (John 18:6). This was a substitute action to show that He had the power to destroy them.

We learned from Revelation 13:13 that Satan will cause fire to come down from heaven, but the Bible also instructs us that Satan cannot make fire come down from heaven. Do you recall the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal (I Kings 18)? The 450 prophets of Baal, whose head is Satan, tried all day to cause fire to come down to the altar they had made. But they failed totally to accomplish this. Elijah, on the other hand, prayed that God would send fire on the altar that Elijah had built, and fire came down and consumed the offering, the wood, and even the stones of the altar.

Therefore, Satan cannot literally call down fire from heaven. Satan was present when Jesus caused those who came to take Him to fall backward as a substitute for calling down fire from heaven (John 18). This is the solution to the prophecy that Satan would call down fire from heaven: He causes people to fall backward to the ground under some supernatural power as the equivalent of calling fire from heaven. Thus, this could be the manner through which Revelation 13:13 finds its fulfillment. Among the false gospels of our day, there is an extensive phenomenon going on in which many people fall backward by some supernatural power. Among some, this is called "being slain in the spirit." Since Satan himself cannot literally call down fire from heaven, he follows the lead of Jesus and causes people to fall backward, which is a substitute for calling down fire from heaven.

Zechariah 13:8-9 records:

And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

The one-third refers to those who have become saved; they have passed through the fire in the sense that Christ, as their substitute, has endured the wrath of God on their behalf. The wrath of God is identified with the eternal fires of hell. In Christ the full penalty of our sins has been paid; we can now stand blameless before God. We are His people, and the Lord is our God.

Another historical example is found in II Kings 1, where we read that on three occasions captains with 50 men came to take Elijah. The first two bands of men were destroyed by fire from heaven. The third captain and his men pleaded for mercy and were spared. Those who were spared represent the saved; the saved are safe in the arms of Christ.

When God is ready to destroy this earth by fire and create new heavens and a new earth, He will bring judgment on the churches that have become increasingly apostate. God utilizes Satan for this dreadful task even as He used the wicked nations of Assyria and Babylon to destroy ancient Israel. Satan will not be the final victor. When Satan thinks he has won, God will bring him into judgment. Revelation 20:9 discloses: "*And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.*"

Fire from heaven signifies the judgment of God that is to come on the unsaved at the end of the world. This verse

emphasizes God's final judgment on the enemies of God (the unsaved) as they are cast into hellfire on the last day. In Revelation 22:18 God warns of judgment utilizing the word "*plagues*":

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.

Ezekiel 38 speaks of the same conclusion to the fortunes of Satan and the wicked of the world in verses 18-23:

And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel: So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

This is the language of Judgment Day; it gives us assurance that Satan will not be the final victor. As we approach the end of time, it will appear that Satan is winning. False gospels, particularly those that feature signs and wonders, prosper. In fact, they trouble many congregations. The Bible is becoming less and less their ultimate authority. The salvation program being preached may be logical and seem loving and reasonable in the eyes of men, but it is not the salvation plan of the Bible in which the whole counsel of God is presented. The true believer will become increasingly lonely. They will wonder how it can be that the cause of Christ will have become so ineffective.

Then Judgment Day will come. Satan will not win. The believers headed up by Christ will be vindicated. O glorious salvation! O glorious and loving God who is faithful to all of His commitments!

Open Forum Excerpts with Harold Camping: "Speaking in Tongues"

HC: Good evening. Welcome to the Open Forum.

Caller: I'd like to ask a question about baptism in the Holy Spirit insofar as speaking in tongues is concerned. I understand that the Holy Spirit is a gift of God, so why would a person have to be specially baptized in the Holy Spirit? What is the relationship between baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues?

HC: There is no relationship. Let's first talk about baptism in the Holy Spirit. Let's start in the Old Testament, where four signs pointed to salvation.

First, there was circumcision, to indicate that we must have the foreskin of our hearts cut off. We must be cut away from our flesh and its sinful lusts. Jeremiah 4:4: "*Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.*"

Second, there was the burnt offering. Meal offerings and animal sacrifices as burnt offerings pointed to Christ, who became our burnt offering. Hebrews

10:5-7: "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."

Third, there was the shedding of blood, for instance a lamb, or an ox, which pointed to the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who endured the wrath of God for our sins. Hebrews 9:22: "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

The fourth sign used in the Old Testament was water ablation, which ceremonially indicated that a person had been cleansed of his sins. For example, Aaron and his sons were washed when they were consecrated as priests (Leviticus, 8:6). The sign or symbol of water ablation or washing in water is used also in the New Testament.

From the beginning, to be saved, a man, woman, or child must have his sins washed away, be born again, become a new creature in Christ. The Holy Spirit, who is eternal God, is given to the person who becomes saved.

Beginning with Pentecost, God began His work to evangelize the world through believers, who were qualified by God to be witnesses, to proclaim His Word and share the Gospel. God utilized different terminology in talking about salvation. Christ talked about being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Believers in the New Testament are saved the same way believers were saved in the Old Testament; the difference in the New Testament is that every believer is qualified to share the Gospel.

We read of this in the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John. Acts 1:5: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence," speaks of an Old Testament sign because John the Baptist was a prophet on the Old Testament side of the cross. They were told that before many days, they would be filled with the Holy Spirit and become qualified to be witnesses in the New Testament program of evangelism.

When we are saved, we are baptized in the Holy Spirit. The word "baptize" means to wash, cleanse, or purify. Therefore, it denotes the fact that our sins have been washed away. Baptism of the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with miracles, signs, or wonders. Jesus says in Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

In the Book of Acts we find illustrations in each of these places of a special miracle to indicate that the Word of God was to be sent out to evangelize the world. (See Acts 2, Acts 8, Acts 10, and Acts 19.) After these illustrations in Acts, no outward miracle is recorded in the Bible that occurred when a person was saved.

In the letter of Paul to the church at Corinth, Chapters 12, 13, and 14, however, we learn that in that church there was a phenomenon known as tongues or speaking in an unknown language. This was a gift that was given to a few individuals in that church, including Paul, whereby they received information from God in an unknown language. The phenomenon bears no relationship to baptism in the Holy Spirit; this gift was not bestowed upon them when they were saved.

The believers at Corinth who were given this gift were instructed to pray that they might interpret. The purpose of interpretation was to share with the congregation what God had revealed to them, for the edification of the congregation. This was possible because

in that day, God had not completed the Bible.

Around A.D. 95, God completed the Bible with the writing of the Revelation of John. God is the author of the Bible, and in the last chapter of the Bible, He declares, in Revelation 22:18-19:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

With this statement, God ended the possibility of any further information coming from God. From that point on, we cannot expect anyone to receive a vision, tongue, or voice from God because God will not violate His own rules. God said that He has given us His Word, the revelation of His will. We are to study it, be obedient to it, and not expect any phenomena of tongues or visions such as occurred before the Bible was complete.

Since A.D. 95, various people in the New Testament period have claimed to have received a vision or speak in tongues, which might seem very glorious. Based on the Bible, however, these activities cannot be from God. It might be from their own minds. It might be from an evil source. It might be hallucinatory. Our minds are very tricky, as you may know.

Today anyone can be baptized in the Holy Spirit if he will recognize that he is a sinner under the wrath of God and know there is no way that he can help himself. If he will call upon God for mercy and begin to trust the Bible concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, then God will forgive his sins, and he, too, can be saved. When he is saved, that is, born again, he is baptized in the Holy Spirit. His sins are washed away, and the Holy Spirit takes up His abode with him.

Caller: What about I Corinthians 13:9-10, which say, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." It seems to me that Paul is saying these gifts will pass away when we get to heaven, because there will be no need for them there. Also, Mark 16:17-18 says: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

HC: I Corinthians 13 simply indicates that tongues shall cease, not when they shall cease. God says that prophecy and knowledge will pass away, and in verses 9-12. He says that they will pass away when we see Him face to face, that is, when we get to heaven.

God teaches in Revelation 22:18 that if you look for divine truth from sources other than the Bible, it indicates that you are still subject to the plagues written herein, that is, you are unsaved and subject to hell.

It is true that the Bible speaks of signs and wonders that will still come to pass. The Bible speaks about signs and wonders in a number of places, and speaking in tongues is a sign. We read about this in I Corinthians 14. The Greek word for sign is *simeon*, which also can be translated "miracle." The Bible speaks of signs and wonders, particularly in relation to the end-time church, ominously, and unfortunately, all references to signs and wonders near the end of time are satanically related. God declares in Matthew 24:24: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very

elect." We read in II Thessalonians 2:3-4: Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

The man of sin taking his seat in the temple represents or is a picture of Satan ruling in the church. Satan will come with signs and wonders of falsehood. God will make the followers of Satan believe a lie, so they will be prepared for judgment.

Revelation 13 speaks about the beast that comes out of the earth and a second beast. The second beast makes an image, and he gives life to that image and brings signs. These are gospels that Satan has designed, so he can enslave the nations of the world to a higher degree than ever before. He will come as an angel of light and attest to the genuineness of his gospels with signs and wonders. Satan is the big deceiver. Revelation 16:13-14:

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

These verses speak of the beast and the false prophet coming with signs and miracles to deceive. Every reference to signs and wonders near the end of time relates to satanic activity. This is very ominous; it indicates that we have to be extremely careful today because we are so near the end of time. We must make absolutely certain that we look only to the Bible for divine truth. The Bible alone and in its entirety is the divine Word of God.

Satan can speak in a lot of ways; he comes with all kinds of occult activities. Apart from the church, he comes through witchcraft, Ouija boards, tarot cards, and so on. In the church, he also comes with occult activity. The Bible says he does. II Corinthians 11:14: "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." We must be on guard and make sure that the only place we look for divine truth is the Bible.

Caller: You said that speaking in tongues is adding to the Bible, but couldn't it be used just to reiterate something for someone who is not as close to God as he should be? Could it not be used just to uplift him? It could be for emphasis, to reiterate; for example, God gave us four gospel books, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, instead of one.

HC: But you see, God will not violate His own program. His program is that He has given us all of the information that He wants us to have. If we want to grow stronger in the Word, we are to read the Bible. Psalm 119:11 tells us: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." God gave us four gospel accounts so that we have plenty of information concerning who the Lord Jesus Christ is. We are to go to the Word of God to seek the voice of God. If we say, "Well, the Word of God is not sufficient," then we are violating the Word of God.

Caller: But in the case of a person who may not be as deeply involved in searching through the Word as he should be, would it not be used as a means of exhorting that person to dig deeper into the Word? Does it not say, "Forbid not the speaking in tongues?"

HC: That is from I Corinthians 14:39, and in the church at Corinth, where tongues were somewhat of a problem (which we learn when we study this language carefully), they were mandated not to forbid speaking in tongues. But,

you see, we have to look at these chapters of I Corinthians in the light of the whole Bible.

In the Old Testament, for example, the law was that males were to go to Jerusalem three times a year to offer sacrifices. Now, we don't go to Jerusalem any more to offer sacrifices. Why don't we? It's in the Bible! It's a command of God! Why don't we do that?

The reason we don't do that is because we read that command in the light of everything else the Bible offers, and we discover in the New Testament that God says these ceremonial laws have been completed in Christ. And so, we're not to be obedient to them any more. In fact, it would be wrong to offer sacrifices.

By the same token, in I Corinthians 12-14, God laid down rules insofar as tongues is concerned. But in Revelation 22:18, He has more to say about His Word. And we have to read I Corinthians 12-14 in the light of Revelation 22:18, and Deuteronomy 13:1-10, and Deuteronomy 28, and other passages that speak on this matter.

When we realize that the Bible alone is the Word of God and we know that Satan comes as an angel of light, then let's try to put ourselves in the shoes of Satan. And that's not too difficult because all of us have a sinful nature. Satan thinks, "I'm going to try to snare someone who is a very religious person. I'm certainly not going to come to that person with horns and with a forked tail. I'm going to come as an angel of light. I'm going to look like a legitimate emissary of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the first thing I'm going to do is encourage that person to be drawn away from the Word of God, and convince him that the Bible is not the only authority. Then I can get him to begin to understand the Bible in the light of other authorities, and he will no longer attempt to get truth from the Bible only."

Satan is very careful to come with gospels that sound like the true Gospel. He quotes the Bible, but he is very deceitful. In this way, the person is completely disarmed. That person will become accustomed to listening for the Word of God from sources outside the Bible.

Satan is the father of lies. For a while, he might come with just the Word of God, then slowly, he adds a statement or a little something that is contrary to the Word of God. Satan is the great deceiver. The person listening might not know that he has begun to accept ideas that are contrary to the Word of God, ideas that are half-truths. That person might think only that he's had a happy experience, a good experience with a vision, and it seemed so holy, and he trusts that source of information. That person might not even know what happened to him.

It is so wonderful that we have the Word of God, the Bible, and we can be absolutely certain that it is the Word of God. It will always be the Word of God. We do not have to wonder or fear that perhaps Satan had something to do with this or that statement in the Bible.

Caller: I have two more questions. First, at the time of the completion of the Book of Revelation, the whole Bible, the Old and the New Testaments, was not compiled into one book form. Is that correct?

HC: I'm sure it was not. The Old Testament Scriptures were completed.

Caller: But everything wasn't in one form and under one cover, that is, both the Old and the New Testaments. OK. Revelation 22:18 indicates to me that we are not to add to the prophecy that is outlined in the Book of Revelation. I find no indication anywhere that the gift of tongues or the gift of healing or any of the other gifts of the Spirit have been outmoded as of any time. I believe it's for all time and for all men.

HC: Well, it's your privilege to believe that. But, you see, the Book of Revelation is an integral and cohesive part of the whole Bible. Now, if you add a chapter to the Book of Revelation, then you have added it to the whole Bible. And whether you tried to add it sometime during the first five years after it was written or you tried to add it 1,500 years after it was written, you have still attempted to add to the whole Bible.

In other words, anything that was written after the Book of Revelation was completed could not possibly be part of the Holy Canon. The ending verses of the Book of Revelation set the limit as to the Word of God. And it doesn't take long to review all of the writings that came forth during the period prior to this date to see why this is the Bible that we have and not something else. There is an internal cohesiveness in the Bible.

One of the problems is (and I say this kindly but, nevertheless, I say it firmly), that if you read a verse like Revelation 22:18 from the vantage point of having accepted the premise that God does speak in visions and voices and tongues or whatever today, then you can be sure that you will not understand a verse like Revelation 22:18 in the same way that someone would understand who is determined to let the Bible alone be his guide and his authority. This is because you would have additional information that you are putting into the equation, and you are bound to come up with a different answer. And so it doesn't surprise me at all when you say that you believe tongues or visions, etc., are for today. This, of course, is the conclusion you come to when you allow information outside of the Bible to be used in your understanding of what the Bible says. As a matter of fact, you will reach conclusions in regards to many Biblical passages that are different from the conclusions reached by those who limit themselves to the Word of God.

The minute you try to add to the Bible, from this vision or that tongue, or whatever, and one person adds this, and another one adds that, and someone else adds something else, and then attempt to interpret the Bible in the light of all this new information, you end up with a gospel that will take you almost anywhere. This is exactly what is happening today. The false gospels are going off in all directions.

The true Gospel, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, is circumscribed by the Bible alone. Only in the Bible, the whole Bible, can truth be found.

APPENDIX 7 – WHAT GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER

By Harold Camping

INTRODUCTION

When we compare the church of today with the church of 50 years ago, we are astounded by the appearance of a most dreadful phenomenon. Fifty years ago divorce was almost unheard of. Oh yes, in some avant garde elements of our culture there were those who divorced; but in the church it was virtually never found.

But today divorce is as common as grass. Hardly a church exists wherein there are not people contemplating divorce. Not only are people in the pews divorcing, but deacons and elders and pastors are also divorcing. In short, the institution of marriage has become a shambles.

How did all this come about? Did the church of 50 years ago have a wrong understanding of the Bible's rules concerning marriage and divorce? Certainly the churches of our day that

condone divorce are convinced that they have a biblical basis for their action. After all, doesn't the Bible teach in Matthew 19:9 that fornication is a cause for divorce? And doesn't 1 Corinthians 7:15 teach that the one that has been divorced is no longer bound to the divorced partner and, therefore, is free to remarry? Surely there is adequate biblical allowance for divorce and even remarriage after divorce. Because this situation is so terrible and so all-pervasive, it would be well to examine the biblical principles concerning the subject.

It cannot be denied that something has dreadfully gone wrong. In the last 50 years the very foundation of marriage has been grievously shaken. Hardly a church exists without the problems of those who have been divorced, or of those who are contemplating divorce. The trauma to which the children of these unhappy marriages have been subjected is indescribable. And along with the wreckage of families has come an overwhelming lust after sexual pleasures and perversions.

Indeed, it appears that Sodom must be moved down to second place as the capital of perversion and lust. What has happened to our world?

The magnitude and awfulness of this problem cannot be overemphasized. Marriage has everything to do with the family. And the family is the foundation of society. It is the cornerstone of any and every nation. When the families are destroyed, the destruction of the nation is not far behind. Therefore it is imperative that we find a solution to this terrible plague that is sweeping over the earth.

In this study we will start and stand with the principle that the Bible is absolute truth. Only our understanding of it can be erroneous. As Christians we have an obligation to search the Word to discover all truth. And because God has much to say about the marriage relationship, we will examine most carefully all that the Bible has to say on this subject. In doing so we will rediscover the rules that God has given us for the purpose of protecting the marriage institution.

CHAPTER 1 -- BIBLICAL DIVORCE

We are embarking on a search for answers to a very serious and perplexing problem. The problem is to discover the truth about the binding character of the institution of marriage. In our day virtually every church and denomination has decided that under certain conditions a marriage can be broken. Indeed, not only can it be broken by divorce, but those divorced are permitted to remarry.

Such permissive rules are taught and preached as the Word of God. Solemnly pastors claim that they have the full authority of God Himself to encourage divorce under certain conditions and to call God to witness the joining together in marriage of those who have been divorced from their first spouse.

But what does the Bible say about this kind of activity? We must look carefully at all the Bible teaches to discover God's most holy will in this matter.

If we are ever going to understand the biblical teachings concerning marriage and divorce, we must start with an understanding of the ceremonial laws of the Bible. We must realize that it is in the ceremonial laws that God has first spoken concerning marriage and divorce.

As a matter of fact, it is the teaching of the ceremonial laws that has given many theologians of our day what they believe to be a biblical basis to permit divorce and remarriage. Without realizing it, in their misunderstanding of these laws, they have made a caricature of the

ceremonial laws as they unknowingly have used them to justify today's divorces. Therefore, we want to spend some time understanding the very nature of the ceremonial law itself and in particular its relationship to the world and the church of our day. And then we want to focus the spotlight of our study on the ceremonial laws that particularly relate to marriage and divorce.

What are Ceremonial Laws?

When Christ was on earth He spoke in parables and "without a parable spake He not unto them" (Mark 4:34). Sometimes Jesus told the people He was telling a parable. At other times He simply told a story and from its setting in the Bible we know it was a parable. For example, very frequently He would begin a story or a declaration with the words "the kingdom of heaven is like..." We know that when He used these particular introductory words He was teaching with a parable.

A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. That is, it is a story or illustration taken from the secular world, but its application relates to some aspect of salvation. It may teach some aspect of Christ's death or resurrection; it might relate to the faith that should be found in the life of the believer; it might emphasize the sending forth of the Gospel; or again, it might point to Judgment Day.

Because the nation of Israel was so intimately a part of the Gospel story, some of the parables were teaching about God's plans for them. For example, in Matthew 21:33-45, in the parable of the wicked husbandmen, Jesus is pointing to the fact that the kingdom of God would be taken away from national Israel and given to others.

In the Old Testament this same teaching method was used extensively. We can see this most clearly in the types and shadows God employed in the ceremonial laws outlining worship activities, and in the civil laws which governed much of the Israelites' civil pursuits. These laws are called "ceremonial laws" by theologians because on the earthly, physical level they were to be rigorously obeyed by the nation of Israel. But once Christ hung on the cross, the physical aspect of these laws was no longer to be obeyed. Now only the heavenly meaning inherent within these laws is to continue. At the time Christ hung on the cross the great curtain that separated the holy of holies from the holy place was torn apart from top to bottom by the finger of God. This signaled the end of the literal, physical keeping of the ceremonial laws. From that time forward the eyes of believers were to be focused only on the spiritual teachings set forth in the ceremonial laws.

Fact is, when the New Testament church met together to decide which of these ceremonial laws were to be obeyed by the Gentiles who were being saved, they concluded in Acts 15:28-29:

For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

By this statement we can see that the observing of ceremonial laws had come to an end.

The ceremonial laws ran the whole gamut from blood sacrifices and burnt offerings to such things as the dimensions and characteristics of the temple building, as well as to such things as laws concerning the planting of fields or weaving of cloth.

These laws were to be obeyed by Israel literally, as earthly experiences. But as they engaged in the earthly event they

were to realize that the earthly event was only a shadow or type of some aspect of God's salvation. In Colossians 2:16-17 God emphasizes this principle as He declares:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Included within the ceremonial laws were laws concerning marriage. Three of these were especially noteworthy.

We shall look at each of these three laws very carefully. In doing so we will begin to understand the terrible dilemma the church of today has gotten itself into in this matter of divorce and remarriage after divorce.

Believers Are Not To Be Unequally Yoked With Unbelievers

The first of these three laws is found in Deuteronomy 7:2-4. This law was given to national Israel at the time they were first coming into the land of Canaan. The law declares: *And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:*

Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

The first part of this commandment points to the spiritual principle of the eventual judgment of the unsaved by the believers. This will occur at Judgment Day when the believers will act as the jury, judging those who must be sent to hell for their sins (1 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 2:26,27). The earthly application of this commandment is that they were to destroy the nations of the land of Canaan.

The second part of the commandment points to the spiritual principle that believers were not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. The nation of Israel typifies the body of believers in Christ. The heathen nations surrounding Israel typify the world with all of its enticements and temptations. Even as the men of the nation of Israel were not to marry heathen wives, so believers are not to become attached or "married" to the world.

As a further development of this law, God declares in Isaiah 52:11:

Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.

In this exhortation the Israelites were effectively told that they were to divorce themselves from that which was unclean. In its literal, earthly application it meant that if (in violation of Deuteronomy 7:2-4) they had married heathen wives, they were to divorce them. The truth of this can be seen dramatically in the book of Ezra.

The last two chapters of Ezra reveal a most sad and traumatic experience faced by Israel. Under the leadership of men like Nehemiah and Ezra a number of Israelites had returned to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem the discovery was made that quite a number of the men had married heathen wives and had even borne children. We read in Ezra 9:2-4:

For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands; yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.

And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.

Then assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.

In answer to this serious charge of violation of the commandment of Deuteronomy 7:2-4, the leaders of Israel made a very important and difficult decision. They decided that these men must be divorced from their heathen wives. We read in Ezra 10:2-3:

And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.

Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.

The decision was to let it be done according to the law. In Isaiah 52:11 God's law decreed that those who had become involved with the unclean thing were to depart from that which was unclean. In the practical sense it was saying that if an Israelite married a heathen wife, he was to divorce that wife. This was precisely the way Ezra and the other leaders understood that law, for we read in Ezra 10:10-12 of their decision concerning this matter.

And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel.

Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.

Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do.

That we have not misunderstood the disposition of this problem can be seen further on, in Ezra 10:15-17.

And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter.

And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.

Combining the commands of Deuteronomy 7:2-4 and Isaiah 52:11 with the last two chapters of Ezra, we see that the earthly application of this first ceremonial law concerning marriage is that there was to be biblical divorce. If a man violated the law of Deuteronomy 7:2-4 by marrying a heathen wife, the law of Isaiah 52:11 decreed that he was to correct that sinful situation by divorcing that wife.

The spiritual or heavenly meaning introduced by these laws continues today. In II Corinthians 6:14-17 God declared: Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and

touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

By this law God is emphasizing that believers are not to be unequally yoked to anything that is of the kingdom of Satan. This can be someone we are planning to marry, or it can be any situation in which we become so entangled with the world that it is like being married to the world.

If we find this conditions existing in our lives, we are to separate ourselves from it. We are to turn away from this unclean condition. This turning away from the world is what God was typifying by the biblical divorce presented in the last two chapters of Ezra.

Must I Divorce My Unsaved Spouse?

Of course, our next question is fairly shouting at us by now. 'Since the men of Israel were to divorce heathen wives to whom they had become married, what about a mixed marriage of today wherein the believer is married to an unbeliever? Is the believer to divorce the unsaved spouse? In order to answer these questions, let's quickly review what we've learned so far.

The earthly story of the Old Testament was that some of the men of Israel were marrying women of other nations. Such marriages were to be ended by divorce. In the New Testament when God says "Israel" He means the body of believers. So, even as the Old Testament men of Israel were not to marry heathen women, the New Testament men of Israel, the true believers, are not to marry unsaved wives.

Does that mean then that God intends for a believer to divorce his unsaved wife?

God answers this question very carefully in I Corinthians 7:12-13.

But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

God further answers this question in I Peter 3:1 where He speaks of the wife who is married to the unsaved husband. There we read:

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;

In these verses God is indication that there is not to be divorce in the case of this kind of marriage. We thus see that the earthly application of the ceremonial laws of Deuteronomy 7:2-4 and Isaiah 52:11 no longer is to be observed. No longer do these laws provide a valid basis for divorce.

But the heavenly meaning of these laws continues today. Anyone who is so involved in or attached to the world to the extent that he seems married to it is to turn away from it. He is to separate himself from this unholy alliance.

Thus we have seen that until Christ went to the cross a biblically sanctioned divorce was required when a man had violated Deuteronomy 7:2-4 by marrying certain heathen women. But the earthly aspect of this law came to an end when Christ died, as indicated by New Testament verses such as I Corinthians 7:12-13, II Corinthians 6:14-17, and I Peter 3:1.

But Deuteronomy 7:2-4 and Isaiah 52:11 are not the only ceremonial laws that speak to the question of marriage and divorce. In our next chapter we will look at another ceremonial law that focuses on the sanctity of marriage.

CHAPTER 2 -- ADULTERY

CALLS FOR THE DEATH PENALTY

In the first chapter of this study we found that there was a time when, under certain conditions, divorce was sanctioned by the Bible. But we also learned that the earthly aspect of that divorce is no longer applicable. Insofar as marriage is concerned, the divorce that was sanctioned by the ceremonial laws we have thus far examined, is no longer applicable to us today.

But now we will look at a second ceremonial law that relates to marriage. It is found in Deuteronomy 22:22 where God declares:

If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.

This law did not deal with the prohibition of certain marriages as did the law of Deuteronomy 7:2-4. Rather, it demanded the death penalty for a man and woman who were discovered in an adulterous relationship. This dramatic judgment on those who commit adultery was the literal, earthly application of this command.

But what is the heavenly meaning? What is the Gospel application of this command?

The answer to these questions is found in the New Testament. There we discover that this command is pointing us to a very awesome spiritual marriage. This marriage is revealed in Romans 7:1-4. There we read:

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

In this significant passage God teaches us that in a spiritual sense every individual in the human race is automatically married to the law of God. This marriage is not the result of man's desire. Rather, it is a marriage in which God has joined two parties together into an indissoluble union. These two parties are the human being on the one hand, and the law of God on the other hand.

Because God has joined these two together, no man can break this union. No matter how we might wish we were free from our spiritual marriage to the law of God, we cannot be freed from it.

Unfortunately, it is a marriage between a perfect husband and a very imperfect wife. The husband is the law of God, which is absolutely blameless. The wife, however, is the human being, and she is altogether adulterous. We know that the law of God is the husband because Romans 7:1 declares that the law has dominion over the man. Within any marriage relationship, it is God's plan that the husband is the head of the wife and that the wife is to be submissive to the husband.

Therefore, within this spiritual marriage, we humans are to submit obediently to the law of God, which is our spiritual husband. But each and every time we commit a sin we are engaging in spiritual adultery. We are not being faithful to our spiritual husband, the law of God.

The law of God, as the husband, cannot divorce the adulterous wife because what God has joined together cannot be put asunder by man. God takes this principle so seriously that even a perfect husband, the law of God, cannot become separated from the adulterous wife (each human) to which it is married.

That this spiritual adultery is recognized by God can be seen in the language of James 4:4.

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

In this verse God is clearly speaking of the adulterous nature of mankind. Men are adulterers and women are adulteresses because they are living in spiritual fornication in relationship to the law of God to which they are spiritually married.

Jesus makes reference to this adulterous condition of the human race by the language of Mark 8:38 where we read:

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

The adulterous and sinful generation of which He speaks includes the existence of the whole human race throughout time.

The kingdom of Satan to which all of the unsaved of the world belong is described as the great whore in Revelation 17. This indictment of the world can be clearly understood when we realize that every unsaved person is married to the law of God. But because of man's sinfulness, he is living adulterously as a harlot. Each sinful act is an act of spiritual adultery.

However, even though the law of God, as the husband, cannot divorce that fornicating wife, the human race, there is a way that this terrible marriage can be brought to an end. Because of fornication, the wife deserves to die. Only if she dies can this unfortunate marriage be brought to an end.

Because the husband is absolutely just and holy, it (the law of God) will bring accusation against the adulterous wife, demanding her death. It is this death that was anticipated in the ceremonial law of Deuteronomy 22:22.

Only Eternal Damnation Can Break This Spiritual Marriage

The earthly story required the physical stoning of both the adulterous wife and the individual with whom she had committed adultery. But the heavenly meaning of this terrible punishment is far more serious. This is because the death that is required by mankind's husband, the law of God, is the second death, which is eternal damnation. Only after we have spent an eternity in hell can the marriage between the law of God on the one hand, and each human being on the other, be ended.

When a man, a woman, or a child dies physically, does this death end the spiritual marriage of this person to the law of God. Unfortunately, it does not. For on the Last Day, when this individual is resurrected, this person's spiritual husband, the law of God, will stand there, accusing this person of spiritual fornication while living on this earth.

Even in hell the law of God is present, demanding the full penalty--an eternity in hell. Only if this person has spent an eternity in hell can be freed from the dominion of the husband, the law of God. But because eternity is forever, there will never be an ending of this awesome relationship.

This, then, is the warning that God wants us to see in the ceremonial law of Deuteronomy 22:22.

The question must now be raised: Is the earthly aspect of this dreadful ceremonial law still to be observed in our day? The answer is that it (like all of the ceremonial laws) is no longer to be observed now that Christ has gone to the cross.

This is shown by Jesus' reaction to the woman taken in adultery, which is recorded in John 8:1-11. According to Deuteronomy 22:22, she should have been stoned. But Jesus, who is eternal God Himself, nullified that command by telling the woman to sin no more.

But the spiritual meaning of Deuteronomy 22:22 continues throughout time. This can be seen very clearly in the language of Romans 7:1-4. The recognition of this spiritual situation points us to our intense need of a Saviour. Later we will look at the wonderful truth that in Christ we can be freed from this dreadful marriage with the law of God.

Only Death Can End The Human Marriage

It must not escape our attention that, in discussing the spiritual application of this command, God has set it forth in the context of the human marriage relationship. The individual is bound forever to the husband, the law of God. Only death can break this union.

Likewise, the wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. Only his death can free her from this marriage union.

The word "bound" that is used in Romans 7:2 is very important. We read there that the woman is "bound" to her husband as long as he lives. Only his death can free her from this marriage union.

The word "bound" is the Greek word "deo." It connotes being "shackled together." For example, in Mark 5:3 it is translated "bind" and in verse 4 as "bound." These verses describe its import and meaning as we read:

Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

Again in Acts 12:6 we read of Peter in prison, "**bound with two chains.**" This word "deo" is found many times in the Bible and is always used in the sense of someone who is tied or shackled. This is the word that God uses in describing the wife's relationship to her husband. This is seen in Romans 7:2 and also in I Corinthians 7:39 where we read:

The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

Again in I Corinthians 7:27 we read, "**Art thou bound unto a wife?...**"

This binding or shackling of the wife to the husband can only be broken by the death of the husband as Romans 7:2-3 so plainly teaches. (As the law of God is the spiritual husband of each human being, forming a spiritual bond that cannot be broken, likewise the husband cannot divorce his wife even in the face of her continuous adultery.) She is bound to him as long as he lives. How important it is that we see that, in no uncertain terms, God is teaching that there cannot be divorce for any reason whatsoever! As we go on in this study we will see this important principle more and more clearly.

How To Become Free From Our Marriage To The Law Of God

Before we leave this second ceremonial law which demanded the death penalty for those caught in adultery, we should not miss the glorious teaching which

shows us how we can end the spiritual application of this ceremonial law. That application points us to the traumatic fact that each of us, in our unsaved condition, is married forever to the law of God.

But in Romans 7:4 God gives us the way of escape: Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

What does this mean: that we have "become dead to the law by the body of Christ"? We can understand this if we recall that the death required by our spiritual husband, the law of God, was eternal damnation. This is precisely the death Jesus endured when He took our sins upon Himself. In the atonement He was found guilty with our sins and God poured out His wrath upon Him as punishment for those sins. That punishment equaled the punishment we would have to endure if we had to spend an eternity in hell.

That is why Romans 7:4 indicates that Christ rose from the dead. This was the proof that the penalty demanded by the law of God had been entirely paid. Because Christ, our substitute, endured the equivalent of eternal damnation for each believer, each believer has become dead to their former husband, the law of God. Thus the law of God has no longer any dominion over him. He is dead to the law.

And he, as a new creature, as one who is born again, is free to become spiritually married to someone else. That someone else is Christ Himself. The believer becomes the eternal bride of Christ.

The spiritual marriage of the believer to the law of God has come to an end by the death of Christ because, as the believer's substitute, He has endured eternal damnation. Christ, therefore, is free to take the believer as His bride in an eternal marriage relationship. God has joined the believer to Christ in an eternal, indissoluble marriage relationship that no man can break asunder.

Since no death can ever occur to either Christ, the husband, or to the believer, the bride, there is no possible way that this beautiful marriage can ever come to an end. Even though the believer might engage in spiritual fornication (sin), Christ cannot divorce His bride.

Even as the law of God, the husband, could not divorce its fornicating wife (the unsaved person), so too, Jesus cannot divorce His bride, the person who has become saved, even when His bride commits spiritual fornication. Likewise, in the human marriage relationship, there cannot be divorce for fornication. What God has joined together cannot be put asunder. Only death can break this marriage.

Because the believer was given eternal life at the time of salvation, and because Christ rose from the dead to live forever, Christ can never end this blessed marriage union between Himself and the believer.

How marvelous! How wonderful! How magnificent is the grace of God!

Moreover, because the law of God is no longer the husband of the believer, it no longer has dominion over the believer. That is, never again can it threaten the believer with death. The eternal damnation Christ endured for each believer forever satisfies any penalty the believer might be subject to for spiritual fornication (for any sin he might commit).

This does not mean he is no longer related to the law of God. The law of God has now become his friend. It shows him how to enjoy to the highest possible degree his new relationship with his new husband, Christ Jesus Himself. But he is no longer shackled to the law of God the

way a wife is to a husband. Therefore, the law can no longer threaten him with eternal damnation when he sins.

Wonderfully, even as God uses the marriage relationship between the law of God and mankind to help us understand human marriage between husband and wife, so too, God uses the wonderful marriage relationship between Christ and His bride to help us understand human marriage. Later in our study we will look at this more closely.

Thus far we have looked at two ceremonial laws which had to do with marriage. The first decreed that an Israelite was not to marry a woman of certain nations. If he did so, he was to divorce her. This law was pointing to the spiritual principle that we are not to be unequally yoked with the world. If we find we have become tied to the world, we are to break these ties. We are to depart from the unclean thing.

We discovered that the earthly application of this ceremonial law no longer is applicable. Since believers are found in every political nation, and national Israel no longer has preferred spiritual status (since the cross), this law no longer applies to marriages between individuals of different nationalities.

True, we can make an earthly application when we recognize that a believer is not to marry an unbeliever. This application is possible because the spiritual meaning continues throughout time. The marriage of a believer to an unbeliever is directly related to the spiritual meaning which decrees that there is not to be yoking together of the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of Christ.

But even in this special application, the Bible very carefully instructs us in the New Testament that there is not to be divorce even if a marriage does come to exist between a believer and an unbeliever.

The second ceremonial law we looked at was Deuteronomy 22:22. There we discovered that the earthly story insisted that a man was to have his wife stoned to death if she were found committing adultery. But this earthly application was set aside when Christ told the woman taken in adultery to "go, and sin no more."

On the other hand, the spiritual meaning of this ceremonial law continues forever. It points to the marriage between the human race and the law of God. The law of God, as the husband, rules over each unsaved individual, the wife. But no matter how often the wife engages in the spiritual adultery of rebellion against the law of God, there can be no divorce. Only eternal damnation satisfies the death penalty required because of mankind's spiritual fornication.

Thus far we have not found the slightest suggestion that, following the cross, there can be divorce for any reason whatsoever. On the contrary, we have found that even as we humans are bound to the law of God until we have completely experienced the second death, eternal damnation, so too, the wife is bound to her husband as long as they both shall live.

In the next chapter we will look at a third ceremonial law that actually has been used as the basis for much of the divorce that is taking place today.

CHAPTER 3 -- GOD'S MARRIAGE TO ISRAEL

Patiently we are carefully searching the Bible to find what it has to say about the institution of marriage. We are particularly seeking to know if under any circumstances a divorce may occur.

So far we have examined two sets of laws found in the Bible that relate directly to the questions we are studying. And thus far, we have found no statement that condones divorce for any

reason whatsoever.

But now we shall look at a third ceremonial law that relates to marriage and divorce. It was introduced into the Bible because there existed a second spiritual marriage, entirely different from the marriage of the law of God to the human race. It was the marriage wherein God took as His wife a nation, ancient national Israel. Israel, as a corporate, external body, was the representation of the kingdom of God on earth during the historical period from Abraham to Jesus.

This marriage relationship was established by God because national Israel as a whole typified and foreshadowed the spiritual Israel of God which was to become the eternal bride of Christ.

We know this spiritual marriage between God and national Israel existed because of God's complaint recorded in Jeremiah 3:14 concerning the spiritual fornication practiced by His wife:

Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you:...

He was not married to them as individuals; as individuals they were spiritually married to the law of God. Rather, He was married to them as a corporate entity.

But God faced a real problem. At no time in national Israel's history were they faithful. Repeatedly they lusted after other gods. What was God to do with His fornicating wife?

According to God's eternal law, death is required for the adulterous wife. But God could not utterly destroy Israel as a nation, for it was out of national Israel that Christ was to come. Moreover, national Israel was to be the seedbed from which the whole New Testament church would spring forth.

Furthermore, God's plan was to use national Israel as an example of His patience and mercy. Remember, in the parable of Luke 13 the fig tree that repeatedly had not borne fruit was to be cut down. But then it was to be given one more opportunity. If there still was no fruit, it was to be cut down.

So today we see national Israel as a viable nation amongst the nations of the world. Only if it ceases to bear spiritual fruit will it be destroyed.

For all of these reasons, and possibly others, God chose not to have his spiritual wife, national Israel, killed. And yet it was God's plan to break His spiritual marriage with national Israel. Once Christ went to the cross, God had purposed to forever end any spiritual relationship He had ever had with Israel as a nation.

To accomplish this goal, God introduced another law into the body of ceremonial laws. In order to divorce Israel God had to introduce a law that would permit divorce. God, as the giver and maker of the law, may introduce any law He desires. But whatever law He sets forth, God in His perfect righteousness obligates Himself to obey.

And so in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 God placed into the Word of God a law that permitted divorce for fornication. There we read: When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.

And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;

Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou

shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

This law permitted a husband to divorce his wife in whom he had found some matter of uncleanness. (Later we will go into detail to show that this related to fornication.) The inclusion of this law permitted God to divorce national Israel. We are told this in Isaiah 50:1.

Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

Likewise, in Jeremiah 3:8 we read:

And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.

Further on, in verse 20 of Jeremiah 3, God continues revealing the sinful nature of the wife He had married.

Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord.

So we have seen that within the ceremonial law God introduced two dominant laws concerning adultery within a marriage. These two laws were quite different from each other. In the case of Deuteronomy 22:22 both a man and a woman engaging in the act of adultery were to be put to death. In the case of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, only the wife could be divorced for fornication. No language is employed here or anywhere else in the Bible that even suggests that a wife could ever divorce an adulterous husband.

Because these laws were a part of the ceremonial laws, the citizens of the nation of Israel were to obey them. If a husband found his wife in an open act of adultery, he was to have her stoned to death along with the man with whom she was caught. If there were some act of obvious fornication, but the wife was not actually caught in the act of adultery, the husband still had the right to divorce her. This ceremonial law of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 had an earthly, physical application and a spiritual, or heavenly application. As we have seen, the earthly application permitted the husband to divorce his wife if it appeared she had engaged in fornication. The heavenly application was intended to make it possible for God to divorce national Israel because of its continuing spiritual fornication.

Jesus made several references to this law in the New Testament. He did so to show that this law was rescinded with His coming as the Christ, as well as to show that Israel had grossly misapplied this law. Remarkably, it is still grossly misapplied by the church as a biblical basis for divorce. We will look into this as we continue our study.

Israel's Misuse Of Deuteronomy 24

The language of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was sufficiently unclear so that the men of national Israel used it as a basis for divorcing their wives for any reason whatsoever. Let us see why this is so, because this will help us understand Matthew 5:32, a verse some people use to justify divorce for fornication.

The key words of Deuteronomy 24:1 are "some uncleanness." For "some uncleanness" found in a wife the husband had biblical cause for divorce. What exactly was this sin?

The Hebrew word "dabar," which is translated as "some" in the phrase "some uncleanness," normally means "word" or "matter." Out of about 2400 usages in the Bible, it is translated in a least 1000

times "speak" or "talk" or something similar. In other verses it is translated "word" at least 770 times. Thus, "word" or "talk" are the dominant meanings of the word "dabar."

Less often, but with considerable frequency, "dabar" is translated as "act" (52 times), "matter" (63 times) and "thing" (215 times). Thus, we can safely say that in Deuteronomy 24:1 "dabar" should be translated as "act," "matter," "thing," or "word."

The Hebrew word which is translated as "uncleanness" in this same phrase "ervah." It is a word that is found 54 times in the King James Bible. In more than 50 of these places it is translated "nakedness." When we examine the places where it is translated "nakedness" we find that it usually relates to gross sexual impurity. For example, in Leviticus 18 and Leviticus 20 where God is setting forth commands prohibiting incest, God employs the word "nakedness" ("ervah") at least 30 times.

Thus, the word "ervah" takes on the meaning "fornication." Fact is, in Leviticus 18:8 God warns, "The nakedness (ervah) of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover." A commentary on this warning is found in I Corinthians 5:1 where we read:

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

In this verse God uses the word "fornication" in connection with sexual impurity between a man and his father's wife. But in Leviticus 18:8 God speaks of this kind of sexual impurity as uncovering the nakedness. Therefore, we can see that "nakedness" or "uncleanness" is synonymous with "fornication."

Bringing these facts together, we can know that in Deuteronomy 24:1 God is teaching that if a man found a "word" or a "matter" of fornication in his wife, he could write a bill of divorcement and divorce her.

True, certain acts of fornication were punishable by death. But if the particular act or word of fornication did not require the death of the fornicating wife, the husband had the right to divorce her.

But there was another understanding of the meaning of "ervah" that was possible. And it was this understanding that opened the door for the Israelite husband to divorce his wife under almost any circumstance.

Divorce For Any Cause

In Deuteronomy 23:12-14 God used the identical phrase, "ervah dabar," which is used as the key phrase of Deuteronomy 24:1. "Ervah dabar" did not refer to fornication; rather, it referred to ceremonial uncleanness. Verses 12-14 inform us:

Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad:

And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee:

For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.

The phrase "unclean thing" near the end of this quotation is "ervah dabar." But what was this "unclean thing"? In this context it was nothing more than the discharge from a person's body when he or she felt the "call of nature." When a person felt the urge, he was to go outside the camp, dig a hole to receive his body's discharge, and then he was to cover it so that the surface of the ground would be

clean.

Actually, any discharge from the body made a person unclean. According to the ceremonial laws of Leviticus 15, any running issue, any kind of discharge from the body, made a person unclean. A woman menstruating was unclean. Someone experiencing diarrhea that spotted his garments was unclean.

Therefore, the use of "ervah dabar" in Deuteronomy 23:14 gave the men of Israel tremendous leverage in their marriages. All one had to do was to spot menstrual blood on his wife's garments; or any other discharge that touched her or her garments would serve the hardhearted husband's purpose. In the intimacy of marriage the opportunities to see "some uncleanness" in one's wife were numerous.

Thus the men could divorce their wives quite easily. The wife had no security whatsoever. Even though she may have never been guilty of fornication, the husband could still find plenty of "biblical" reason to divorce her if this was his desire.

Jesus Sets The Matter Straight

Significantly, Jesus took serious issue with this understanding of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Jesus clarified the law by showing that these verses of Deuteronomy 24 had in view only fornication as a ground for divorce. We see this when we read Matthew 5:31-32. These verses declare:

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

The language of verse 31 relates back to Deuteronomy 24:1-4. This is the only passage of the Old Testament that relates in a clear way to the statement of Jesus found in Matthew 5:31.

But Jesus pointed out that ancient Israel had widened the application of cause for divorce far beyond the scope intended by Deuteronomy 24:1 where the cause had to be a specific word or matter of fornication. Most likely, by applying the words of Deuteronomy 23:12-14, they had decided that they could divorce their wives for any reason. That is why Matthew 5:31 states that all that was required for divorce at that time was the writing of divorcement. Jesus, therefore, made a point of restating Deuteronomy 24:1-4 in verse 32.

We will see that Jesus is accomplishing three things by this restatement. First of all, He is underscoring the Jews' total disregard for the sanctity of marriage. He is getting ready to show that the cause for divorce was to have been something quite adulterous.

Secondly, He is revealing the awful sinfulness of divorce in that it causes the divorced wife to commit adultery even though she, by her own action, might be innocent of adultery.

Thirdly, He restates the language of Deuteronomy 24:2-4 to show that the wife who was divorced should not remarry.

Let us look at Matthew 5:32 very carefully to discover these three things that Christ is emphasizing.

Deuteronomy 24 Allows Divorce Only For Fornication

The first phrase we must understand in verse 32 is, "saving for the cause of fornication." Let us examine that phrase. We will see that it relates very closely to Deuteronomy 24:1.

The word "saving" is the Greek word "parektos." It is used in only two other places in the Bible. In Acts 26:29 it is translated "except":

And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

In this verse "parektos" carries the meaning

"without"--"without these bonds."

The other place this word is found is in II Corinthians 11:28 where "parektos" is translated "without."

Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Here we see that the biblical meaning of "parektos" is "without."

Returning to Matthew 5:32, we discover that the English phrase "for the cause" is the Greek word "logos." But "logos" is normally translated "word." It is translated as "word" more than 200 times in the Bible. It is also translated in a few instances as "matter" or "thing." Thus "logos" can mean either "word" or "matter" or "thing." And so we find that it actually is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "dabar" used in Deuteronomy 24:1.

The word "fornication" used in Matthew 5:32 is the Greek word "porneias" which is always translated "fornication." Therefore, we learn that the phrase "saving for the cause of fornication" can be accurately translated "without a word or matter of fornication." This is surprisingly close to the literal rendering of the Hebrew "ervah dabar" of Deuteronomy 24:1. Remember, the usual translation of "dabar" was "word" or "talk" or "matter," and the usual translation of "ervah" was "nakedness" in the context of fornication.

Thus, we evidence that Jesus was focusing in on Deuteronomy 24:1 by the specific language He used in Matthew 5:32. He was teaching that the "uncleanness" of Deuteronomy 24:1 was not meant to be understood as some ceremonial uncleanness such as menstrual blood or a diarrhea discharge. Rather, it was meant to present fornication as the only cause for which a man could divorce his wife. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was never intended to give a man an excuse to divorce his wife for any cause.

Divorce Causes An Innocent Spouse To Be Adulterous

As we continue to examine verse 32, we discover that Christ has introduced an additional principle to be kept in mind in the matter of marriage and divorce.

The next phrase in verse 32 is: "**causeth her to commit adultery.**" How are we to understand this?

Let's begin by reading verse 32 without the phrase "saving for the cause of fornication." It now reads "whosoever shall put away his wife...causeth her to commit adultery. Does this merely mean that the divorced wife becomes prone to adultery because, if she should marry someone else, that marriage would be adulterous as Romans 7:2-3 teaches?

No. There is no evidence that Jesus is teaching this. He is simply saying that if a man divorces his wife, regardless of how holy or pure she might be in herself, she has been forced by divorce itself to commit adultery. That is, the very act of the divorce caused her marriage to become adulterated and in that sense she has been caused to commit adultery. Jesus is underscoring how terrible the sin of divorce is. Not only does the husband who desires the divorce sin, but he also causes his wife to sin, even though she does not want the divorce.

This becomes understandable when we remember that those who have married have become fused by God into one flesh, a divine union which no man can break apart. Remember, we saw earlier in Romans 7:1-4 that the wife is bound to her husband as long as she lives. Therefore, if a man breaks apart that

which God has joined together, the union has been adulterated. Even though the wife may be perfectly innocent in the divorce, she has been forced to commit adultery because the union with her husband has been adulterated. This is one of the important teachings of this verse. Jesus is emphasizing the fact that divorcing a wife for any reason was a dreadful sin.

However, if the wife had committed fornication before the divorce, then she herself committed adultery. Based on Deuteronomy 24:1, the man had a right to divorce his wife in such a case. So, since she was adulterous before she was divorced, the husband's act of divorcing her was not the cause of her sinful state of adultery.

But Jesus is not calling attention to Deuteronomy 24:1 in order to indicate that this command is to continue in force throughout time. That is not the purpose of Jesus' reference to it. He is simply showing that while Deuteronomy 24:1 was in force, a man had to discover actual fornication in his wife. To put her away for any lesser cause was a violation of that command. And the Jews had grossly violated that command by perverting it into a command wherein they could divorce their wives for any cause.

But since that command was repealed (as we shall see when we study Mark 10 and Matthew 19), Jesus definitely is not teaching that fornication is a cause for divorce. Therefore, this verse is not dealing with the question of whether or not there is any cause for divorce. That question is not at issue. Rather, Jesus is emphasizing the seriousness of the sin of divorce. Divorce causes even the husband's spouse to commit adultery because the union between herself and her husband has become adulterated by this divorce.

The Woman Who Is Divorced Becomes Defiled If She Marries Again

The third point that Jesus makes involves a restatement and clarification of Deuteronomy 24:2-4 which reads:

And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.

And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;

Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

In our King James Bible it appears (by the use of the word "may" in the phrase "she may go") to say that the fornicating wife who was divorced was free to remarry. However, in the original Hebrew the word "may" is not included. So the Bible is not teaching she may go and be another's. This can be seen by the language found in verse 4 where God indicates she will have become defiled if she remarries. Effectively, God is teaching that if the divorced wife goes and becomes another man's wife, she will be defiled so that she can never return to her first husband.

This principle is reiterated and expanded in the last phrase of Matthew 5:32 where Jesus declares the "whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Because the divorced wife who has remarried has become defiled as a result of this remarriage, it logically follows that the man who married her has entered into an adulterous marriage. Jesus is emphasizing the fact that such a man has indeed committed adultery.

But in Matthew 5:32 Jesus is further indicating that anyone who marries a

divorced wife is committing adultery. That is, if a wife is divorced for any reason, the man who marries her commits adultery. We see, therefore, that even as Romans 7:2-3 taught that the woman who remarried while her first husband was still living became as adulteress, so too, the man who married such a woman has become an adulterer.

Deuteronomy 24:1 Allowed Only One Half Of Israel To Divorce

Significantly, the law that permitted a man to divorce his wife for fornication only applied to half of Israel. Let us see why this was so.

As we have seen, Deuteronomy 24:1 was a law that only permitted the husband to divorce his wife. This was so because, in its ceremonial nature, it was pointing to the coming divorce of national Israel. But no provision of any kind was made for the wife to divorce the husband. This was because there was no aspect of God's salvation plan or of God's dealing with national Israel that included the possibility of national Israel divorcing God. Therefore, as national Israel obeyed that law, a wife could never divorce a fornicating husband. In her relationship to her husband she was under the universal law given from the beginning of creation that there was not to be divorce for any reason whatsoever.

We thus see that in the case of the law of God (the husband) being spiritually married to the individual (the wife) there never was a time when divorce for fornication or for any other reason was allowed. Also we have seen that in the nation of Israel the wife could never divorce the husband for his fornication. Only the husband could divorce the wife for fornication because that was part of the ceremonial law pointing to God's coming divorce of corporate, national Israel. This was to occur because of their many spiritual fornications. It would come about when God no longer planned for national Israel to serve as a type or figure of His salvation program.

In summary, we see the Deuteronomy 24:1-4 taught the following principles:

1. A husband could divorce his wife only if she were found guilty of fornication.
2. The wife, who was guilty of fornication and, as a result, was divorced, would become defiled if she married someone else. Thus she was to remain single.
3. No permission was given to the wife to divorce her husband for any reason whatsoever.

In Matthew 5:32 Jesus reiterated the basic principles of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and expanded them to teach:

1. A husband who divorced his wife for any reason other than fornication caused her to commit adultery.
2. Any man who married a divorced woman committed adultery. Now we must face the next question.

When we looked at Deuteronomy 7:2-4 and Deuteronomy 22:22 we saw that once Christ went to the cross the earthly, physical applications of the laws no longer were to be observed. Only the spiritual or heavenly meanings of these commands were to continue.

But what about Deuteronomy 24:1-4? What does the Bible teach concerning the continuation of this law? Insofar as the spiritual, heavenly meaning of these verses is concerned, we know that it came to an end when Jesus hung on the cross. When the veil of the temple was rent asunder, it signaled the finality of God's divorce from national Israel. Never again would He have any spiritual relationship with national Israel as a corporate body.

Therefore, in its spiritual dimension, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 has no application after the cross. Because it was written into Old Testament law in order that God might divorce national Israel for its

spiritual fornication, we have reason to suspect that it (like other ceremonial laws) ceased to have any physical application after the crucifixion. It was at that time that God officially ended His special spiritual relationship with national Israel.

The Bible clearly shows that this law was rescinded by the Lord Jesus Christ in Mark 10:2-12. Let us look at these verses.

In Mark 10:2 we read of the Pharisees coming to Jesus with a question concerning divorce. This verse informs us:

And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.

Their question must relate to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 for it is the only Old Testament passage that speaks of the possibility of a man divorcing his wife. This can be seen in Jesus' answer in verses 3 and 4:

And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

These verses plainly show that Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is in view. It is clearly the passage that Jesus is addressing as He continues to teach. In verse 5 Jesus explains why this command had been inserted into Old Testament law;

And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

Here He declares that it was because of the hardness of the hearts of ancient Israel that the law was given to allow divorce for fornication. Can we assume by this that God saw how adulterous the wives in the nation of Israel would be? Did He want to provide some relief to the husbands by setting forth a law that permitted them to divorce if their wives were involved in fornication? Or did He give the law because the husbands would be so unforgiving of their fornicating wives that, because of the hardness of their hearts, these unforgiving husbands were allowed to divorce their wives?

Neither of these possibilities make sense. God lays down laws that help us to live more holy before Him rather than to allow us to live sinfully.

It is only when we realize the truth as to why God inserted this law into the ceremonial laws of the Bible that this verse can be understood. The phrase "**hardness of heart**" relates to that which is rebellious. And rebellion against God is spiritual fornication. God gave this law so that He, as the husband of national Israel, could divorce His fornicating wife. It was because of the hardness of heart, or spiritual fornication of national Israel that his law was given. And so, once God had divorced national Israel, this law had no further purpose.

Therefore, we find in verses 6-9 of Mark 10 that Jesus very directly, very plainly rescinds this command by stating:

But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

In this answer Jesus indicates that it was never God's intention for divorce to be permitted. True, temporarily, God did open a very narrow window permitting a man to divorce his fornicating wife. But this was only so that God could divorce fornicating national Israel.

In Jesus' answer in Mark 10:9 He restates God's intention for marriage with the words: "**What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.**" In other words, there is not to be divorce for any reason whatsoever. Two people

who have been joined together in marriage have been fused by God into one flesh. And that which has been bound together by God, no man is to try to break apart.

To underscore this truth Jesus added in Mark 10:11-12:

And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 only allowed a husband to divorce a fornicating wife. A wife was given no right whatsoever to divorce a fornicating husband. But now that Jesus has rescinded the husband's right to divorce a fornicating wife, He emphasizes the impossibility of biblical divorce from both directions - that of the husband divorcing the wife, and that of the wife divorcing the husband.

We see, therefore, that Jesus has clearly re-established the principle laid down from the beginning of time that there is not to be divorce. He is emphasizing what the Bible continues to declare in later verses.

Moreover, in Mark 10:11-12 God is underscoring another vital principle. It is the law that a divorced man or woman cannot become remarried. According to verse 11, if a man remarries, he commits adultery against his first wife. Why is this so?

Remember, we learned in Romans 7:1-4 that the wife is bound to her husband as long as they both live. Therefore, even though a divorce may have seemingly broken the marriage relationship, from God's vantage point the man and wife are still bound to each other. Therefore, if the man takes another wife while his first wife is still living, he is committing adultery. He is adulterating the lifelong union God has made between this man and his first wife.

Likewise, verse 12 emphasizes that the wife may not marry someone else after divorce. Even though she is legally divorced, in God's sight she is still bound to her first husband. Therefore, she commits adultery if she marries another while her first husband is still living.

Again, when we looked at Romans 7:1-4 we saw how God clearly teaches that the wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. Remember, this statement was in the context of a wife living in constant fornication against her husband.

The principle of this binding relationship of the wife to the husband is repeated in 1 Corinthians 7:39:

The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

Moreover, in 1 Corinthians 7:10 we are instructed, "Let not the wife depart from (that is, divorce) her husband."

Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 7:11 God adds, "**...and let not the husband put away his wife.**" All of the Bible's teachings are consistent and in agreement. There is not to be divorce for any reason whatsoever.

Significantly, in Luke 16:17 Jesus made reference to the eternal nature of the law of God as He declared:

And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

Having indicated the perpetual nature of the law of God, Jesus immediately addresses the question of a man divorcing his wife. He exhorts in Luke 16:18:

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

In this statement we find a repetition of the same exact truth we have already learned from Mark 10:2-12, Romans

7:1-4, and I Corinthians 7. There is not to be divorce! No exceptions are to be made!

We also find in Luke 16:18 the truth of Mark 10:11 repeated. God is again declaring a man is not to marry another after being divorced. Here in Luke we also find the last phrase of Matthew 5:32 re-emphasized. God is again teaching that anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

At this point, it is very clear that God does not countenance divorce for any reason whatsoever. In order to divorce national Israel (whom God had corporately married), He had temporarily put a law on the books allowing a husband to divorce his wife for fornication. But when Jesus came on the scene, He very deliberately and very clearly rescinded that special law.

We have further learned that there is not to be remarriage while a former spouse still lives. This truth also may be seen very clearly.

But you may ask, doesn't Matthew 19:9 teach that there still can be divorce for fornication? To answer this fair question, we will examine that verse in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4 -- MATTHEW 19:9

As we get more deeply involved with the biblical teachings on divorce, we want to look carefully at the one verse that has been abused most consistently in man's efforts to find a biblical basis for divorce. Because this verse intimately relates to this Deuteronomy 24:1-4, which we studied at length in our last chapter, we are now prepared to understand Matthew 19:9.

This verse has the appearance of allowing divorce for fornication. It reads:

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Many theologians read this verse and quickly conclude that it is teaching there can be no divorce except in the one case of fornication. Surely this verse appears to teach that fornication is cause for divorce.

But we have already seen in our study that there is no biblical cause for divorce. Neither fornication, nor any other sin on the part of either the husband or the wife provides any reason whatsoever for divorce.

Therefore, we can be sure that this one verse, Matthew 19:9, cannot allow divorce for fornication, or for any other reason. If we concluded otherwise, we would have before us a major contradiction.

But the Bible is one harmonious whole. While it may have statements within its text that appear contradictory, we can know that these are not actual contradictions. They only appear to be contradictions while our understanding of the questionable passages remains incomplete. But when we have come to correct understanding, we will no longer find contradictions. This is so because the Bible is one harmonious whole.

But let us assume for a moment that we must base our whole understanding of divorce and remarriage on this one verse, Matthew 19:9. What would we learn?

Matthew 19:9 apparently teaches that a man may divorce his wife for fornication. But notice: there is no suggestion that the wife may divorce the husband for fornication. There is not even the slightest implication or indication that the wife can divorce the husband. In fact, nowhere in the Bible is there any statement that teaches that the wife can divorce the husband for any reason.

We also notice that the verse does not justify the husband for divorcing his wife for any reason except fornication. According to this verse, as it stands alone, the only possible cause for divorce is fornication.

Additionally, Matthew 19:8, which immediately precedes the verse we are studying, tells us that Moses allowed the husband to divorce his wife for the cause of fornication only because of the hardness of the husband's heart. The verse declares:

He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

The term "hardness of heart" refers to someone who is unsaved, someone who is in rebellion against God.

Thus, if anyone insisted on understanding Matthew 19:9 without regard to any other teachings of the Bible, the most that he could see in this one verse would be that a husband could only divorce his wife in the case of fornication. And such a divorce would be an indication of the husband's unsaved, rebellious spiritual condition. Therefore, even on the basis of Matthew 19:9, no true child of God would ever countenance the thought of divorce. Rather, he would realize that he is called upon to repeatedly forgive his wife for the sin of fornication just like any other sin.

When we consider what modern day theologians have done with this verse, we should become very skeptical of their conclusions, for when they have decided there can be divorce for the cause of fornication, they immediately conclude that, not only can the husband divorce the fornicating wife, but the wife also can divorce the fornicating husband. Yet neither this verse nor any other in the whole Bible allows a wife to divorce her husband. Thus when we hear such teachings, we should suspect that gross violation has been done to a true understanding of this verse.

To the question, "Does the Bible teach that fornication is a ground for divorce?" the answer is emphatically "No!" We have just seen that in Deuteronomy 24:1 God, as part of the temporary ceremonial law, had made fornication a cause for a man to put away his wife. Then we saw, as we looked at Mark 10, that through Christ that command was rescinded. Now we shall see that right in the context of Matthew 19:9, as Jesus makes reference to Deuteronomy 24:1, He is indicating the same teaching we discovered in Mark 10:2-12. That teaching was that Deuteronomy 24:1 was rescinded.

Let us see how this develops in Matthew 19. Again, we read in Matthew 19:8:

He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

Here Jesus is emphasizing two important truths. First, this command was inserted into the law book primarily to give God a way to divorce national Israel because of their spiritual rebellion, their hardness of heart. Secondly, He is indicating that this was not God's eternal plan for human marriage -- "from the beginning it was not so." And as we discover from other passages that God's divorce of national Israel was finalized at the cross, we come to see that this law no longer applies. So by the language of verse 8 we see that He was effectively rescinding this law.

That Jesus is bringing to an end the Deuteronomy 24:1 basis for divorce for fornication is in total agreement with the statement of Matthew 19:8. It is also in complete harmony with the other passages we have looked at which emphatically prohibit divorce for fornication or for any other reason.

Since Jesus has just emphasized in Matthew 19:8 that a man was no longer

to put away his wife for fornication, it doesn't make any sense at all that our Lord would reintroduce in the very next verse the command He has just rescinded.

No Divorce For Any Reason Whatsoever

We know, therefore, that we have to re-read Matthew 19:9 to attempt to discover what Jesus was actually saying in this verse. Certainly He was not teaching that fornication was a cause for divorce.

A correct understanding of Matthew 19:9 is forthcoming if we go back to the opening sentence of the paragraph in which Matthew 19:9 is found. In verse 3 of that chapter we read:

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

The question the Pharisees are asking is whether a man can put away his wife for every cause. Jesus answered them in verses 4-6 by indicating there is not to be divorce for any reason whatsoever: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Then in verse 7 the Pharisees asked about Deuteronomy 24:1, which permitted divorce for fornication. Jesus answered their question in verse 8, indicating that Deuteronomy 24:1 was rescinded. It could no longer apply.

In verse 9 Jesus returned to the Pharisees' original question: "**Can a man put away his wife for every cause?**" In verse 8 He had indicated that fornication was no longer to be a cause for divorce. So in verse 9 He covers every possible reason other than fornication, indicating that any other reason was also an invalid cause for divorce. Effectively He is saying in verse 9, "**whosoever puts away his wife for any reason 'in addition to' or 'other than' or 'except' for fornication (which we have just seen in verse 8 to be an invalid cause for divorce) and marries another commits adultery.**"

In other words, the word "**except**" (the Greek "ei me") takes on the sense or meaning of "**in addition to**" or "**other than**" in this context. This meaning of "ei me" is fairly common in the Bible. For example, in Matthew 19:17 Jesus said: "...**there is none good but (ei me) one, that is, God...**" This verse could be read: "**there is none good in addition to' or 'other than' one, that is God.**"

Likewise, in Mark 8:14 we read:

Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

The phrase "**more than**" is also "ei me." Here, too, we could translate: "neither had they in the ship with them 'in addition to' or 'other than' one loaf."

Many other examples could be given, but these two should suffice to show that Jesus, in Matthew 19:9, is simply covering all other possible causes for divorce "**except**," "**other than**," or "**in addition to**" fornication. He has already eliminated the cause of fornication in verse 8.

Jesus has thus twice answered the question posed by the Pharisees in verse 3 concerning divorce for every cause. He has first answered it in verses 4-6 by indicating there is not to be divorce for any reason. Then in verses 7 and 8 He specifically teaches that fornication cannot be a cause for divorce. And in verse 9 He applies this teaching to all other causes for divorce, except the cause of fornication, which He had just covered in verse 8. Thus, the conclusion stands twice over. There is not to be divorce for any cause whatsoever!

The removal of fornication as a cause for divorce so shocked the disciples that they said to Jesus in verse 10:

His disciples say unto him, If the case of

the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.

They apparently could not envision a marriage wherein a husband had lost all right to divorce his wife. As we saw earlier in our study, Deuteronomy 24:1 had become a very convenient escape route for a man who no longer cared for his wife. Remember what this law declared: according to Israel's understanding of this command, all the husband had to discover was a word or matter of uncleanness. Any ceremonial uncleanness was sufficient to permit a husband to divorce his wife.

Thus, the disciples were astounded and dismayed that there could no longer be divorce. Their reaction to the statements Jesus made in Matthew 19:4-9 underscores the fact that Jesus had just rescinded the command of Deuteronomy 24:1.

Thus, we see that, even as the earthly application of the other ceremonial laws came to an end when Jesus came, so too, the application of this ceremonial law of a man divorcing his fornicating wife also ended with His coming. In fact, not only did the physical application of this law end, but the spiritual application ended as well. The last half of Matthew 19:9 -- "**and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery**" -- is almost an exact duplication of Luke 16:18. Remember, we saw that in this verse of Luke 16, as well as in Matthew 5:32 and Mark 10:11-12, God indicated that a man was not to marry another wife after divorce, and anyone who married the divorced wife committed adultery. Clearly the law stands today that as long as the divorced spouse lives, there is not to be remarriage after divorce.

Thus far, we have examined three different sets of ceremonial laws dealing with marriage and divorce. First we looked at Deuteronomy 7:2-4 and Isaiah 52:11 and saw that God prohibited an Israelite from intermarrying with people of certain nations. If they did so in violation of God's law, they were to separate from that which was unclean. In the physical, earthly aspect of this command they were to divorce their wives if they had married in violation of God's original command. We saw in I Corinthians 7:12-13 and I Peter 3:1 that the physical, earthly aspect of this command was rescinded when Christ came. However, the heavenly, spiritual meaning of this command continues throughout history. We are not to be unequally yoked with the world. If we find we are effectively in the embrace of the world, we are to turn away from it. Spiritually, we are to separate from the world so that we can serve God with our whole heart.

The second command we looked at was given in Deuteronomy 22:22 where God commands that a husband who finds his wife in the act of adultery is to have her stoned to death. The husband could not divorce her. He could only separate from his adulterous wife by having her executed.

We saw that the spiritual meaning of this command points to the spiritual marriage described in Romans 7:1-4. There God declares that every person is spiritually married to the law of God which is the husband. Because of our constant spiritual adultery against the law, we are to be executed. And the execution God has in view is eternal damnation. In this context God taught that even as a human cannot be divorced from the law of God because of spiritual adultery, a human marriage cannot be broken because of fornication. It can be broken only by death.

We discovered that the physical application of Deuteronomy 22:22, which called for the death of the adulterous wife, was rescinded. But the spiritual application continues today.

Because of our spiritual adultery, our husband, the law of God, condemns us to eternal damnation.

Thirdly, we looked into the ceremonial law of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. This law decreed that if a man found even a word or act of fornication in his wife, he could divorce her. In the physical sense, as a man divorced his fornicating wife, he was being shown by God that likewise the nation of Israel, which corporately was married to God, would be divorced by God because of Israel's constant spiritual fornication.

Incidentally, we might remember that the Bible records that when Joseph, the stepfather of Jesus, thought Mary had committed fornication because she was with child, he, being a just man, sought how to put her away (Matthew 1:19). The fact that the Bible says he was a "just" man underscores the fact that God was absolutely holy and righteous when He divorced national Israel as a corporate body.

We might remember that God divorced them as a corporate body, not as individuals. God could not divorce them as individuals within the nation because He was not married to them on that level.

On the other hand, the law of God as the husband was married to them as individuals and in that relationship there could be no divorce. No matter how adulterous any man became, he remained under the law of God, even as the wife remains under the dominion of her husband.

Thus we see that God used national Israel to display various types and figures which were shadows of the spiritual reality which was to be fulfilled in Christ. Their corporate marriage to God was to be a picture of the marriage of Christ to the eternal church. Even as God married Israel when it was a nothing, the believer becomes the bride of Christ when he is spiritually dead in his sins. Even as God lavished his love on his wife, national Israel, by showering them with physical and spiritual blessings, so He showers spiritual blessings on His eternal bride, the true believer in Christ.

But, as it was with all of the ceremonial shadows, the typology of God's marriage to national Israel was quite imperfect. The time would come when national Israel would no longer serve as a type -- the marriage of God to national Israel was to come to an end.

That is why God introduced the command given in Deuteronomy 24:1-2 as an integral part of the ceremonial law. This law anticipated Israel's spiritual fornication which allowed God to divorce them.

Once Christ went to the cross, national Israel's role of serving as a type or figure of God's salvation program came to an end. All ceremonial laws were completed in Christ, including Deuteronomy 24:1-2.

Thus, God's purpose for calling attention to Deuteronomy 24:1-2 in the New Testament is to emphasize that this temporary law no longer applies. Instead, the universal law given from the very beginning is the only law that stands: under no circumstance is there to be divorce.

It is such passages as Romans 7:1-4 and Mark 10:2-10 that God shows us that that universal law still stands. Even while the ceremonial law was temporarily allowing a man to divorce his fornicating wife, God strictly limited that law to the nation of Israel.

As we go on in our study, we will look at a couple of verses found in I Corinthians 7 which frequently are used as a basis to justify divorce and remarriage. We will look at them in our next chapter.

CHAPTER 5 -- THE UNSAVED SPOUSE BREAKS THE MARRIAGE

Thus far in our study we have found no biblical basis whatsoever to justify divorce. In marriage God has joined two people together. No one is to put asunder that marriage. Moreover, should divorce occur, remarriage is not to be sought as long as both spouses still live.

But now we should examine a verse that is sometimes used as a biblical basis for remarriage after divorce. In I Corinthians 7:15 we read:

But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

We have been learning from Matthew 5, Matthew 19, and Mark 10 that the one who marries a divorced person commits adultery. But doesn't I Corinthians 7:15 teach that if the unbelieving spouse insists upon a divorce, the believing spouse is no longer bound in that marriage, and therefore is free to remarry?

We know from our previous studies that the conclusion that a divorced person can remarry is erroneous. So how are we to understand I Corinthians 7:15?

The key word that we need to understand is the word "under bondage." It is the Greek word "doulos" which means "to enslave." It is from the Greek word "doulos" which is translated "slave", "bondservant," or "servant" in the Bible. It is a word that is commonly used of a man's relationship to Christ. Paul was a servant (doulos) of Christ (Romans 1:1). We are servants of Christ (Colossians 4:12; II Timothy 2:24). On the other hand, we may be the slave of sin (II Peter 2:19).

But this word "doulos" or "doulou" is never used of the relationship that exists between husband and wife. Insofar as the Bible is concerned, the husband is never the slave of the wife; the wife is never the slave of the husband.

True, God does say in I Corinthians 7:27, "Art thou bound unto a wife?..." But this word "bound" is an entirely different word than "doulos" or "doulou." It is the Greek word "deo." It is a word that gives the sense of two things being bound or tied together. The prisoner is bound (Mark 6:17). The donkey was tied (Mark 11:2). The husband and wife are bound to each other (I Corinthians 7:27,39); Romans 7:2). But the idea of being a servant or a slave is not found in the word "deo."

But how do we explain the use of the word "doulou" in I Corinthians 7:15? It is a word that nowhere else in the Bible is identified with the husband-wife relationship. So how are we to understand its use in this verse? The answer can be seen if we properly understand the problem being addressed by this verse.

Let's look at a situation common to our day. The Christian wife knows there is not to be a divorce under any circumstance. But the unsaved husband insists on a divorce. He refuses to obey God's Word because he is unsaved. God's Word means little or nothing to him.

What, then, is his wife to do? Is she bitterly and relentlessly to fight her husband in order to prevent the divorce? God has an answer for this situation. She is called to peace. She is not to fight. In her bondage to Christ, earnestly desiring to do God's will, she is not to fight the divorce. She is not bound to Christ's written law to the point that she is to engage in such a fight.

If her husband insists upon divorcing her, she still cannot remarry as long as her husband is living. Remember Romans 7:2-3:

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long

as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

Do you recall that we learned from Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 that anyone marrying the divorced wife commits adultery?

Instead of marrying, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband as I Corinthians 7:11 teaches.

But if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

We thus must realize that I Corinthians 7:15 is not intended to give aid or comfort to those seeking divorce. When carefully understood in the light of everything else the Bible teaches about marriage, this verse is found to be in perfect agreement with the principle that there is not to be divorce for any reason.

Art Thou Loosed From A Wife?

As we continue our study, let's look at another passage that is sometimes made to serve as a rationale to permit divorce. In I Corinthians 7:27-28 we read:

Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

When we try to understand the phrase "seek not to be loosed," it is very apparent and certainly biblical to understand this as a command not to seek divorce. That conclusion agrees with everything we have seen in the Bible concerning marriage.

But verses 27 and 28 go on to say, "Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned."

With this statement in mind, the argument is often presented that if the first word "loosed" in verse 27 refers to divorce, then the second word "loosed" must also refer to divorce. This interpretation makes this seem as if it is teaching that someone who is divorced can remarry.

But the conclusion, when tested by all the passages of the Bible that speak of divorce and remarriage, is shown to be wrong. Nowhere else in the Bible does God permit remarriage after divorce. In fact, in the verses we have examined we have seen that the man who marries after divorce commits adultery and the man who marries the divorced wife commits adultery.

Therefore, we should know that somehow we have arrived at an altogether wrong conclusion concerning the meaning of this verse. It does not fit with the rest of the Bible.

How then are we to understand this passage? Let us look more carefully at these verses.

First of all, we had assumed the word "loosed" was referring only to divorce. Actually, there were two ways a husband could be loosed from a wife. She could have been divorced, or she could have died. Therefore, verse 27 is simply saying, "Art thou bound (Greek (deo.) Remember this word means (shackled to.) to a wife? seek not to desire to be loosed;" that is, don't desire that God would take her in death, which would be the biblical means of ending this marriage. And don't desire to be divorced from her. That would be the unbiblical way of attempting to end this marriage.

But is you are loosed from a wife, then what? Verse 28 declares you can remarry.

Since there is clear evidence in the Bible that one can not remarry if they have been divorced, we can be sure that in this second usage of the word "loosed" God cannot have divorce in mind. If He did so, this verse would be contradicting everything else in the Bible concerning the subject of marriage and divorce.

The only possible meaning that can be in view in regards to this second usage of the word "loosed" is that the shackle that has bound the wife to the husband has been broken by her death. That conclusion is in total agreement with passages like Romans 7:1-4 where we learned that only death can break the union that exists between husband and wife.

As a matter of fact, even the first usage of the word "loosed" in I Corinthians 7:27 cannot refer to divorce. This is so because Romans 7:2 stipulates that only if her husband is dead is a wife loosed from the law of her husband. In other words, even if a husband divorces his wife, she is still bound to him insofar as God's law is concerned. Only death can loose her from her husband. Therefore, when God speaks of a man being loosed from his wife, He can only be referring to a loosing caused by the death of his wife.

Thus we learn that I Corinthians 7:27-28, like all of the other passages we have examined, gives no assent whatsoever to the idea of divorce or remarriage after divorce.

Now that we have concluded that there does not exist any possibility of divorce, let us look more closely at the marriage relationship and see how the husband and the wife are to live together as they are shackled together for the rest of their natural lives.

We will be asking these questions: Is marriage a contract? Is it a partnership between two people who stand on the same ground? How much does the Bible teach concerning the nature of marriage? We will examine these questions as we continue our study.

CHAPTER 6 -- LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER

We have thus far learned that marriage can only be dissolved by God Himself. He alone has the authority to terminate it by taking either one or both spouses in death. No other authority has the power to terminate a marriage, and death is the only valid means used by God to end a marriage.

In this chapter we will look more closely at the marriage union itself. We will ask: Is it just a partnership between two people who stand on the same ground? Is it merely a contract that is analogous to any other contract with which we might be familiar?

As we have been carefully examining all that the Bible teaches concerning marriage, we have begun to discover that marriage is not a contract; it is not a partnership. It is a union -- a union of such consequence that two people, as it were, have become fused into one being. The Bible uses the language: "they are no more twain, but one flesh" (Matthew 19:6). The husband and wife have become fused together, or welded together, in such a way that God speaks of them as "one flesh." In fact, the wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. As we saw when we studied Romans 7:1-4, even if the wife marries someone else, she is still bound to her first husband. It is a fusion, therefore, that men may try to break by divorce, but that

in actuality only God can break. The man who divorces and marries another woman has, in God's sight, become married to two wives. This is true even if the law of the land recognizes only the latter wife, for God's law supersedes man's laws.

The intensity and reality of this fusion is further described in I Corinthians 7:3-5 where we read:

Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence; and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

The wife hath not power of her own body but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinence.

In this statement God has established the principle that the two who are married are to live in the greatest possible intimacy. Their bodies belong to each other. Except for brief spiritual activity, they are not to deny their bodies from each other. No other physical relationship exists in the world like this relationship. They are to live as one body, because God has ordained that they are one flesh.

Moreover, God emphasizes that this union is not made by man but by God. Remember we read in Mark 10:9: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Is this statement referring only to a Christian marriage under the authority of the church? If so, then all non-Christian marriages would not be marriages. They would simply be a condition of two people living together in an adulterous relationship.

But the fact is, God is speaking of every marriage found in the human race. We can know that God has all marriages throughout history in every part of the world in view, for Mark 10:6-8 takes us all the way to our first parents who were created to be husband and wife. This indicates that God has in mind the whole human race. These verses tell us:

But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

We know from these verses that whenever two people are joined in marriage and consummate that relationship in the marriage bed, it is a union made by God.

This is indeed a remarkable truth! It is hard to find any other physical human experience wherein we can say conclusively, "This is God's action."

Even the marriage that may have been consummated as an act of rebellion against God is still a marriage which God makes into an indissoluble union. But this does not make God guilty of sin, because God cannot sin. Rather, in accomplishing His divine purposes, God utilizes the sinful desires of man.

For example, God allowed the brothers of Joseph to commit the dastardly crime of selling their younger brother to be slave so that in turn Joseph, as Prime Minister of Egypt, would be able to later save them from starvation. Likewise, God can utilize a sinfully contracted marriage for His own purposes. And God informs us that once a marriage is consummated there has come into being a union by the action of God. Under God's edict, these two people who have become married to each other have become fused into one flesh. The moment two people become married, God informs us, the bond between them becomes more than just a human bond. It has become a bond in which God ordains that the two have become one flesh. God has welded or bound them into one body. No other relationship is of this nature.

For that reason God speaks of the wife being bound to the husband (Romans 7:2; I Corinthians 7:39). And if the wife is bound to the husband, then it logically follows that the husband is bound to the wife. Earlier in our study we say that the

word "bound," which God uses in these verses, means to be "tied to" or "shackled together." And remember that God declared that only He could break that union. He does this claiming one spouse in death. By God's edict, marriage has a distinction that sets it apart from every other human experience.

The Marriage Union May Not Be Broken By Man

As we saw earlier in this study, the fusion of the husband and wife is so complete that God warns in Mark 10:9:

What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

This warning indicates that, since it is God who has fused the bodies of the husband and the wife into one flesh, no man is to separate that union. God reserves that right to Himself. He breaks the union by taking one of the spouses in death. But no man may break that union.

Actually counselors who encourage quarreling spouses to try a trial separation are in violation of God's Word. Divorce, which is so much in vogue in our day, is a terrible violation of God's edict concerning marriage. Rather than encouraging separation, the Bible insists that the bodies of those who are married belong to each other (cf. I Corinthians 7:3-5). No matter how badly the marriage is going, that principle is to be observed. **Woe unto us when we take these matters into our own hands!**

God again underscores the sacredness of the marriage union by declaring in Mark 10:11-12:

And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

As we discovered earlier in this study, God further reinforces the certainty of this law that there is not to be divorce in Romans 7:2,3.

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

In Luke 16:18 Jesus restates the same principle by the use of the words:

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

Surely the Bible could not be any clearer! There is not to be separation! There is not to be divorce!

We might wonder why God has put such emphasis on the sanctity of marriage. God Himself has declared that He is the One who has joined these two people together; and no man is to break this union.

We can first of all see that God in His mercy has placed great protection around the family. These laws protect the husband and the father so that he is included in the family as long as any of the other family members are living. The wife is protected in the same way. Moreover, the same protection is afforded the children.

In our day, when divorce has become rampant in our land, we all know too well of wives who are trying to get along without husbands, husbands who have rejected their wives, and bewildered, broken children who hardly know who their parents are. Indeed, when the church first began to rewrite the rules of

the Bible to permit divorce, it was the beginning of the end for families. The wind was sown, but the whirlwind is being reaped.

There is a staggering amount of evidence in the lives of broken families to indicate that the church committed drastic sin when it began to tamper with God's marriage laws. It's like the mythical Pandora's box, the lid of which could not be closed when sin began to pour forth. We have begun to see the reality of the magnification and terrible consequences of tampering with God's sacred laws. Indeed, it is with utmost peril that anyone dares to break apart what God Himself has welded together.

There is a second wonderful reason why God Himself enters into every marriage, claiming responsibility for the fusing of two people into one flesh. God uses the human marriage as a picture of Christ and the believers. Even as God fuses the husband and wife into one flesh, so God through the Lord Jesus Christ makes Himself one with the believers.

This unique oneness is spoken of in many different ways in the Bible. The believer is "in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1); Christ is in the believer (Romans 8:10); God the Holy Spirit dwells within the believer (Romans 8:11); and Hebrews 2:11 declares:

For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

More specifically, the believers are called the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2,9). And in the most beautiful language of Ephesians 5:28-32, God develops the human marriage as a type or figure of Christ's relationship to the believer. There we read:

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

In this passage God carefully declares that the joining of the husband to the wife as one flesh is pointing directly to Christ and the church.

Thus we see that God has placed His divine hand on the marriage union because He has made it a type or figure of the intimate and eternally binding relationship that exists between Christ and the true believers, His church.

Even as the husband and wife live together in the greatest intimacy, so Christ lives in a similar intimacy with the believer. And even as God has fused the husband and wife together into one flesh, so God has fused Christ and the believer together in such a way that God can use the same phrase, "one flesh," when speaking of this spiritual union.

Likewise, just as no one can break the human marriage union, so the marriage of Christ and the believer cannot be broken. It is an eternal union. What comfort we may have as we realize that once God has joined us as a believer to the Lord Jesus Christ, no can break that union!

Death is the only way the physical union of husband and wife can be broken. But the believer in Christ has eternal life. That is, he can never die spiritually. And since Christ is eternal God, who died once at the cross and will never die again, there is no possibility of breaking the union between Christ and the believer. Neither the bride (the believer), nor the husband (Christ) can ever die. Therefore, no sinful action on the part of

the believer can threaten his marriage with Christ. Even as in human marriage there cannot be divorce for fornication, the spiritual marriage between Christ and the believer cannot be broken by the spiritual fornication of the believer. What tremendous comfort and assurance we should receive from this glad truth!

Let us now look once again at the marriage relationship. What reservations or conditions may the husband place on his love and fidelity to his wife? And, what reservations can the wife place on her love and obedience to her husband? In our next chapter we will examine these questions.

CHAPTER 7 -- THE HUSBAND'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

We should now be fully impressed by the biblical evidence that shows us that a marriage can only be terminated by God as He takes one or both spouses in death. But now we want to examine the question: Even though a husband cannot divorce his wife for any reason whatsoever, is he to love her under all circumstances?

The Bible commands in Ephesians 5:25, "**Husbands, love your wives.**" Does this command apply when the wife indicates she hates her husband, when she may be on drugs, or is a drunkard, or is living in fornication? Surely God would not expect the husband to love this kind of a wife.

The fact is, however, that God's command to the husband to love his wife is unconditional. There are to be no reservations insofar as his love for his wife is concerned. No matter what she might be or become, he is to love her.

How do we know that this is so? First of all, we know this is so because the Bible offers no advice concerning conditions for a cessation of this love. True, Matthew 19:9 and Matthew 5:32 appear to indicate there can be divorce in the event of fornication. But earlier in our study, when we looked at these verses most carefully we discovered that in no way are they giving fornication as a cause for divorce. Likewise, I Corinthians 7:15 at first appears to teach there can be divorce in the case of desertion. But we learned as we looked at this verse most carefully that it is not teaching divorce at all.

Even in these verses that sometimes seem to suggest the possibility of divorce, there is no suggestion of a cessation of love. In fact, God teaches in Matthew 18:21-22 that forgiveness is to be normative in a Christian's life. We read in those verses:

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

If there is to be no end of forgiveness toward the one who has sinned against us, surely this principle of forgiveness should apply to the husband-wife relationship. Therefore, no matter what the wife does or says that displeases her husband, he is to forgive her. The principle, "Husbands, love your wives," still stands. Since a husband is never to cease forgiving and loving his wife, we can see even more clearly why God does not countenance divorce for any reason whatsoever.

Earlier, when we looked briefly at Ephesians 5, we saw that human marriage typifies the marriage union between Christ and the believer. Let us now develop that truth a bit further.

As Christ Loved The Church

As we look more carefully at Ephesians 5:25, we see a second dynamic reason why a husband's love for his wife is to be

without reservation. This verse informs us:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it;

In this important verse God is giving us an example of the kind of love the husband is to have for his wife: "even as Christ loved the church." What does this teach us? How did Christ love the church? Remember; the church that God has in view is the body of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

How and when did Christ first love me as His child? How does He continue to love each of His believers after they become saved? Let us examine these questions a bit further.

What is the character of Christ's love towards those whom He plans to save? He loves them when they are still entirely rebellious against Him. He loves them without any conditions or reservations of any kind. He draws them to Himself when they are still in rebellion against Him. He inclines their hearts to love Him. He pays for their sins. He forgives every sin they will ever commit.

To accomplish this salvation Christ denied Himself entirely. He was stripped of the glory He had eternally with the Father. He humbled Himself to the lowest possible degree, becoming one with this sinful human race which arrogantly had rebelled against Almighty God. Even though Jesus Himself was without sin, He became laden with our sins. Worse than that He bore the punishment demanded by God for those sins. That punishment was the worst that will ever be endured by anyone, for it was the equivalent of eternal damnation on behalf of everyone who would come to be His bride.

Indeed, God has given us an awesome example of the way husbands are to love their wives, as well as the kind of sacrifices they are to make as they seek the very best for their wives.

But what about after we are saved? Does Christ's relationship to His bride change? Again we stand amazed at the compassion, the patience, the forgiveness of Christ. No matter how often the true believer sins, Christ always forgives him. He promises He will never leave him nor forsake him. His love is a tender, everlasting love. Nothing His bride can say or do can separate her from Christ's love.

And this is the way the husband is to love his wife. No matter what she does or what she becomes, he is to love her; he is to cherish her as his wife. He is to patiently forgive, no matter how sinful or rebellious she might become toward him. And even as Christ, in His love for the church, wanted the very best for the church, so husbands are to always want the very best for their wives. Indeed, Christ paid an enormous price to free the believers from eternal damnation.

In his love for his wife, a husband will find that many times he has to deny himself. For the good of his family he may have to give up his cherished hobby. He may find that he cannot spend the time he would like to spend with his special friends. It may mean that he may have to reconsider his own personal thinking concerning the vocation he would like to follow or the place where he would like to live. Always he must have a loving concern for the feelings and needs of his wife and children.

As head of the house, he is not to consider himself to be the "big boss." While he never loses sight of his responsibility as the head of the family, and that it is his wife's responsibility to submit to him, he nevertheless always tries to think of what is best for his wife and family. He lovingly guides his family. Always, his is the final authority under God; but he exercises that authority with great love, tenderness, and empathy for his family.

Under no circumstances is he to be resentful toward his wife. Whatever she is or does, he is to patiently continue to love her. He is never to think about others he could have married. He is never to look at other women and wish his wife could be like someone else. He is never to countenance the idea that he wishes he was married to someone else. The full focus of his attention and concern should be, first of all, toward his wife and family. No matter how difficult the situation may be, he is never to think of divorce. It is his business to love his wife regardless of what she is or does.

He is to accept without any reservation whatsoever the fact that his wife is to be an integral part of his life as long as she lives. Because God has fused her to him so that they are one flesh, he knows that he can never take any action that disregards his wife. His wife should be at least as important to him as anything else in his life. Only his love for his Savior should be greater than his love for his wife. And in his love for his Savior he knows he is to love and care for his wife the same way and to the same degree that he loves and cares for himself.

The greatest blessing a man should desire for his wife is, of course, eternal life. Therefore, a husband is not only to provide for the necessary physical needs of his wife; he is, above all, to provide for her spiritual needs. That is, he has the responsibility of providing a godly home. He has the responsibility of leading his family in the fear and nurture of the Lord.

Moreover, Ephesians 5:28-29 declares:

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

The God-fearing husband has realized the highest possible good for himself. That good is salvation. Furthermore, he will do whatever is necessary to care for and satisfy the needs of his own body. This comes very naturally to him. But in these verses he is exhorted to love his wife as he loves his own body. If his body becomes ill, wounded, or otherwise troubled, he still loves it. Likewise, he is to love his wife the same way. No matter what moral, mental, or physical difficulties his wife may experience, he is to love her.

And because he is saved, he knows that finally his body, too, is to be changed into a glorious spiritual body. Just so, he is to desire the highest blessing -- a glorified spiritual body -- for his wife.

Moreover, he is to honor and respect his wife. We read in I Thessalonians 44:

That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

The vessel God has in view in this verse is the wife. The husband is to regard his wife as a holy vessel. She is not a convenient place to discharge his sexual lusts. In the marriage bed, as well as in all of his relationships with her, he is to treat her with honour and respect. To use a secular phrase, he is always to be a gentleman. In all things lawful he is to have a first concern for his wife.

Of course, no husband can of himself love his wife in the measure asked for by God. But by God's grace and in His strength, as the husband trusts more and more in Christ, these ideals become possible. Instead of ideals, they become living facts in the life of the husband.

As we ponder these truths, we begin to sense the awesome responsibility of the husband to love his wife -- to love her without condition or reservation -- to love her as long as she lives. With this mandate set before the husband, how could he ever think of divorce? The word "divorce" should not even be in his vocabulary. No wonder the old marriage forms declared:

I, John, take thee, Jane, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my troth.

CHAPTER 8 -- THE WIFE'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

We have seen most clearly that the husband is to love his wife without reservations of any kind. Regardless of her rebellion, her sinfulness, her unfaithfulness, or anything else, he is to love her as Christ loves the church. He is to faithfully forgive again and again.

But what about the wife's relationship to the husband? Because of the problem of unsaved husbands being married to Christian wives appears to be a far more serious and prevalent problem today than that of Christian husbands being married to unsaved wives, we will spend considerably more time with this question.

The Bible tells us in Ephesians 5:22, "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands...*" Is this submission to be without condition or reservation?

Surely, if she respects him and he is a man worthy of her respect, she would be submissive to him. But what if he turns out to be a scoundrel, a drunkard, a philandering adulterer, or a wife beater? What then? Is she still to be submissive to him? Does she have to live like a doormat for him to walk all over? This is a very practical question in the light of the terrible way some husbands treat their wives.

The Bible speaks very directly and specifically to this question. There is no need to speculate or guess about what she is to do while married to such a husband.

First of all, Matthew 18:21-22 applies to her in the same way it applies to her husband. Remember; there the Bible teaches:

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

If she is a Christian, this passage leaves her no alternative but to forgive again and again as her husband sins against her.

A Tyrant Of A Husband

God deals more specifically with this problem in I Peter 2 and 3. In I Peter 2:18-24 God deals with the matter of the servant who works for a cruel, ruthless, despotic master. There we read:

Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

In these verses God indicates very clearly

that it is our mission in life to bear patiently the injustices, the revilings, and the abuse of those who rule over us. We are not to revile in return. We are to realize that God has called us to walk in the footsteps of our Lord. We are to look to Him as our example. And the abuse He endured included His death on the cross.

In the opening verses of I Peter 3 God ties the admonishments of I Peter 2 to the wife who is married to an unsaved husband. The Bible exhorts in I Peter 3:1-5:

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.

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing gold, or of putting on of apparel;

But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

The important word "likewise" in verse 1 ties these verses of chapter 3 to the instruction which has just been given in chapter 2. Effectively, God is exhorting: "*Even as the servant of a cruel master is to patiently endure abuse, so too, the wife who is married to a cruel husband is to patiently endure abuse.*" Note that verse 1 of chapter 3 is emphasizing that the husband in this case is one who does not obey the Word. That is, he is someone who is in rebellion against God. He, therefore, pays no attention to God's rules which declares that the husband is to love his wife and that he is to forgive her repeatedly.

The word "*likewise*" also implies that he, like the master of I Peter 2, may be unjust, cruel, and a tyrant in the home.

Human reason would conclude that if this is the condition in the home, the wife has every right to separate from her husband. No human should have to live under such unhappy, difficult conditions.

But God has a different answer. The word "divorce" is not to be a part of the wife's vocabulary. She must make it her business to love her husband as God commands. And because God always wants the very best for the human race, God's laws are the only trustworthy rules to follow. God declares she is to be quietly submissive to her difficult husband.

Two principles are being established in I Peter 3:1. The first is that she is not to nag, accuse, or preach to her husband. The second is that she is to be submissive to him. Let us look at each of these principles more closely.

The natural God-honoring inclination of the God-fearing wife of an unsaved husband is to desire his salvation. She earnestly desires his salvation, because she knows that apart from salvation her husband is headed for hell. He is under the wrath of God because of his sins.

Secondly, she desires his salvation because in the human sense she is embarrassed before her friends and relatives to be married to such a godless husband. Oh, how happy she would be if he would be a believer like the other husbands she see in church every Sunday.

Thirdly, she desires his salvation because she knows that it would mean her trauma of being married to a difficult tyrant of a husband would have come to an end. She knows that then her husband would desire the very best for her as he showed his love to her. This would be the new

situation, because a believing husband wants to obey God's command to love his wife as Christ loves the church.

Thus, there is much at stake as she prays for the salvation of her husband. And she knows that salvation comes by the Word of God and that she herself is commanded by God to be a witness. She seeks every possible occasion to share the Gospel with her husband. Certainly, she reasons, this activity on her part is in accord with the will of God. (Just a reminder: this file can be downloaded, or you can leave your name and address and we will be happy to send this book to you free of charge.)

Without A Word

But God says, "No!" If her husband is to be saved, he is to be won without the Word. But why would God teach this apparently impossible program? Does God have one means by which He saves normal unbelievers and another program whereby He saves husbands? We know that can't be true. But why, then, this curious admonition that the wife is to be silent?

We can begin to understand this language if we see the special condition that prevails in the husband-wife relationship. When we bring the Gospel to others, normally these people know very little about our personal lives. Therefore, all that the unbeliever usually sees is the Gospel itself.

But, if a minister preaches from the pulpit, "Thus saith the Lord," while it is a well known fact that he is living in sin, his preaching will have little power. Those who hear him speak only look upon him as a hypocrite. In such a case the elders ought to be dealing with this pastor, even seeking to remove him from his role of pastor, if necessary.

Likewise, if we know someone who seems to be an ardent witness of the Gospel, and yet does not live the Gospel, we will not take him seriously. He, too, will be looked upon as a hypocrite.

In the husband-wife relationship this problem becomes especially enormous. A church body can know something about the thinking and actions of their pastor, but not everything. An unsaved person may know something about the life of the one witnessing to him, but not everything.

But a husband knows more about his wife's thinking and actions than anyone else could possibly know. He has lived, and may still be living with her, in the most intimate relationship. He is with her when she goes to bed and all through the night. He is with her in the morning before she's had her first cup of coffee to settle her nerves. He is with her when she is tense, when she is tired, when she is depressed, and when she is angry.

Because of the intimacy of their marriage, he knows by the way she walks, by the way she looks at him, by the way she greets him when he comes home from work, by the way she puts food on the table and by countless other mannerisms, whether she is thinking lovingly or resentfully towards him.

Therefore, even though she claims to be such a fine Christian, insisting on going to church, and insisting that her husband repent from his sins and trust Christ as Savior, her husband knows very well that often she lives quite differently from the way she preaches to him. So he is likely to be convinced that whatever Christianity his wife has, he doesn't want it. He senses hypocrisy in his wife. If this is what a Christian is, he does not want to be a Christian.

He may not know that the Bible declares that his saved wife should have an earnest desire to forgive him again and again. He may not know that the Bible declares that a saved wife is not to nurse resentful feelings against her husband. He may not know that the Bible exhorts believers to walk very patiently. He may

not know that the Bible states that the wife's body belongs to the husband and, therefore, in the bedroom she is to give herself willingly, warmly, and lovingly to him. He may not know that the Bible emphasizes that the wife is to submit to her husband in all things lawful. He may not know that his wife is to accept him as her husband without reservations of any kind. He may not know many or any of these principles. But he does sense that his wife's actions do not measure up to her words. She is telling her husband to go to church, to obey God, to be a better husband. But as he thinks about times his wife has reacted to situations just like any other unbeliever, he becomes convinced she is altogether hypocritical. And his defenses against the Gospel become increased if he senses any negative feelings from his wife toward him. As he thinks about his wife's attitude toward him, her resentment toward him, her coldness in the intimacy of the bedroom, her mannerisms and words that suggest very strongly that she would be happier without him as a husband, he knows one thing very well. If this is what being saved is all about, he wants no part of it at all. True, if the husband is doing negative things against the wife, her congregation will look upon her as a loving child of God who unfortunately is married to a beast of a husband. When she is with her friends, when she talks to the pastor, when she sits in church, she appears to be a lovely, devoted wife who dearly loves to do the will of God. But none of these dear people in the congregation can know her as her husband does. They cannot know how cold and resisting she may be in the marriage bed. They cannot know about the resentment she shows toward her husband. They have no way of knowing this wife like her husband knows her. Neither can they know the intense frustration of a husband living with a wife who in the most intimate relationship of the marriage does not practice what she preaches. Therefore in 1 Peter 3:1 God admonishes the wife to reach her husband's heart by silent submission. Let her very quietly obey God's rules without preaching to her husband. Because of the tremendous intimacy that exists between husband and wife, her actions will speak far louder than any words. Incidentally, the same admonition should apply to the saved husband who is married to an unsaved wife. If the saved husband's intimate lifestyle does not clearly show the fragrance of Christ, his wife will look upon him as a hypocrite; she will not wish to emulate him. Truly, in the intimacy of marriage, the old adage "actions speak louder than words" certainly applies. Returning to the saved wife's relationship to her unsaved husband, let the wife make sure that she accepts her husband without reservation. She should reject any thoughts of wishing she was not married to her husband. She realizes it is a dreadful sin to wish she had married someone else, or to wish that her husband could be like someone else. She knows full well that God has joined her to her husband and he is the only man she is to love and desire as a husband.

God Gives The Rules

The believing wife earnestly seeks to practice the principles set forth in Philippians 4:8. This verse outlines the kind of thinking that should be going on in the life of the believer. There she reads;

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

She, therefore, asks God's forgiveness when she thinks resentfully of her husband. When her husband sins against

her, no matter how often this has been true in her marriage, she gladly forgives him. No matter how her husband treats her, she tries to convey to him that she is glad she is married to him. She can do this honestly because she realizes that since they are married, her life will remain intimately involved with her husband until God Himself takes one of them in death. The impact of this kind of godly behavior on an unsaved husband is bound to be enormous. Even though he is unsaved, he knows that he is wrong when he mistreats his wife. And as he sees her continuing faithfulness to him, her quiet submission, her continuing forgiveness, he will slowly realize that his wife is very special. By God's grace he should begin to relate his wife's beautiful conduct to Christianity. And by God's grace God may use this awareness to begin to open his spiritual eyes. This is the essence of the teaching of this helpful and hopeful verse of 1 Peter 3:1. However, this kind of patient, submissive conduct toward a tyrant of a husband may not be understood by friends and relatives. Because they may not understand God's laws, they may tempt this dear wife by accusing her of being a "doormat" or a "patsy" or whatever. But because she is truly saved, she has within her an earnest desire to do the will of God. This continuing desire will be an integral part of her life, as 1 John 23-6 teaches.

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

The only time she is to disobey her husband is if he asks her to break God's laws. If he asks her to lie, steal, or engage in sexual activity with someone other than himself, she, of course, must disobey. Such disobedience may bring her husband's wrath on her. However, if she has been the God-fearing, quietly submissive wife God asks her to be, without question her husband's wrath will be greatly reduced from what it might have been had she not been faithfully obeying God's rules by her quiet submission.

The Wife's Secret Weapon

One area of special concern may arise if her husband forbids her to go to church or engage in other spiritual activities. After all, God commands in Hebrews 10:25:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Shouldn't she, therefore, disobey her husband when he makes such an unreasonable request? Or, if he forbids her to teach the children the ways of Christ, doesn't God command in Ephesians 6 that children are to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord? What should she do when her husband makes these kinds of demands?

A direct answer to these questions cannot be given until other factors are considered. This is so because actions in the wife's life sometimes bring about such distressing confrontations about church. One big factor concerns the fact that the wife has a weapon she can use against her husband for which he has no defense whatsoever. The confrontation concerning church may be his way of getting even with his wife for using this weapon against him.

What is this powerful weapon? It is a weapon that the wife may wield without any deliberate malice towards her

husband, or she may even employ it consciously to put him in his place. It is not a weapon of physical strength. Ordinarily the wife is physically much weaker than her husband. It is not the weapon of an agile mind whereby she can outwit her husband in some way. Rather, it is the weapon of a lack of her submission in the intimacy of the bedroom. Because of its serious nature, we should look at this more closely.

Suppose a husband is very thoughtless toward his wife. He may even be quite cruel toward her. She can show her resentment toward him by reacting with cutting remarks, by giving him the silent treatment, or similar treatment accorded to her by her husband. But, if she is truly saved, she realized this kind of conduct is altogether rebellious against God.

Nevertheless, all of these types of conduct the husband can deal with. He can be even more threatening. He can become more vicious in his verbal attacks on his wife. He might even resort to beating her. Since everyone who starts a fight wants to win the fight, the husband, too, wants to win.

While nothing is resolved by such exchanges between a husband and wife, and the marriage is grievously threatened by them, nevertheless, the husband feels equal to such challenges, insults, and treatment from his wife. Because he normally is physically the stronger of the two, he can feel that in some way he has won.

But in the bedroom the wife has a weapon that can drive the husband wild. Even though he may be a cruel, thoughtless husband, he knows that the greatest joy he has ever experienced is when his wife lovingly gave herself to him in the intimacy of the bedroom. It is an intimacy that is far more important to him than he realizes. For God has fused him into one flesh with his wife. Therefore, anything that destroys the joy of that intimacy is a blow to the very center of his manhood.

The problem is, however, that in order to experience the joy and wonder of the marriage bed, his wife needs to have warm and loving thoughts toward her husband. But when fighting has been going on, the wife feels defeated before this tyrant of a husband and she finds herself incapable of reacting with loving submission to his advances in the marriage bed. She may even try to avoid the marriage bed altogether; or if it looks like it can't be avoided, she may be cold and unresponsive to his advances.

Soon she learns that nothing bewilders, hurts, and frustrates her husband more than her lack of loving submission to his advances. And because she can not win the shouting match, she can not win the test of physical strength, she may opt for a miserable pleasure in the fact that in the bedroom she can be the winner.

This is so because nothing her husband does of a negative nature can force her to change. He can threaten, bully, or beat her, but all this only makes his wife even more unresponsive to his advances and as a result deepens his own frustrations and anger.

Without realizing it, the wife is laying the groundwork for another day of estrangement, quarreling, silent treatment, or cruelty which the husband uses to try to get even for the tremendous battle he just lost in the bedroom.

True, the husband and wife are not rationally thinking about what is happening. They are only reacting with the intuition of the sinful tendencies that dwell within them.

It is at such a point that the husband may try to strike back to even the score. What can he take from his wife that she loves the most? Aha! She is a Christian and is always making a big point of going to church, or listening to Family Radio, or reading the children Bible stories. These activities seem to bring the greatest

pleasure to his wife. He, therefore, knows how he can really hurt her. He will forbid her from going to church. He will forbid her from listening to Family Radio, and so on.

All the members of the congregation can see is an unregenerate tyrant of a husband who is in rebellion against God. They, of course, haven't the slightest idea of what is going on in the marriage bed.

Meanwhile, the wife can go about appearing to be a martyr and receiving the sympathies of her friends. She may not even realize that her conduct in the marriage bed (as legitimate and logical as it may seem to her) is reprehensible to God. She is violating God's rule that she is to be in quiet submission to her husband. She is violating God's rule that she is to continuously forgive her husband. She is violating God's rule that her body belongs to her husband.

In fact, this weapon of unresponsiveness in the marriage bed should never be used. It will drive the husband into the arms of another woman quicker than anything else. It will serve to destroy the marriage more quickly than anything else. This is so because it is tampering with God's design of making the two one flesh.

On the other hand, let's consider the wife who loves the Lord and is living by God's rules. Her unsaved husband may begin to wonder, "How can I be married to such a wonderful, forgiving, thoughtful woman?" He may become increasingly embarrassed by his own thoughtlessness and cruelty. So when she asks if she can go to church on Sunday, he has no reason to deny her. He doesn't need to get even with her.

One could logically ask at this point, "Are you saying that all the problems of marriage begin in the marriage bed?" The answer is that they may not necessarily begin there. But it is there that they can be greatly advanced. And it is also there they can to a very high degree become solved.

True, the idea of becoming one flesh with one's spouse embraces much more than just the marriage bed. But it is there that it is the most obvious that the two become one flesh, that is why it is one of the most sensitive areas in the marriage relationship.

Before we leave the matter of the Christian wife's relationship to her unsaved husband, we should emphasize one other problem that is common to this situation. At the time this lady married her husband she was quite sure she loved him. But after the honeymoon was over, and after living with him in the confines and intimacy of the marriage relationship, she found that he had many qualities she did not like at all. He made unwise decisions. He was self-centered. He squandered the money that should have been used to buy groceries. He was lazy. He couldn't hold a job. She found that all her dreams about a pretty white house with a beautiful picket fence around it would never be realized.

Worse than that, he began to run after other women. He even became a drunkard.

Isn't There a Better Answer?

At this point there arise many questions that demand an answer. Must she remain married to this man? Isn't she entitled to something better than this? Is her entire life to be enslaved to this man who has turned out to be so miserable in so many ways?

The Bible's answer comes back clear and strong: "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." The Bible insists that she has been fused into one flesh with this man. He is her husband. He is not just any man. He is her husband. His life is her life and her life is his life. She is to live out her life in quiet submission to him. True, she is to skillfully and lovingly encourage him.

She is to try to help him see his potentials. But she cannot nag him. She cannot boss him. She cannot threaten him. The ideas of separation or divorce must never even enter her thoughts.

Again we are reminded of the old marriage form:

I, Jane, take thee, John to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my troth.

The violation in thought of this basic principle that marriage cannot be broken is the major root of so many divorces today. As long as a husband or a wife thinks in his or her mind, "I will love you as long as you are worthy of my love," the disaster of divorce hovers over that marriage. It is the husband's responsibility to love his wife without reservation. And it is the wife's responsibility to love her husband without reservation. Oh, if only husbands and wives could realize the importance of this principle. The husband must make it his business to love his wife, wanting the very best for her. The wife must make it her business to lovingly live in quiet submission to her husband. Each must accept the other totally and fully as part of their life as long as they live.

As illogical, as irrational, as foolish as these principles may appear to the secular mind, they nevertheless are the principles laid down by God Himself. If we disobey them, it is to our own hurt. If we obey them as a child of God, we can know that we have God's blessings, and that is everything!

The Problem of Children

In regards to the marriage bed another point should be made that can be very helpful. It relates to the changes that develop when children are born into the family.

When two people become married, there is a wonderful joy that is experienced by both the husband and the wife. Often, the husband relates most intensively to this because he feels that he is "number one." The wife, in her love for her husband, gladly bestows her attention and her affection on him. He in turn responds by showing great consideration and affection for his wife.

Of course, the beginning of a marriage will not be without problems. The wife at times will have great difficulty in submitting her will to that of her husband. The transition from being a single, independent person to being bound to a husband requires great adjustments in any woman's life. But nevertheless, she has her husband and she wants to be the very best wife.

Likewise, the husband at times may feel burdened by the new responsibilities of having a wife. He, too, has left the freedoms of the single state. Now he feels fettered to his wife. He knows he should always care for her and always want the best for her. But consciously or unconsciously, he may still have moments when he wishes he did not have the responsibility of a wife. And so there will be times of misunderstanding and even of quarreling. But still, they have each other, and each one is still number one in the eyes of the other.

But then the first baby comes. The husband is so proud. Just think! He is the father. And the wife is radiant with the joy of becoming a mother.

But along with this beautiful baby comes another problem. The wife is "oh, so happy" in her motherhood. But a great amount of her time, energy, and affection must be given to this precious infant. And she feels tremendously fulfilled as she showers her love and affection on her baby.

The husband, too, loves his new baby. But soon, he begins to realize he is no longer number one. This new baby has become number one in his wife's love and affection.

If he is mature in his responsibilities, he will understand that there is much more to marriage than just having a loving, submissive wife. One of the most important aspects of marriage is the bringing forth of children. It is God's method of continuing the human race so that God's purposes can be worked out on this earth. In other words, two people who marry each other should understand that a major obligation of marriage is the matter of children.

True, by using birth control devices married couples can avoid or delay the responsibility of children. But the sinful practice of birth control is not the subject of this study. Presently we are concerned primarily with the fact that a difficult problem can arise when the babies come.

If the husband is immature in this matter (and most husbands are, to some degree), this problem can have devastating results in the marriage. He no longer is the center of his wife's attention. While his wife still loves him and submits herself to his attentions, it seems that she always has the baby on her mind. A competitor is in the house, competing for his wife's affections. And she is gladly sharing her affections with this little competitor.

And then the second baby comes. Now the wife's attention is even further diverted from her husband. The demands of caring for the children, in addition to all of the other domestic responsibilities, leave little energy and concern for the marriage bed.

Now the husband feels more left out than ever. His manhood is being terribly threatened. His wife seems to have become much less responsive to his needs. It seems there is nothing he can do about it.

Wonderfully, in many marriages the husband recognizes his own selfishness and realizes that he must focus his eyes upon his own responsibilities as a parent rather than on his selfish desires with his wife. And in these cases the family ties are actually strengthened by the arrival of children.

But unfortunately, in some marriages the husband does not see his selfishness. All he knows is that he has a wife who does not submit to him the way she did when they were first married. He, therefore, begins to withdraw from his wife. He begins to spurn the intimacies of the marriage bed.

Because his wife is so busy loving and caring for the children, she does not always sense the change in her husband. In fact, she may even thank that he has grown somewhat tired of the marriage bed and that he actually welcomes the extended periods during which there is little intimacy. She fails to realize that her husband's pride is being severely damaged. He is withdrawing because he cannot stand the frustration of having a wife whom he believes is not entirely submissive to him.

The outcome of this situation is frequently one of alienation between the husband and the wife. The husband may spend long hours away. He may concentrate his attention on his business, or his hobbies, or his friends. Perhaps the time even comes when separate bedrooms become a way of life for these unhappy parents.

In our day the prevalence of divorce suggests that divorce will only be a little way down the road for such a couple. The wife, who loves her children and her husband, does not understand that her child of a husband feels that he must always be number one in his wife's affections. She does not realize that with the coming of children she needs to demonstrate in a special way that her love and submission to her husband

always comes first in her life.

True, if a wife sees her husband pouting or acting selfishly, there is a tremendous temptation on her part to feel offended and to withdraw from her husband. But this kind of action often only intensifies the problem. Instead of just one person acting sinfully in the marriage relationship, now both are acting sinfully. And sin is always destructive. Its outcome is always negative and detrimental to those involved.

It must be noted, of course, that the husband is no less responsible to maintain the marriage relationship in a God-glorifying way than is the wife. Because he is the head of the home, he has an even greater responsibility than the wife. Therefore, when he reacts jealously and selfishly to his wife's affection for their children, his sin is very great. He stands altogether guilty before God.

Wonderfully, many husbands sense their responsibility toward their families. Those families are therefore blessed in many ways. But what can a wife do who finds that her husband is clearly not as close to her as he was during the early days of their marriage? If she can begin to understand the stress that the coming of the children has placed on her immature husband, she can go a long way in correcting the problem.

Because God has ordained that the husband and wife are to live together in the greatest possible intimacy, the wife who discovers that her husband is beginning to withdraw from that special intimacy should be greatly concerned. While her husband may never admit his frustration or his hurt pride, the wife should nevertheless make sure that her attention to her children and to her domestic duties does not help develop this withdrawal in her child husband.

Because the wife finds great fulfillment as a mother, the intimacies of the marriage bed are usually not as needful in her life as they are in the life of her husband. Therefore, she must be especially alert to withdrawal signs in her husband. Such action on the part of the husband can signal that very difficult times are coming for their marriage.

The wife, therefore, must realize that it is very important for her child husband to be number one in the marriage relationship. Prayerfully, patiently, tenderly, consistently she should convey to her husband her faithful love for him. Little gestures, loving looks, a touch, all the things that were so important during courtship and the honeymoon should remain in evidence.

If the estrangement has greatly advanced, it may take much time before the husband will sense again the love and devotion his wife has for him. Moreover, because his ardor has become like ice, the wife will need much of God's grace to persistently continue in her efforts to rekindle desire in his heart. But we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

To show her love to her husband is entirely in agreement with God's Word. Therefore, as God strengthens her, she is to continue her efforts to show her love to him in every way possible.

Thus far, our study has shown us the immense responsibility that marriage is. We should now look briefly at the matter of courtship as preparation for marriage. This we will do in our next chapter.

CHAPTER 9 -- COURTSHIP

We have looked at a few of the problems that may occur in the marriage relationship, seeing some of the enormous difficulties a husband and a wife may face in their marriage. It should be obvious that if both spouses are truly saved, the tensions of marriage will be greatly diminished. Even in the case of unsaved couples, God in His mercy frequently restrains sin to the degree that

they can live together in relative happiness and contentment.

But in this study we have been looking at the marriage where the tensions have developed to the point that divorce is looming on the horizon. When this situation occurs the unsaved couple has little to help them. Their parents' desires, peer pressure from friends, or a feeling of responsibility toward their children may help keep the marriage going for a while, but because neither spouse recognizes the authority of the Bible, and because their world increasingly condones divorce, the reasonable expectation for this marriage is, unfortunately, divorce.

On the other hand, if one of the spouses is truly a child of God, the expectation for this marriage is much brighter. By God's grace, if the husband is saved, he can do much to protect the continuation of the marriage. By following God's rules he can do much to protect the integrity of his marriage.

Likewise, if the wife is a true child of God, she can be very effective in maintaining the continuation of her marriage.

Of course, the task facing the saved spouse of an unsaved partner who is exceedingly disagreeable to live with is indeed formidable. No individual in their own strength can face some of the difficulties that can arise. Only God's grace can sustain them through very stressful situations.

But God's grace is sufficient. God has given very beautiful and certain promises that can be depended upon entirely. God has promised He will never leave us nor forsake us. God has committed Himself to the principle that all things work together for good for those who love Him (cf. Romans 8:28).

The believer has the assurance that he can bring all his anxieties to his heavenly Father and receive the peace that passes understanding. He knows that God is able to change the situation overnight. He is quite aware that the difficulties being faced are a part of God's plan for his life.

In fact, the believing spouse will discover that the continuing problems arising from being married to an unsaved spouse only cause the believer to trust God more and more. He will not have the wisdom or the strength in himself to continue in the face of the seemingly mountainous difficulties being faced, but how wonderful to know that all of the problems and frustrations can be poured out in prayer to a God who dearly loves His child. With secure knowledge that God in heaven is still in charge, this child of God can face tomorrow.

One of the wonders of God's grace that will grow increasingly clear to the believing spouse is the fact that this earthly life is not "the big picture." We are only here for a few short years. Our time here is like a drop in the ocean compared with the eternity we will spend in the New Heaven and New Earth. Therefore, whatever the trauma that must be faced, it will have an end. And following that welcome end is a life in which there is no suffering nor sorrow nor unhappiness ever again.

Moreover, the saved spouse needs to be keenly aware that the unsaved spouse is on the way to hell. While he may appear to be "getting away" with his selfishness, this is not so at all. The unsaved spouse is to be pitied to the highest possible degree. If he dies without becoming saved, every one of his sins must be paid for. And the payment God demands is eternal damnation.

On the other hand, even though the saved spouse may suffer greatly, the spiritual blessings already enjoyed, along with the certainty of eternity with our Lord, emphasize the fact that the saved spouse has everything on his side.

Take Care Who You Date

But what steps can be taken to insure a biblical marriage in the first place? The potential awfulness of a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever is so great that a word of caution must be directed to those who are thinking about marriage.

How careful must a person be who is unmarried and who is becoming romantically inclined toward someone? The answer is that he must be exceedingly careful. As we have learned, when two people have become married, the wife is bound to the husband as long as they live. The words "separation" and "divorce" should never be a part of their vocabulary.

Therefore, it is of absolute importance that each knows as much about the other as possible before marriage. Dating and engagement, as we know it in our land, is designed to provide time to acquire this knowledge.

Obviously, if a person discovers that the other person is divorced and their spouse is still living, then it is very foolish to date that person. Even if the divorced person has become a beautiful child of God, marriage should not take place. Even if the divorce took place before this person became saved, there cannot be remarriage. Therefore, it would be exceedingly reckless to date such a person. It would only be placing a huge temptation before both persons.

Likewise, when two people become romantically interested in each other, it is imperative that they pay careful attention to the spiritual condition of the potential partner. How awful it would be if one person only seemed to be saved and after the honeymoon was over the saved spouse discovered that their mate was unsaved.

If on the first few dates the saved person does not find any substantial evidence that the other person is a child of God, then dating should cease. Romantic love has a way of blinding people more than they are willing to admit. Because an unsaved person, who seems to be interested in the things Christian people are interested in, can still have very many attractive qualities, it is very easy to focus only on attractive qualities.

Many a wife who has discovered after the wedding that she was married to an unsaved husband had not been careful enough when she dated. She may have realized at first that all was not spiritually well with this handsome man she was dating, but as she became increasingly attracted to him, she began to rationalize about what he could eventually become.

Surely, he does show a lot of interest in church, she reasons. Surely, her influence is so great in his life that even if he is not already saved, as she witnesses to him and prays for him, he will eventually become saved. Meanwhile, she is becoming more and more blinded by her romantic love.

She has already violated two very important rules. First, dating, engagement, and marriage are not missionary endeavors. If she wants to minister to the unsaved, there are thousands of people all around her who need her witness. But the arena of romance is not the place for missionary work. It is designed to provide, by God's grace, a godly marriage. This must remain the single focus of the dating agreement.

True, there are some instances wherein a child of God has had the glad experience of seeing their steady date become saved. But these unusual exceptions provide no solid basis for this kind of exception. Too many emotions are involved in romantic love. Unless there is clear, immediate and continuing evidence that the one being dated is already a child of God, the only wise action is to cease dating. The reason for this is quite

evident.

Suppose at the inception of dating there is good evidence that one person is not a child of God. But the dates continue because many attractive qualities can be seen in the one being dated. The Christian knows the importance of salvation and so encourages the unsaved person to read the Bible, to pray, and to attend church. Because the unsaved person is falling in love with the saved person, he increasingly tries to please her. She, as the saved person, will become more and more convinced that God's Spirit is working in the heart of her steady date. After all, why else is he beginning to attend church so faithfully? Why does he appear to have become so interested in the Bible?

True, at times he says or does things that are quite alien to a saved person. But because she is falling in love with him, she overlooks her fears, trying to see only God's grace in his life. Even when parents and friends express concern, she will not listen. Because she has fallen in love, she has convinced herself that God's grace is present in his life. Moreover, she is sure that after they are married he will grow even faster in the things of the Lord.

So they marry each other. Now he has her as his wife. By the time the honeymoon is over he knows he does not have to try as hard to please her. Because going to church and studying the Bible are boring to him, he will soon cease doing these things altogether.

The happy bride eventually discovers to her utter consternation that she is married to an unsaved husband. She realizes, too that she is married to him until death parts them.

But because her husband does not recognize God's rules against divorce, there is a strong likelihood that when he gets tired of living with a wife who puts such a high premium on going to church and reading the Bible, he will seek a divorce. This may even come when the family has grown to include children.

And so the believing wife becomes divorced. According to the Bible, she may never marry again as long as her husband is living. But in his rebellion against God he marries someone else, and she is left with the heavy responsibility of rearing the children.

Unfortunately this sad scenario is being repeated again and again in our day in actual life situations. If only those who are free to marry would realize the enormous consequences of marriage! One can never be too careful in deciding who to date.

Some may argue that dating is quite innocent, and that it does not necessarily have to be pointing to marriage. But the fact is that all dating, however innocuous, superficial and innocent it may appear to be, is a preliminary step toward marriage. Ordinarily, every marriage begins with a first date. It is a ritual that is engaged in to prepare for a successful marriage.

Therefore, during courtship the chief focus should be on spiritual concerns. Serious questions should be faced such as: What is salvation? What does it mean to be born again? What is the true Gospel? If we should marry, what church would we attend? If God gave us children, what about baptism? What about the education of those children? What kind of school would we try to send them to? What is the wife's chief role in marriage? Is she to be first an assistant breadwinner and then a keeper of the home? Or is she first to be a keeper of the home and assist as a breadwinner only if it does not interfere with her duties at home? What about family devotions? What about the responsibility of giving to God's work? What about the use of birth control measures? Etc., etc.

All such questions should be faced and

settled before marriage. By facing these questions, at least two goals will be realized. First of all, it will provide a forum for the examination of the spiritual sensitivities of each person. Two people may each be convinced the other person is a child of God, but if agreement cannot be realized on these issues, it may raise serious doubts as to the advisability of marriage. These are all matters of serious concern in the life of a true child of God. Therefore, to enter into the intimate, binding relationship of marriage with basic disagreements on these issues may be exceedingly dangerous. If the two disagree on these issues during courtship, the disagreements are sure to intensify during marriage.

On the other hand, by honestly and openly facing these issues before marriage, a solid foundation can be laid for a happy, God-glorifying marriage. If there is honest agreement on these matters, both will enter into marriage secure in the knowledge that harmony will prevail.

Hopefully we have come to an understanding of what is likely to bring about a more perfect marriage union.

But what about those who divorced before they were saved? Are they free to remarry? What about those who are already married a second or third time? Are they to divorce their wives in order to become more biblical? We will look at these questions in our next and final chapter.

CHAPTER 10 -- SOME FINAL QUESTIONS

We have spent considerable time investigating the biblical principles that relate to the binding nature of the marriage union. Repeatedly, we found that there is not to be divorce under any circumstances whatsoever. What God has joined together is not to be put asunder. Moreover, if someone does become divorced for some reason, we found that it would be a grievous sin to remarry while the former spouse still lives.

We then looked briefly at the implications of these truths upon both the husband's role and the wife's role in the marriage relationship. We discovered that, even if both spouses are saved, it can be very difficult to be the kind of husband and wife that God desires. But when one spouse is unsaved, it is certain that the other will have an exceedingly difficult life to live.

However, by God's grace it is possible to live victoriously even in such a difficult marriage. But to do so requires very careful obedience to God's rules. Wonderfully, God has given us His rules and principles so that even in the most trying circumstances we can experience the blessings of obedience. Those blessings include not only the comforting knowledge that we are living in the will of God, but they sometimes include the salvation of the unsaved spouse as well.

But now we will look at some other questions that often arise in Christian circles. For example, isn't it true that when we become a Christian old things have passed away and all things have become new? Doesn't this imply that if I was divorced before I was saved, now that I am saved I, as a new creature, am free to remarry? And what am I to do if I become saved after I have already married a second time? Let's conclude our study by examining such questions.

Divorce And The Newly Saved

A common assertion these days is the idea that if we were divorced before we were saved, after becoming saved we are free to remarry. This is based on the contention that as saved people we have become new creatures in Christ. Old things have passed away and all things

have become new. But is this kind of teaching biblical?

Actually, this teaching is quite unbiblical. First, it does not recognize that God's laws apply to all mankind. For example, the commandments "thou shalt not kill" or "thou shalt not covet" apply to the unbeliever as well as to the believer. The only difference is in the response to these commands. The true believer earnestly desires to be obedient to all of God's commands, while the unbeliever pays little or no attention to these rules.

The true believer knows that all of the commands of the Bible are to be obeyed. There is no statement of the Bible he would disregard. Therefore, if the Bible says he is not to remarry after divorce, then he will remain single. And this is true whether he was divorced before or after he was saved.

Secondly, becoming a new creature in Christ does not necessarily nullify the physical results of our sin. For example, a murderer is sentenced to the electric chair. While waiting to be executed, he becomes saved. This means he will never be threatened with hell for murder or for any other sin he committed. He now stands absolutely blameless before God. But does this mean that now he can leave death row and avoid execution? No, he still must be executed for his crime, unless he receives a very unusual pardon from the governor.

The same is true of a drunkard. Because of his continued drunkenness he is told he is dying of liver disease. But then he becomes saved. All of his sins, including drunkenness, have been covered by Christ's blood. But does this also mean that he will not die of liver disease? Not necessarily. Normally, the effects of his drunkenness continue with him.

Likewise, the man who has a messed up life because of divorce can be forgiven of this sin along with every other sin he has ever committed. When he becomes saved he can know that he will never have to answer to God for any of these sins. But much of the impact of those sins remain with him. God's laws concerning marriage and divorce still stand. Even if he becomes saved after he was divorced, he knows that God's law prohibits remarriage while his former spouse is living. Therefore, he will remain single as God has commanded.

This leads us into another question. Is it really true that God expects those who were divorced to live the single life in total celibacy? Isn't that asking too much? Surely a loving, forgiving heavenly Father would not expect this.

These questions can be answered from two vantage points. First of all, let us look at a marriage that was broken by God. Consider the example of a widow with five children, one of whom is a child with special needs. God has taken her husband by death.

Biblically she is free to remarry, and if any family needs a husband and a father, it is certainly this one. But in actuality, marriage for this widow is highly unlikely. It would be difficult enough to expect a new husband to become the instantaneous father of five children. But it is well nigh impossible for a new husband to be willing to take on the additional responsibilities of a child with special needs and cares.

Now, did God leave this poor widow in an impossible, terrible situation? Surely God is perfect in His actions and His wisdom! Therefore, when God took this husband by death God knew full well that the widow could continue a meaningful and happy life without the presence of a husband and father for her children.

True, it would be a life that would be different from what the world considers to be ideal. She would certainly need the help of others. And she would have to constantly cry out to God for wisdom

and patience. But she would find that God's grace is truly sufficient. In fact, she could experience in an especially dynamic way the reality of such promises as "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*" (Hebrews 13:5).

So, if God's grace is sufficient for those whose marriages have been broken by His own action, surely we can expect that His grace will be sufficient for those whose marriages have been tampered with by man's action of divorce.

There is a second emphasis here that must be kept in mind. In our sinful, finite mind we think that because the intimacies enjoyed in our marriage were such a seemingly necessary part of our life, that it would be nearly impossible to live a celibate life after divorce. "How can I be expected to live the rest of my life without any further intimacies with the opposite sex? Surely a good God does not intend that for me," we reason.

But God is the one who has designed us. It is God Himself who has put the body chemistry within us so that we can enjoy the intimacies of marriage.

It is also God who assures us that it is possible for humans to live very happy lives without the benefit of such intimacies. God declares in I Corinthians 7:27, "...Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife." He adds in verses 32-34:

But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.

There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

These verses clearly show that there are some special advantages that are available to the unmarried. In these verses God is not speaking to a certain group within the company of the believers. He is speaking to all who have become children of God.

Jesus spoke to this question in Matthew 19:12 where He taught:

For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

The strict definition of a eunuch is someone who is not physically equipped to perform the sexual act. But Jesus is teaching that some people make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. But He is not implying that they are to have themselves physically altered. Rather, they choose to live without the physical intimacy of the marriage relationship. In denying themselves this intimacy, they gain all kinds of new and wonderful ways to live to God's glory.

True, the world in which we live has put an enormous priority on sexual intimacy. Listening to the advertisements, the novels, the TV programs, the psychologists of our day, we have been brainwashed into thinking that if we cannot have this kind of intimacy, we are being deprived of the greatest blessing known to man.

But this is a lie. God's Word is the truth. While God indicates there are certain blessings within the marriage relationship -- particularly in the rearing of godly children -- there are even greater blessings to be realized in the single state. This is what we learn from I Corinthians 7:32-34.

The single person has the advantage of having more time to serve the Lord by doing such good works as caring for the lonely, the children of broken homes, and the elderly in nursing homes. They also have more time for Bible study and prayer.

Married people should also be involved in denying themselves so that their lives might be as fruitful as possible for Christ. But it is in the lives of the unmarried that these ideals can be realized to the highest degree.

And it is this spiritual dimension that can make the big difference in the lives of widows, widowers, divorced people, and those who have never married. God has given this special comfort and promise to all those who are single.

But it is only as they live in accordance with God's principles that these added blessings become evident. If the single person listens to the advice of the world, the feeling that the single state makes a person a deprived, pitiable, second-class citizen can be overwhelming. This in turn can set the stage for a fall into fornication. Only when God's rules are followed can the life of the single person become even more victorious than that of the married person.

But now we should face another question. What about someone who has married a second or even a third time and then becomes saved? Is he or she to divorce these latter spouses? What is to be done in order to obey God?

The Second Marriage

The question we are facing is a serious one, even though it should not be. If the human race, led by the church, were obeying God's laws concerning marriage and divorce, there would be very few second marriages. But because of the wholesale repudiation of God's laws concerning the sanctity of marriage, this problem has become enormous. Everywhere we turn we meet those who have remarried after divorce. Therefore, we must try to find an answer to this question.

We already know that the second marriage is an adulterous marriage. Remember, the wife is bound to the husband as long as he lives. And Romans 7:3 plainly declares:

So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

We cannot deny the clear teaching set forth in this verse. The wife is an adulteress if she is married to a second husband while her first husband is still living. She is an adulteress because her first marriage has become adulterated by her divorce, as well as because she has married a second husband.

We must recognize that a number of examples are given in the Bible of men with multiple wives. Jacob had four wives, David had several wives, and Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines! But, these were exceptions. The usual example that is given is of one wife. This was true of Adam, Noah, Isaac, Moses, etc.

We also consider that never did the Bible instruct a man to divorce all but the first wife. This is remarkable when we remember that the principle of one man, one wife goes all the way back to the beginning. God did not tell Adam that the three or four or several shall become one flesh. No. He instructed mankind in the beginning that the two shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:24). Although in Genesis 2:24 the number "two" is not used, the verse speaks of a man cleaving to his wife (not wives) "*and they shall be one flesh.*"

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Remember, Jesus quotes this verse in Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:8. In both of these verses He declares that the two shall be one flesh.

Therefore, we might expect that God would ask those who have violated this command by taking multiple wives to divorce their additional wives. But such an admonition is not given by God.

Thus, we must realize that even though God has willed that the proper marriage is one husband, one wife, nevertheless He has allowed mankind to break this law by having multiple wives. Nowhere in the Bible does He ask those believers with multiple wives to divorce the extra wives.

The reason for this state of affairs probably lies in the fact that even the marriage of a second wife is still a marriage. Even though it is altogether wrong, for some reason God still counts it as a marriage. Thus, the second wife becomes bound to the husband even as the first wife has become bound to the husband. And once this binding relationship occurs, there cannot be a breaking of that relationship.

True, the marriage to the second wife adulterates the pristine, ideal character of marriage as a one husband, one wife relationship. But the second marriage still is a marriage, and therefore, there can be no divorce.

When a man divorces his first wife, she is still bound to him from God's vantage point. Therefore, when he takes a second wife while his first wife is living, he has two wives bound to him. The act of divorcing his first wife was grievous sin. Likewise, the act of marrying a second wife was grievous sin. But the second marriage was still a marriage, and therefore, there cannot be divorce from this second wife. This is the marriage in which he must continue until death separates him from this wife.

True, a second or third marriage under these circumstances is far from ideal. From the standpoint of its relationship to the first marriage, it is adulterous. Secondly, there still exist responsibilities towards the first wife. Alimony and child support are the most obvious. But there are also moral and spiritual responsibilities and conflicts that may continue to plague the one who has arrogantly violated God's rules. Unfortunately, the children frequently suffer the most because of these selfish parents.

Moreover, such a husband can no longer be a pastor, an elder, or a deacon within the church. In I Timothy 3 God specifically instructs that such an office bearer in the church is to be the husband of one wife. Remember that in Romans 7:3 God speaks of the woman's husband still living while she is married to another man. God considers her to have two husbands, even though she is legally divorced from the first. Likewise, from God's vantage point, the man who has divorced his first wife and married another now has two wives. Therefore, he does not meet God's qualifications for a pastor, an elder, or a deacon.

In spite of the difficulties of a second marriage after divorce, it is still a marriage. The spouses involved are to live as if it were their first marriage.

Wonderfully, if they have become true believers, they can know that all of the sins connected with the divorce and remarriage are covered by Christ's blood. Christ came for sinners, not righteous people. Regardless of how many dirty, rotten sins we may have committed, when Jesus becomes our Savior we can know that He has paid for all our sins.

This brings us to the last group of questions we shall consider in this study. If a second marriage is to be lived the same as a first marriage with the complete assurance that the sins of divorce and remarriage become completely forgiven by God, why can't I

just go ahead into a second marriage and then ask God's forgiveness later? Suppose I am already married to someone, but I want to marry someone else with whom I have fallen in love. Why can't I go ahead and get an unbiblical divorce and then sinfully marry this second person? Cannot I then ask God's forgiveness, believing Christ's blood will cover these sins? Or, suppose I am divorced; can't I first marry someone else before I get right with God? That way I can have my second marriage and Christ also. Then I don't have to live the rest of my natural life in the single state.

These questions and observations surely seem logical and attractive. They surely appear to solve the problem of one having his cake and eating it too.

But this course of action is fraught with danger. Effectively, the one contemplating this action is taking the role of an adversary of Almighty God. Effectively he is saying, "I can sin as deeply and as often as I wish, and in my own sweet time I can become saved. And God must save me when I am ready to become saved."

Such a one is tempting God like Israel tested God in the wilderness when they complained that God was leading them to destruction. God warns in 1 Corinthians 10:9:

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

The specific sin God had in view in this verse is recorded in Numbers 21:5-6 where we read:

And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

The nation of Israel accused God of being too harsh in bringing them out of Egypt into the wilderness where they were to live following God's direction. But their complaints against God only brought judgment upon them.

So, too, those who insist on having their own way concerning divorce or remarriage after divorce effectively are complaining that God's way is too severe and too harsh. They are insisting on having their own way.

Ancient Israel insisted on having its own way and as a result came under God's wrath. How then can we expect God to treat any differently those who insist on having their own way in such important matters as divorce and remarriage? Indeed, it is a very serious matter to contend with Almighty God!

Moreover, the idea that I can sin for as long as I like, then sometime in the future I can repent at will and secure God's grace, is entirely faulty. It does not recognize nor understand the nature of God's grace.

We must remember that mankind is not the decision maker in salvation. Only Sovereign God Himself decides who is to be saved. But He comes to us commanding us to believe in Christ as Savior. He warns, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3)? He exhorts... "**make your calling and election sure...**" (Peter 1:10). And He instructs us that we are to come not despise" (Psalms 51:17). He also warns that He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.

With such warnings and exhortations before our eyes how would anyone dare to deliberately rebel against God in something as serious as divorce or remarriage after divorce? These are not sins that one slips into incidentally or accidentally. These are sins that require deliberate planning and consistent action over a period of considerable time. And

if one's heart is rebellious and hard enough today to commit such a sin, the probability is that this person is not saved. Moreover, it is evidence that God is not even drawing this one toward salvation. If God is today allowing this person to engage in such rebellion, what assurance can he have that later on God will deal kindly with him and soften his heart in order to draw him to salvation?

We may never presume upon the mercies of God. Today is the day of salvation. No person has any guarantee or promise that he will even be alive tomorrow. How then can we know that tomorrow we can be able to make our peace with God?

Furthermore, if we are so rebellious today that we would dare to sin so deliberately, how do we know that at some future date our hearts will become broken before God so that we can honestly and sincerely cry out for mercy? Indeed, we have no such assurance.

Therefore, to deliberately divorce or remarry after divorce, knowing that such action is contrary to God's will, is the most foolish and dangerous action anyone could take. The only fulfilling way to live is in accordance with God's laws. And the best time to begin living in this way is right now. May God give wisdom to those who have even played with the idea of sinning now and repenting later!

How Did It Happen?

But now let's turn our thought to wondering how it could ever have happened that the dreadful sin of divorce has become so widespread in our day.

The problem of unbiblical marriage and divorce is so serious, so catastrophic, that we wonder how the church could ever have strayed so far from the truth. Fifty years ago it was only in the more rebellious elements of the secular world that this sin was visible. Because the church would not even countenance this sin, the secular world did not dare to go too deeply into sin. It is a fact that the church is to some degree the conscience of the secular world.

But then comes along a dear lady who was married to a man living adulterously with other women. The church began to wonder: "Must this dear wife continue to live with that kind of horrible husband?" So in its sympathy and compassion, the church restudied the question of divorce for adultery and finally decided, "Yes, the Bible does allow divorce for adultery." And so the door was opened so that not only could this dear lady have her divorce, but also many others in the congregation could begin to lawfully seek divorce. Because the church is to some degree the conscience of the secular world, the people of the world also began to expand their divorce horizons. And so divorce began to multiply in the world.

At this point another kind of problem began to arise. Another dear lady was deserted by her husband and she had to labor all alone in caring for her children. But there was a dear Christian man who loved her and wanted to marry her. Surely, they reasoned, it must be in accordance with God's will for those children to have a Christian father to care for them!

So again the church, in its pity and compassion for this woman, appointed study committees to research the possibilities of biblical divorce for desertion and biblical remarriage after divorce. And again victory was assured. Indeed, these theologians successfully convinced themselves that the Bible allows divorce for desertion and remarriage after divorce. And so not only could this dear lady divorce her scoundrel of a husband, but she was free to marry this fine Christian man who had fallen in love with her.

Many in the church now believe they have God's blessing to divorce and remarry. Indeed, even deacons and

pastors are now freely divorcing and remarrying. And the world, taking its cue from the church, becomes a wasteland of broken homes.

Simultaneously, the church, taking its cue from the world, tacitly gives assent to the dreadful sin of birth control. This not only encourages the world to go deeper into this particular sin, but also opens the door to increased fornication. Where forty years ago it was rightly considered to be shameful and repugnant for unmarried individuals of the opposite sex to live together, now it has become commonplace. Indeed, sexual restraints of any kind have almost disappeared.

Along with all of these step-by-step violations of God's laws for the protection of the family unit, have come shattered lives of men, women, and children whose families have been hopelessly broken. The havoc is so widespread and of such magnitude that no words can accurately describe the full extent of the horror story.

Indeed, it is no wonder that God's judgment is on the church of today. I am afraid that the primary blame for the destruction of the marriage institution and the family unit must be placed at the door of the church, for it has the Word of God that indicates divorce is not to be countenanced. The church is the institution that has rewritten the rules to accommodate these sins of its members.

But what can we do? We must do the same thing that must always be done when we find sin in our lives. We must repent! We must turn away from all of these rebellious rules that permit divorce and remarriage. We must cry out to God for His mercy and forgiveness.

And we can't wait for another denomination or even another church within our denomination to agree with us that we have sinned. I personally must repent if I have had wrong thinking about these questions. And the church I belong to must repent.

Unfortunately, few will repent. The sins that have developed and have been accepted as the marriage institution has been slowly but surely destroyed are so widespread and so interwoven into the fabric of our churches that there is little hope for that. This is particularly so because we are so close to the end of the world. These dreadful sins evidence the fulfillment of the prophecy that most men's love will grow cold. May God have mercy on us!

Wonderfully, however, those who truly want to be obedient to God's Word can still move in the direction of a more holy life. If we discover wrong practices or wrong doctrines in our life, we can repent of them. God is gracious. He does forgive! And the Bible is just as much a guide for our lives today as it has ever been.

Could it be that there will be those who humbly will give heed to all that God teaches? Although we cannot turn this massive destruction of the family around, individually we can grow in holiness by becoming more obedient. This is the heart's desire of every child of God.

APPENDIX 8 – INTERVIEW WITH HAROLD CAMPING

Mr. Harold Camping, President of Family Radio recorded and interview about the purpose of Family Radio. In that interview he answered questions about his personal doctrinal positions, the "Open Forum" and other programs aired on the Family Radio Network. Much of this text is taken verbatim from that recorded interview.

QUESTION: Mr. Camping, you received mail that is quite critical of doctrines you teach. Is God calling Family Radio to teach Bible doctrine...or to teach people how to find doctrines from their own study of the Bible?

MR. CAMPING: An excellent question. You see, God is calling Family Radio to do both. In Matthew 28:19 and 20, Jesus declared: "Therefore, go and teach all nations..." This is the marching orders of the Church today. This is one of those commands about which there is nothing to debate. We are to teach...but what we teach and how we teach are equally important. We are not to teach the philosophies of men. The Bible is very, very clear about that. The Bible alone, in its entirety, is the divine Word of God...and that is what we are to teach. And how we teach the Bible should train people to find doctrine from their own, private study of the Bible.

QUESTION: What do you mean when you say that how you teach the Bible trains people to find doctrine for themselves?

MR. CAMPING: Well, every week I stand in the "open market place", where anybody can call in, whatever their background. There's no investigation of who they are or what they believe - it's completely anonymous, and they can ask any question. My role as teacher is to guide them into the Bible so they'll find their answer for themselves. I hope that they will not only learn what the Bible says in answer to their question, but also, by example, how to find answers in the Bible themselves.

QUESTION: Mr. Camping, you are sure that everything you teach is absolutely correct? Have you ever been wrong in your teaching?

MR. CAMPING: No one can be accurate all the time. Neither I nor any teacher or theologian who has ever lived on the face of the earth can be accurate all the time. But the Bible is always accurate. This unveils a serious difference between Bible teachers. Much of today's theology is a product of studying books written by men about the Bible, rather than studying the Bible itself. There is too little research into the scriptures themselves. Too often a Bible teacher quotes as authority some commentary or other Bible teacher rather than "Thus saith the Lord..." directly out of scripture. It is far more difficult to be wrong when (1) you use the Bible only as your authority and (2) you stand in the open market and are subject, without restrictions, to the probing and questioning of everyone. But, yes, I have been wrong. For example: For years and years I believed that the Bible teaches that adultery is grounds for divorce. (I admit that I was always a tiny bit uneasy about it, but nevertheless that is what I had been taught and believed...therefore that is what I said the Bible taught.) But as questions kept being raised about the divorce question I began to study more carefully. Today I believe, based only on the scriptures, that there is no Biblical divorce of any kind. Now, my current conviction on divorce is based on the scriptures under the discipline of study and the questions of listeners.

QUESTION: What do you say to those who suspect you of trying to get a following - of starting a new movement or a new church?

MR. CAMPING: I don't want anyone to follow me. I am not asking anyone to follow Family Radio, because at our best all we can do is teach God's Word and be an example of the fact that we all need to go back to the Word of God along for our answers. Oh, if only pastors could see that we are not their enemy. We are not opposed to them, we are not trying to put them down, and we are not trying to come with controversial or contentious doctrine. Actually, God's marching orders in Matthew 28:19 and 20 are two fold: the Church is to teach and to baptize. We are not a church. We do not baptize. In fact, we urge those who listen to go to a Bible-teaching church, be baptized and submit to the discipline and fellowship of the believers there. We can never become a church...we are only a network of radio stations - a voice speaking out clearly - teaching the Bible by spoken word, by song (as mentioned in Ephesians 5:19) and giving opportunity to those who want to challenge, question, even debate what God is saying to all of us in His Word. I feel badly that there are those who misunderstand why I teach as clearly as I do. I don't claim to be infallible. I want no personal following. No one has to agree with my teaching to be a member of the Family Radio FAMILY. Even our staff are not required to agree with my teaching. They are, of course, required to be students of the Word themselves and to live exemplary lives.

QUESTION: Mr. Camping, is there some personal word you'd most like everyone who listens to Family Radio to hear and believe?

MR. CAMPING: My greatest desire is that everyone, not just those who listen to Family Radio, might know (1) that the Holy Bible is the ultimate authority for all doctrine and practice, (2) that it is the only divine authoritative statement of truth, and (3) that it is inspired by God in its entirety. And I want this knowledge to be a matter of the heart, so that they will become addicted to reading and studying the Bible... that what it says may become an indelible part of their character.

QUESTION: Why do you make very emphatic statements when you teach?

MR. CAMPING: There are people who think that I tend to be contentious...or at least stubborn so that I can't see anything but what I'm saying. But the fact is, I am not contentious. All I want is truth. Very personally speaking, one of the greatest things I delight in is the "Open Forum" program because (1) it is a marvelous place to share the truth and (2) it is an open market place where I am subject to correction. Even my closest friends don't hesitate to talk to me personally when they suspect that I have said something that is wrong. And I delight in this. I'm so grateful for this because it means that if I'm proven wrong I can correct it so I won't be wrong any more. Now, some people have the attitude that you never can be sure in your heart what God's Word is saying...and so they think I'm being contentious when I declare it so clearly. I see no glory in ignorance or even in being unsure (though there are times when I'm asked something I just don't know what the Bible says about it, and I say so). So I study a great deal, and I think that is why my answers seem "quick" or emphatic. But I'm never trying to put down the questioners...only trying to provoke them into the Word of God for themselves so they can know what God says and learn to study only the Bible for their answers.

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