



REAL FAITH:
ANSWERS TO THE
TOP 100 QUESTIONS
ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

MARK DRISCOLL

REAL FAITH

Answers to the Top 100 Questions
About Christianity

REALFAITH.COM

By Mark Driscoll

Real Faith: Answers to the Top 100 Questions About Christianity
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PREFACE

Howdy, it's your nerd friend Pastor Mark here to tell you that I can't wait for you to start reading this book and discover all the things that God has for you as you seek to find biblical answers to the questions I know we all have about God and Christianity. When I first got saved, I bombarded pretty much everyone around me with questions about pretty much everything. My pastor at the time told me to just read the Bible and eventually I would find some answers. He was right, and after teaching the Bible for over 25 years, I want to help you figure out how to learn from God's Word too, so I put together this book that answers 100 questions about God and Christianity. I love that God builds relationship with us through His Word and prayer, so I'm praying that it's a blessing to you as you grow closer to Him.

Pastor Mark Driscoll

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'P' and 'M' in a cursive, flowing style.

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QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven [God the Father] said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." -MATTHEW 3:16-17

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REAL FAITH

1. What are theology and monotheism?

Theology literally means the “study of God”. Varying religions and philosophies have vying proposed understandings of what the truth is about God.

Christianity’s view of God is monotheistic. Monotheism teaches that there is only one personal God who is separate (transcendent) from the universe though involved in it (immanent). As a result, many people have regarded Christianity as just one of many monotheistic religions along with Judaism and Islam. In one sense, Christianity is monotheistic, as it does believe in one God. Yet, upon further investigation, the Bible is not impressed with mere monotheism because God’s objective is not that we simply believe in one God. As James 2:19 says, “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!” The God of Christianity as revealed in the Bible is one God who exists in the Trinitarian community of Father, Son, and Spirit. No other religion shares the concept of the Trinity with Christianity.

TOP 100 QUESTIONS

2. What is the Trinity?

The Father, Son, and Spirit are equally declared throughout Scripture to be God. The Trinity appears in creation^a, at Mary's conception of Jesus in Luke 1:35, at Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:16-17, and in Jesus' Great Commission^b. Additionally, every member of the Trinity takes part in salvation with a different role^c.

God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God. Three persons. While the word Trinity does not appear in the Bible, this One-who-is-Three concept very clearly does. As an aside, the Bible also does not include the word Bible. The word Trinity is a shorthand way of summarizing complex biblical truth. It was likely first used by the church father Tertullian (AD 155–220). To say that God exists as a Trinity does not mean that there are three Gods, or that one God merely manifests himself as either the modes of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit on various occasions.

For our purposes, we will use the following definition: The Trinity is one God who eternally exists as three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Spirit—who are each fully and equally God in eternal relation with each other.

To say that each member of the Trinity is a “person” does not mean that God the Father or God the Spirit became human beings. Rather, it means that each member of the Trinity thinks, acts, feels, speaks, and relates because they are persons and not impersonal forces. Further, each member of the Trinity is equally God, which means that they share all the divine attributes (e.g. eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence), which we will explore in later chapters.

a Gen. 1:1-2 **b** Matt. 28:19 **c** Eph 1:4-13, 1 Pet 1:2, Titus 3:4-6, 1 Cor 12:4-6

3. Who is the Father?

Innumerable Scriptures clearly and emphatically declare the Father to be God.^a

In the history of Christianity and all the cults and religions that have erred from biblical truth, there has never been any noteworthy false teaching denying the deity of God the Father, because it is so obviously clear throughout the entirety of Scripture.

However, there has sadly been an underemphasis on God the Father in many Christian circles because of a father wound. The father wound is an unhealed hurt from a physical or spiritual father or father figure in our life. Fathers fail us, and unless we forgive them and invite God the Father to heal our father wound, we remain burdened instead of unburdened, broken instead of healed, and made bitter instead of made better.

People with an unhealed father wound can have a wrong and warped view of God. Our view of God is often a projection or rejection of our imperfect earthly dad onto God. To heal the father wound, you need to forgive the earthly physical and spiritual father(s) who have failed you. This forgiveness will remove the demonic foothold that bitterness brings. Jesus promised "I will not leave you as orphans."^b

When a child gets adopted, they adapt to having a father and spend time getting to know their new father and family. To become a Christian is to get a new family (the church), a new big brother (Jesus), and a new Father (God).

a John 6:27; 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3 **b** John 14:18

TOP 100 QUESTIONS

4. Who are the Son (Jesus) and Holy Spirit?

Jesus is also repeatedly declared to be God throughout the Scriptures by both others^a and himself, without apology or correction. ^bJesus was ultimately put to death for declaring himself to be God, a declaration that, if untrue, would have been a violation of the first commandment and a blasphemous sin^c. We discuss Jesus' divinity and humanity more in depth in the following sections.

In addition to the Father and Son, the Holy Spirit is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, he possesses the attributes of God, which reveals his divinity; he is creator^d, eternal^e, omnipotent (all-powerful)^f, omniscient (all-knowing)^g, and omnipresent.^h In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is also clearly declared God.ⁱ

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is not merely an impersonal force but a person who can be grieved^j, resisted^k, and insulted.^m The personhood of the Holy Spirit explains why Jesus speaks of him as a personal "he" and not an impersonal "it."ⁿ

a Matt. 28:9; John 1:1–4, 14; 5:17–18; 8:58; 10:30–38; 12:37–41; cf. Isa. 6:9–11; 20:28–29; Acts 20:28; Rom. 1:3–4; 9:5; 1 Cor. 8:4–6; Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:10–11; Col. 1:16–17; 2:8–9; 1 Tim. 6:15; Titus 2:13; Heb.1:8; 1 John 5:20; Rev. 1:8, 17–18; 17:14; 19:16; 22:13–16 **b** Matt. 26:63–65; John 5:17–23; 8:58–59; 10:30–39; 19:7 **c** Matt. 26:64–66; Mark 14:62–64; John 8:58–59; 10:30–31 **d** Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30 **e** Heb. 9:14 **f** Mic. 3:8; see also Acts 1:8; Rom. 15:13, 19 **g** 40:13–14; see also 1 Cor. 2:10 **h** Ps. 139:7 **i** Acts 5:3–4; see also John 14:16; 2 Cor. 3:16–18 **j** Eph. 4:30 **k** Acts 7:51 **m** Heb. 10:29 **n** John 14:17, 26; 16:7–14

5. Why should we try to understand the Trinity?

Admittedly, the doctrine of the Trinity is complex to comprehend. Perhaps the best way to consider how God can be three but one is to consider that, in the covenant of marriage, a husband and wife, though two distinct persons, are supposed to be “one”.^a As a result:

1. Trinitarian life is humble. The doctrine of the Trinity is so complex and wonderfully mysterious that it humbles us.^b

2. Trinitarian life is loving. 1 John 4:7 reveals that love emanates from the Trinitarian community of God, which includes love for God, family, friend, neighbor, stranger, and even enemy.

3. Trinitarian life is worshipful. We are to live all of our life to the Father, through the Son, by the power of the Spirit.

4. Trinitarian life is relational. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God [Father], and the Word was God.” In the original Greek, John is saying that God the Father and God the Son were proverbially face-to-face in eternity past. This is the language of friendship.

5. Trinitarian life is unified and diverse like a healthy family. The term Christian is a bit like a last name that reveals the connection between all family members.

6. Trinitarian life is submissive. As we hear Jesus teaching us to pray, “Your will be done,”^c while sweating like drops of blood from anxiety caused by his looming his crucifixion, we learn to submit ourselves to the will of the Father by the Spirit like the Son.

7. Trinitarian life is joyful. God is good. God made you. God made this world as a home for you to live in and have a loving and life-giving relationship with Him, the rest of His earthly family of human beings, along with His spiritual family of spirit beings.

a Genesis 2:24 **b** 1 Cor. 13:12 **c** Matt. 6:10; Luke 22:42

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QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW GOD SPEAKS TO US

So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. -1 CORINTHIANS 2:11a -12

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6. What is general revelation?

God communicates to us in two ways all the time. These are called general revelation and special revelation.

God reveals Himself to everyone everywhere through general revelation. General revelation includes creation, common grace, providence, and conscience.

Creation reveals God's power, love, and glory.^a Among the most awe-inspiring aspects of creation is the human body. Every doctor, mother who births a child, grandparent who holds a grandchild, and person reading this with eyes God made sending data to the brain God designed should be brought to worshipful wonder.^b

Through common grace, God reveals His love to all people, though not in a saving way. God's common grace includes the water we drink, food we eat, sun we enjoy, and rain we need, as God is good to the sinner and saint alike.^c

Externally, God's common grace is experienced in providence and miracle. Just as you get work done with two hands, consider God as metaphorically also working with two hands. On one hand, God works through miracles that are visible revelations of His person and power. On the other hand, God works through providence that are invisible revelations of His person and power.

Internally, God also reveals Himself generally through the conscience He gave us. Most everyone knows it is wrong to murder, lie, and commit adultery, because God has written His morality on human hearts.^d Additionally, God the Holy Spirit convicts the whole world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.^e Most people innately appeal to conscience every time they want justice or decry something as wrong or unfair.

a Psalm 19:1,4; Isaiah 6:3; Romans 1:19-20 **b** Psalm 8:3-4 **c** Ps. 65:9; 104:14; Matt. 5:45 **d** Rom. 2:14-15 **e** John 16:8-11

7. What is special revelation?

For anyone to have a saving knowledge of God requires that, in addition to general revelation, they also must receive and believe special revelation. While general revelation is good and true, it is not sufficient for someone to know that God became a man and died on a cross in our place for our sins.

God revealed Himself supremely through the incarnation, where the second person of the Trinity humbly entered into human history as the God-man Jesus Christ, and God continues to reveal Himself today, primarily through the divinely inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Bible.

Because the Bible is so central to what Christians believe, at some point each of us has to settle what we think about the Book. Most disagreements between Christians and non-Christians come down to whether or not we think the Bible is true. A non-Christian might consider a few parts of the Bible curious. They might write some of its words on a sticky note for inspiration. They accept some points but not others. They approach the Bible like a salad bar: “I’ll take that, I’ll leave that, I’ll take that, I’ll leave that.” But for Christians, the Bible is fully true. It is not a salad bar. It is a boxed lunch—take it or leave it.

8. What are the Scriptures?

Scripture is God speaking his truth to us in human words. The New Testament writers claim that the Old Testament is sacred Scripture, which literally means “writing.”^a The word Bible comes from the Greek word for book. Holy Bible means “Holy Book.” It was written in three languages (Hebrew, Greek, and a bit in Aramaic) over a period of more than fifteen hundred years by roughly forty authors (of varying ages and backgrounds) on three continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe).

The Protestant Canon of the Bible contains sixty-six separate books. Thirty-nine books, approximately three-quarters of the Bible, are in the Old Testament, which is a record of God’s speaking and working in history from when he created Adam and Eve, up until about 450 BC. In the period between the two testaments, people waited for the coming of the Messiah into human history. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament begin with the four Gospels, which record the life, death, burial, resurrection, and return to heaven of Jesus, and then proceed to instruct Christians and churches about how to think and live for God.

The Bible is a library of books compiled as one Book, showing a divine unity and continuity. This point is illustrated by the fact that the New Testament has roughly three hundred explicit Old Testament quotations, as well as upwards of four thousand allusions to the Old Testament. In many ways, the Old Testament is a series of promises that God makes, and the New Testament is the record of their fulfillment, and the anticipation of the final fulfillment of the remaining promises at Jesus’ Second Coming.

^a Matt. 21:42; 22:29; 26:54, 56; Luke 24:25–32, 44–45; John 5:39; 10:35; Acts 17:2, 11; 18:28; Rom. 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 16:26; 1 Cor. 15:3–4; Gal. 3:8, 22; 4:30; 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Tim. 3:16; James 4:5; 2 Pet. 1:20–21; 3:15–16

9. Who decided what books are in the Old Testament?

Ultimately, God did. The canon of Scripture is the collection of books that God has chosen, and the Church has recognized, as having divine authority in matters of faith and doctrine. The term comes from the Greek word *kanon* and the Hebrew word *qaneh*, both of which mean “a rule,” or “measuring rod.”

Time after time, Jesus and his apostles quoted from this distinctive body of authoritative writings. They designated them as “the Scripture,” “the Scriptures,” “the holy Scriptures,” “the sacred writings,” and so forth.^a

Early Jewish Christians followed Jesus and used the same Old Testament books as found in the Hebrew Bible today, the canon that was formally ratified in a meeting of rabbis at Javneh in A.D. 90. Since then, The Roman Catholic church has added other books such as the Septuagint and the Apocrypha, which were rejected by Protestant Reformers who wanted to eliminate tradition-based, Bible-less teachings.

Our Old Testament has the same books that it had when Jesus preached out of it.

^a John 7:38, Acts 8:32, Rom. 4:3; Matt. 21:42, John 5:39, Acts 17:11; Rom. 1:2; 2 Tim. 3:15

10. Who decided what books are in the New Testament?

In the fourth century the church moved to settle the issues of the New Testament canon. In the East it was done in the Thirty-Ninth Paschal Letter of Athanasius in AD 367. In the West, the canon was fixed at the Council of Carthage in AD 397.

Was the New Testament canon disputed? Not really. Virtually all the books were immediately accepted. Did the church canonize the books? Not at all. Rather, they recognized and confirmed their canonical status based on three primary criteria:

1. Conformity to “the rule of faith.” Did the book conform to orthodoxy, Christian truth recognized as normative in the churches?
2. Apostolicity. Was the writer of the book an apostle or did the writer of the book have immediate contact with the apostles? All but a few New Testament writers were eyewitnesses to the events they recorded.^a Though not eyewitnesses, Luke received his information from Paul and numerous eyewitnesses, while Mark received his information from Peter, who was an eyewitness. James and Jude were closely associated with the apostles in Jerusalem and were probably Jesus’ brothers, which would have also made them eyewitnesses.^b
3. Catholicity. Did the book have widespread and continuous acceptance and usage by churches everywhere?

a John 19:35; 20:30–31; Acts 1:1–3, 9; 10:39–42; 1 Cor. 15:6–8; 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:16; 1 John 1:1–3 **b** 2 Tim. 4:11; Luke 1:1–4; 1 Pet. 5:13

11. How did the Bible get chapters and verses?

Chapters and verses were added to provide addresses (not unlike those on our homes) that help us find particular sections. In 1205, Stephen Langton, a theology professor who became the archbishop of Canterbury, began using Bible chapters. In 1240, Cardinal Hugo of St. Cher published a Latin Bible with the 1,189 chapter divisions that exist today. Robert Stephanus, a Protestant book printer, was condemned as a heretic for printing Bibles. As he fled with his family to Geneva on horseback, he arbitrarily made verse divisions within Langton's chapter divisions. His system was used for the first English Bible (The Geneva New Testament of 1557) and became today's system of 31,173 verses.

The Bible's chapters and verses were not applied with any consistent method and, while helpful, they are not authoritative. Because the Bible was not intended to be read in bits and pieces, reading verses out of context can lead to serious misunderstanding. Thus, rightly interpreting particular sections of Scripture requires paying attention both to the immediate context and the overall context of all of Scripture.

12. Who wrote the Bible?

As part of His teaching ministry, Jesus often taught his students (disciples) about the future. On a few occasions He promised the day He would leave them and send the Holy Spirit to perfectly remind them of his life and teachings, so that they could write and teach accurately and truthfully to complete the Bible.^a

The human authors of the Bible include kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, a doctor, and scholars. The books of the Bible cover history, sermons, letters, songs, and love letters. There are geographical surveys, architectural specifications, travel diaries, population statistics, family trees, inventories, and numerous legal documents.

Unlike any other book, the Bible is a book written by both God and man. Hundreds of times the Bible says, “thus says the Lord”, and uses similar statements nearly four thousand times. It was not co-authored, however. It was not God and humans collaborating, or a human writing a draft with God making revisions, or God giving ideas that the human authors put into words. They were not words dictated to humans, as is falsely claimed with the Koran. The Bible is not human writings that become divine when the reader discovers spiritual meaning in them, as it is said of many Eastern religious writings. It is not one of many books containing the religious insights of ancient sages, as many liberals teach.

People who were providentially prepared by God, and motivated and superintended by the Holy Spirit, spoke and wrote according to their own personalities and circumstances in such a way that their words are the very Word of God.^b Putting it a bit more technically, the writings themselves have the quality of being God-breathed. It is not the authors or the process that is inspired, but the writings.

a John 14:25–26; 16:12–15 **b** Jer. 1:5, Gal. 1:15; 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 2 Pet. 1:20–21; Mark 12:36, 1 Cor. 14:37

13. How true is the original to my modern Old Testament translation?

If you have a good modern translation of the Bible, then you have almost exactly what the ancient authors wrote. It is amazing that people try to argue that we cannot trust the Bible because we do not have the original copies. The same is true of Plato, Sophocles, Homer, or Caesar Augustus.

Until the middle of the twentieth century, our oldest copies of the Old Testament dated from about AD 900. We knew the extreme care the rabbis used to copy the sacred text before they destroyed the worn one. But still, the copies we had were historically distant from the original (called the autographa). But then in 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered at Qumran. Suddenly we had copies of much of the Old Testament that were more than a thousand years older than our previous oldest copies, including some 40,000 ancient inscriptions. From these fragments more than 500 books have been reconstructed, including some Old Testament books, such as a complete copy of Isaiah.

A comparison of the Qumran manuscript of Isaiah with the Masoretic text from AD 1000 showed the most minor variations, mostly spelling (like the American honor and the British honour) or stylistic changes such as adding a conjunction. Checking the pivotal text of Isaiah 53, we find that out of the 166 words in that chapter, only one word is really in question, and it does not at all change the meaning of the passage. The Qumran text added the word "light" after "he shall see" in verse 11. It's a word that was implied but not actually written. Our confidence in the text was confirmed.

14. How true is the original to my modern New Testament translation?

In the case of the New Testament, we have more than 20,000 handwritten manuscripts in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Coptic and other ancient languages including almost 6,000 Greek manuscripts with fragments written no later than 50 years after the original books and letters. In addition, we have more than one million quotations of the New Testament by church fathers. This is truly amazing because the Bible was copied onto fragile materials like papyrus. The copies weren't stored anywhere that protected them from the elements, but in God's providence they still survived.

As we compare copies of both Old and New Testament, we do find variations, but most of the variations in the many handwritten copies involve spelling, word order, or style. We would expect such minor human error no matter how careful the scribes were. Less than 1 percent of all the variations have anything to do with doctrine, and no doctrine is affected by any variation.

Lastly, Jesus himself used copies and translations. He trusted them, so we should too, especially when the science of textual criticism has confirmed that our text is accurate. Because we have so many manuscripts to check, we are virtually certain that the text of the New Testament is 99.5% textually pure.^a In the entire text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt (about 400 words), and even Bible critics agree that none of these affects any significant doctrine.^b

As the following chart illustrates, both the number of transmitted manuscripts we possess of Scripture and their proximity in date to the autographs are unparalleled when compared to other ancient documents.

TOP 100 QUESTIONS

Author	Work	Date Written	Earliest MSS	Time Gap	Manuscripts
Homer	Illiad	800 BC	c. 400 BC	400	1,757
Herodotus	History	480-425 BC	10th C	1,350	109
Sophocles	Plays	496-406 BC	3rd C BC	100-200	193
Plato	Tetraologies	400 BC	895	1,300	210
Caesar	Gallic Wars	100-44 BC	9th C	950	251
Livy	History of Rome	59 BC-AD 17	Early 5th C	400	150
Tacitus	Annals	AD 100	1st half: 850, 2nd: 1050 (AD 1100)	750-950	2+31 15th C
Pliny, the Elder	Natural History	AD 49-79	5th C fragment: 1; Rem. 14th-15th C	400 (750)	200
Thucydides	History	460-400 BC	3rd C BC (AD 900)	200 (1,350)	96
Demos-thenes	Speeches	300 BC	Some fragments from 1 C BC (AD 1100)	1,100+ (1,400)	340
New Testa-ment		AD 50-100	AD 130 (or less)	40	5,795

a Geisler, Norman L., Nix, William E., *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 475]. **b** Ibid.

15. Can Scripture be written today?

The only people who could write Scripture were prophets and apostles—people who were witnesses of God’s revelation in Jesus, or authors like Luke who based his Gospel on eyewitness testimony and on the report of the apostles who were eyewitnesses.^a

Books of the Bible cannot be written today for two primary reasons. First, the Old Testament ended with the prophet Malachi promising that the next major event in redemptive history would be the coming of John the Baptist, preparing the way for Jesus.^b Four hundred years followed during which time no book of the Bible was written until John came, as promised.^c Likewise, the New Testament ends with its final book, Revelation, telling us that no other books of the Bible are to be written following it, as the Bible is completed as we await Jesus’ Second Coming.^d

Second, the Bible says that Jesus is God’s final word to us and that we should not add anything to the Bible.^e Furthermore, we have no need for any new book of the Bible because we already have all we need for faith and godliness. If there were some knowledge that all Christians desperately needed, God would certainly not have waited some two-thousand years to reveal it while His people sat in the darkness of partial knowledge.

Simply stated, the canon of Scripture is closed. No books, not even a word, will be added to the Bible. John’s warning at the end of Revelation (22:18-19) applies to the Bible as a whole.

a Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1–3, 9 **b** Mal. 3:1; 4:5–6 **c** Luke 1:11–17 **d** Rev. 22:18-19; Rev. 22:20-21
e Heb. 1:1-2; Deut. 4:2, 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6

16. Why are there different translations of Scripture?

For centuries the Eastern church had the Bible only in Greek. The Western church had the Bible only in Latin. Since most people were not fluent in these languages, they were unable to read the Bible themselves. One of the great developments of the Protestant Reformation was to return the Bible to the people in their own language. Martin Luther and John Wycliffe are just two of the men who risked their lives to translate the Bible into German and English. William Tyndale was charged with heresy and condemned to death for translating the Bible into English. During the past four centuries there have been hundreds of English Bible translations, and dozens are actively used today. They fall into three major categories.

1. Word for Word Translations (ESV, KJV, NKJV, NASB)

Word-for-word translations emphasize the patterns of the words and seek “as far as possible to capture the precise wording of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer...Thus it seeks to be transparent to the original text, letting the reader see as directly as possible the structure and meaning of the original.”¹ The goal is precision like one would expect in other important communications, such as legal documents, marriage vows, or contracts.

2. Thought-for-Thought Translations (NIV, NLT, CEV)

Thought-for-thought translations attempt to convey the full nuance of each passage by interpreting the Scripture’s entire meaning and not just the individual words. Such versions seek to find the best modern cultural equivalent that will have the same effect the original message had in its ancient cultures.

3. Paraphrase Translations (MESSAGE, TLB, TPT, AMP)

Paraphrased translations put the emphasis on readability in English. Therefore, they pay even less attention to specific word patterns in an attempt to capture the poetic or narrative essence of a passage.

6

QUESTIONS ABOUT CREATION

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. -GENESIS 1:1

- 17. What does the Bible say about creation?.....21
- 18. How does creation point to an intelligent designer?.....22
- 19. What does creation reveal about God?.....23
- 20. What are some Christian perspectives on creation?.....24
- 21. Are the 6 days of creation literal 24-hour days?...27
- 22. Is the earth old or new?.....28

17. What does the Bible say about creation?

The first book of the Bible, Genesis, takes its name from its first words, "In the beginning," as genesis means "beginning." Genesis 1-3 records the beginning of creation and human history. The Genesis account of creation was likely directly revealed to Moses around 1400 B.C. by the same Holy Spirit who was present in Genesis 1:2. Genesis is not an exhaustive treatment of early history but rather a theologically selective telling of history that focuses on God and mankind while omitting such things as the creation of angels or the fall of Satan and demons in heaven.

In Genesis 1:1, the word used for "created" is the Hebrew word *bara*, which means "creation from nothing". The other Hebrew word used in a creative sense in Genesis is *asah*, translated "make" or "made". This very common word is used in the creative sense^a which means "to fashion or shape," or "to make something suitable," such as making loincloths out of fig leaves^b or making the ark.^c *Bara* emphasizes the initiation of an object, whereas *asah* emphasizes the shaping of an object. Along with statements where God does initial creation like the heavens and the earth^d, the only other things *bara*'d are the living creatures^e and human beings.^f When people create we are doing *asah*, not *bara*. We can take things that God has given us such as seed and land to plant crops and harvest food, but in so doing we are not creating food from nothing but rather creating it from the gifts given to us by God in creation.

The land or earth is "without form and void". Many read this as primordial space, but it is *eretz*, land or earth in Gen. 1:2 before God prepared them for humans. The same language for "without form (*tohu*) and void (*bohu*)" used in Genesis 1:2 is used elsewhere in Scripture in reference to uninhabited land. Examples include Deuteronomy 32:10, which speaks of "a desert land, and in the howling waste (*tohu*) of the wilderness."

a Gen. 1:7, 16, 25, 26, 31; 2:2, 3, 4, 18; Ps. 86:9; 95:5; 96:5 **b** Gen. 3:7 **c** Gen. 8:6 **d** Gen. 1:1; 2:3, 4 **e** Gen. 1:21 **f** Gen. 1:27; 5:1, 2

18. How does creation point to an intelligent designer?

Christian philosophers have long sought to start with creation to move backwards to introduce people to the Creator. Each of the following arguments is complex and can be presented in multiple ways. Generally speaking, these philosophical arguments are each inductive in form, meaning they reason from what God has done to an understanding of who God is. The one exception is the ontological argument, which is a deductive argument.

- Ontological Argument from Highest Ideal: (*ontos* means “being”) follows that since the human mind is only able to conceive of that which actually exists, God must exist because we would not be able to conceive of God unless there was God.
- Teleological Argument from Design: (*telos* means “purpose” or “design”) contends that when we see something that is designed, we rightly assume that an intelligent designer created it.
- Cosmological Argument from First Cause: (*cosmos* means “orderly arrangement”) asserts that for every effect there is a cause. Therefore, the material world must have a beginning, and that beginning must be outside of the material world to cause it to come into existence.
- Kalam Argument from Time: states that the existence of time necessitates a beginning as a reference point from which time proceeds.
- Axiological Argument from Morality: (*axios* means “judgment”) contends that everyone, regardless of his or her culture, has an innate understanding of right and wrong.

In conclusion, taken together as a cumulative case, the various arguments for God’s existence reveal that God exists; He is the Intelligent Designer, the powerful Cause of all creation, apart from time but at work in time, and morally good.

19. What does creation reveal about God?

Genesis 1:1 reveals that “in the beginning, God created.” In the same way that a piece of music reveals something of the composer and artwork reveals something of the artist, so too creation reveals something of the Creator. In this way, creation is a form of general revelation.^a Therefore, examining creation reveals fourteen glorious truths about God as Creator.

1. God is the only God.
2. Our personal Creator God is Trinitarian.^b
3. God is eternally uncaused.
4. God is living.
5. God is independent.^c
6. God is transcendent, separate from His creation.
7. God is immanent.
8. God is personal.
9. God is powerful.
10. God is beautiful.
11. God is holy.
12. God is a prophet.
13. God is gracious.
14. God is a sovereign King.

In sum, we see that God is not a faceless intelligent designer of the universe, but the living Lord, Yahweh, who alone created everything so we could live in loving relation with Him now and forever. From the first words of the Bible, the Lord is distinguished from the gods of the nations. The other gods—demons, really—are created beings that can’t create anything.^d All they can do is counterfeit what God creates, but as God’s children, we can know and enjoy all that God has created for us to enjoy.

a Ps. 19:1–2; Rom. 1:20 **b** Ps. 19:1; Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 8:6; John 1:1–3, 10; Col. 1:16–17; Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13 **c** Acts 17:24–25 **d** Deut. 32:17; 1 Cor. 10:19–21; Col. 1:16

20. What are some Christian perspectives on creation?

Among Bible-believing Christians, there are at least four primary interpretations of the creation account in Genesis 1-2. Personally, I find the first view to be the most persuasive biblically. But, as Paul says, we now see only in part, and one day in Jesus' presence we will know in full, and we will all be in complete agreement on this and other matters. Until that day, may we worship our Creator together and graciously discuss and debate our differences without unnecessarily dividing over them.

View 1: Historic Old-Earth Young Humanity Creationism

The word used for "beginning" in Genesis 1:1 is *re'shit* in Hebrew, which marks a starting point for what comes afterwards. There is no gap between verses 1 and 2. Rather verse 1 begins the Genesis story telling us that the God who created everything is the same God who creates His image bearers and the Promised Land where He will live with them. What God created in the first verse existed for an undefined period of time (which could be anywhere from a moment to billions of years) before God began the work of preparing the uninhabitable land for the habitation of mankind. The preparation of the uncultivated land and the creation of the first human beings, Adam and Eve, occurred in the six literal twenty-four-hour days of Genesis 1, as echoed in Exodus 20:11. This view leaves open the possibility of an old earth, six literal days of creation, and a young humanity on the old earth. It does have the biblical difficulty since it appears that sun and moon are created on day 4 rather than before the story begins. In protest, some will argue that death did not come until human sin but this might refer to human death only. For example, before Adam and Eve sinned, if they or an animal ate a plant, would that plant not die? If a leaf fell off of a tree, would that leaf have not died?²

TOP 100 QUESTIONS

View 2: Young-Earth Young Humanity Creationism

In this view, God created the entire universe, including Adam and Eve, in six literal twenty-four-hour days. As it seeks to be faithful to its reading of the biblical text, this view affirms that the entire universe is less than ten thousand years old. It interprets the data of science in terms of inspired Scripture, refusing to compromise God's teaching about the date and divine methods of creation with naturalistic scientific theories. It does have some biblical difficulties, such as the creation of sun and moon on day four while there is evening and morning on the first three days.³

View 3: Old Earth Creation or Intelligent Design (no evolution involved)

The "days" of Genesis 1 are analogies of God's workdays, setting a pattern for our rhythm of work and rest. They are understood in the same sense as "in that day" of Isaiah 11:10-11. They represent periods of God's historical supernatural activity in preparing and populating the earth as a place for humans to live, love, work, and worship. These days are broadly consecutive periods of unspecified length. The biblical difficulty is that the days have evenings and mornings, so they would naturally be 24-hour days.³

View 4: Literary Framework View

In this view, Genesis 1 and 2 are intended to be read as a figurative framework explaining creation in a topical, not sequential, order. The six days of creation listed in Genesis 1 are also to be interpreted metaphorically, not as literal twenty-four-hour days. The literary framework view is outlined here:

REAL FAITH

Forming

Day 1: light & darkness separated

Day 2: sky & waters separated

Day 3: dry land & waters separated

Day 3: plants & trees

Filling

Day 4: sun, moon, stars
(lights in heaven)

Day 5: fish & birds

Day 6: animals & man

Admittedly, God speaks of creation creatively by including poetry in the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2. Still, even when the Bible uses figurative and poetic language, it does so to communicate a literal truth, a fact that weakens this view.

View 5: Evolutionary Creation

In this view, God used the planned and purpose-driven natural process of evolution to do His creative work of the universe and life. The universe is a creation that is completely dependent for its continued existence on the sustaining power of the triune God of the Bible. God's design is shown in the finely-tuned physical laws and the biological processes necessary for life to evolve through transitions, which would be impossible without God's involvement, culminating in humans with their incredibly complex brains and minds paired together in full image of God's personhood. Humans evolved from pre-human ancestors and, over a period of time, the image of God and human sin were gradually and mysteriously manifested. It has biblical difficulties in that it usually does not hold Adam and Eve as literal parents of the human race though the New Testament takes this as literal history.^b It also has difficulties in explaining how one species can actually transition into another as Genesis 1:21, 24, 25 all speak of God making fish, birds, and animals "according to their kinds".^c

a Proponents include Hugh Ross: "Reasons to Believe" and Stephen Meyer: "Discovery Institute" **b** Matt 19:4-6; Rom 5:12-14; Heb 4:4-7; 2 Pet 2:4-5 **c** Proponents include Biologos, John Walton, Francis Collins, John Lennox, Philip Johnson, Tim Keller, and Michael Behe

21. Are the 6 days of creation literal 24-hour days?

Those Christians who argue for a metaphorical view of the six days of creation rightly point out that the word used for day in Hebrew (*yom*), often refers to an extended period of time that is more than a literal twenty-four-hour day.^a Nonetheless, if we read the Scriptures, it seems apparent that the six days of creation in Genesis 1 are literal twenty-four-hour days for two reasons.

First, each day is numbered so that there is a succession of days. Further, each day is described as having a morning and evening, which is the common vernacular for a day.^b These details in Genesis 1 clearly indicate that the days are literal.

Second, in Exodus 20:8–11, God says: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

God says that He made creation in six days and on the seventh day He rested. Additionally, His work and rest are to be the precedent for us and why God’s people in the Old Testament had a seven-day week with a Sabbath day.

a Ps. 20:1; Prov. 11:4; 21:31; 24:10; 25:13; Eccl. 7:14 **b** Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31

22. Is the earth old or new?

The question persists as to how we deal with the widespread scientific consensus that the earth is 4.5 billion years old and certainly appears to be old, even to nonscientists. Many solutions have been offered, including the following:

1. Though the earth appears old to most scientists, it is in fact young, and the scientists are simply mistaken.
2. The earth appears old because it was made mature, like Adam was.
3. The flood in Genesis 6 to 9 covered the earth universally, which compressed the geological layers and rearranged the topography so greatly that the earth appears to be old, especially when we assume geologic processes take long periods of time.
4. The earth is in fact old, and the days mentioned in Genesis 1 and 2 are not literal twenty-four-hour days but rather extended periods of time.
5. The earth may be, or likely is, old. As our examination of Genesis 1:1 revealed, God created the earth during an indefinite period of time before the six days of Genesis. That could in fact have been billions of years ago, which would explain the seemingly old age of the earth. Then, in six literal days God prepared the earth for the creation of mankind and on the sixth day made the first man and woman.

We find this last view quite compelling for five reasons. (1) It maintains a literal six-day interpretation of Genesis 1. (2) It defines key terms biblically rather than scientifically. The word translated “heavens” is better understood as “skies”; “earth” (planet) as “land” (Promised Land); and “without form and void” (primordial chaos) as “uninhabited.” (3) It teaches that the first humans appeared recently so that human life on the earth is young even if the earth is old. (4) It was the most common view of early Christians and did not fall out of favor until the rise of modern science. (5) It correlates with the findings of the scientific world from a biblical worldview.

12

QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW GOD MADE US

God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. -GENESIS 1:26-27

- 23. What is our relationship to God, others,
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- 24. What does it mean to be made in God's image? ..31
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23. What is our relationship to God, others, and creation?

Who do you think you are? Where do we even start to answer that enormous question? Let's start at the beginning. You are an image bearer of God.

Genesis, the book of beginnings, 1:26-27 reports, "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

The Trinitarian God, who lives in eternal friendship, created us to image him. God uniquely honors humanity in this way. Practically, this means that God made us to image, or reflect him, as a mirror does. He created us to reflect his goodness and glory in the world around us, like Moses, who radiated the glory of God after being in God's presence.^a

The question of identity is one that humans have struggled with since Satan's conversation with our first parents. Only by seeing ourselves rightly and biblically between God and the animals can we have both humility and dignity. There alone are we as God intended us to be. By understanding our position under God as created beings, we should remain humble toward and dependent upon God. By understanding our position of dominion over creation, we embrace our dignity as morally superior to animals.

^a Exodus 34:30

24. What does it mean to be made in God's image?

There are 12 vital truths revealed in the fact that we were made in the image and likeness of God. Taken together, they provide the essence of a biblical anthropology, or view of humanity from God's intention as our Creator, that has massive implications for virtually every discipline from anthropology to sociology, politics, and philosophy.

1. We were created by the Trinity.
2. We were created as persons by a personal God.^a
3. God originally made mankind without sin.^b
4. God blesses us.^c
5. Unlike the animals who were made according to their "own kind," we are made in the "image of God."
6. God gives commands to us because He made us as moral image bearers.
7. God made us curious adventurers and granted us permission to explore His creation through everything from a telescope to a microscope.
8. God created us to be creative and make culture.
9. God created us to be reproductive and have children.
10. God made us with meaningful work to do.^d
11. God created us as his image bearers solely for our benefit, not his own.
12. God created us to live coram Deo, "before the face of God" as friends. This Latin phrase was commonly used by theologians throughout church history to explain the Christian life. Practically speaking, we were created to live all of life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, according to the Word of God, by the power of God, to the glory of God. Nothing in our life is secular or separated from the sight of God because all of life is sacred.

a Gen. 2:7 **b** Gen. 1:31 **c** Gen. 1:28 **d** Gen. 2:15-17

REAL FAITH

25. What attributes do we share with God?

God's attributes are not merely attributed to him, but they are qualities inseparable from his very being. In every way that God exists, He exists without limit, that is, in perfection.

1. Holiness: God is absolutely separate from any evil.^a We mirror God when we hate sin and love holiness by repenting of our sin and fighting against sin in the world.
2. Love: God alone is perfectly good and loving, and He alone is the source for all goodness and love.^b We mirror God when we love God and others, starting with our families, friends, fellow believers, and extending love and dignity to strangers, even enemies.
3. Truth: God is the source of all truth. He is the embodiment of truth.^c We mirror God when we believe truth over lies and speak truthfully.
4. Righteousness: God does not conform to a standard of right and wrong, but right and wrong flow from his character.^d We mirror God as we fight oppression, injustice, and evil and pursue justice – particularly for the unborn, sick, poor, marginalized, defenseless, and abused.
5. Mercy: God does not give some people what they deserve, because He is loving and gracious.^e We mirror his mercy when we forgive those who sin against us and do good to those who do evil.
6. Beauty: God is beautiful, and his creation reflects his beauty. God made men and women in his image and likeness to also create works of beauty.^f We mirror God when we create and enjoy beauty in a holy way, such as by stewarding God's beautiful creation (including our own bodies and health), enjoying the arts, and even painting the walls of our home in thanks to God who gives us both color and eyes to see it.

a Ex. 3:5; Lev. 19:2; Ps. 5:4–6; 99:5; Isa. 6:3; 8:13; 57:15; Hab. 1:12–13; 1 Pet. 1:14–19; 1 John 1:5 **b** Ex. 34:7; Ps. 84:11; John 3:16; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 2:4–7; 1 John 4:8–16 **c** Num. 23:19; John 14:6; 17:17; 2 Cor. 1:20; Titus 1:2 **d** Gen. 18:25; Ex. 34:7; Deut. 32:4; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:11 **e** Ex. 34:6–7; Matt. 18:23–35; Rom. 12:8; Eph. 2:4–7; Titus 3:5 **f** Ps. 27:4; 50:2; Eccles. 3:11; Isa. 33:17

TOP 100 QUESTIONS

26. What attributes do we not share with God?

1. Omnipresence: God is everywhere at all times.^a
2. Omniscience: God has complete and perfect knowledge of all things, including the past, present, future, and every thing actual or potential.^b
3. Omnipotence: God is all-powerful and able to do all that He wills.^c
4. Immutability: God does not change in his essence, character, purpose, or knowledge but does respond to people and their prayers.^d
5. Eternality: God has no beginning or end and is not bound by time, though He is conscious of time and does work in time.^e
6. Sovereignty: God is supreme in rule and authority over all things,^f though He does allow human freedom.^g

a Deut. 31:6; Ps. 139:7–12; Prov. 15:3; Jer. 23:24; Col. 1:17 **b** Ps. 139:1–6; 147:5, Isa. 40:12–14; 46:10; Heb. 4:13 **c** Job 42:2; Ps. 147:5; Matt. 19:26; Eph. 3:20 **d** Num. 23:19, Ps. 102:27; Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:29; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17 **e** Ps. 90:2; 93:2; 102:12; Eph. 3:21 **f** 2 Sam. 7:28; 1 Chron. 29:10–13; Ps. 103:19; Rom. 8:28 **g** Gen. 50:21–22

27. What does it mean that we were made male and female?

In Genesis 1 God declared what He made “good,” except for the man and woman, which He declared “very good”. The only thing that we are told is not good before sin and the fall is Adam’s being alone.^a Even in a sinless state we were made for human contact, friendship, and love. Even though Adam had God above him and creation beneath him, he lacked an equal with whom to be in relationship, one who would enable him to function like the Trinity in covenantal partnership as “one”.

God’s answer to Adam’s lack was creating Eve as Adam’s wife and helper.^b It is important to note that the word helper does not denigrate Eve; in fact, God is also referred to as our helper.^c The first woman was taken from the side of the man, as she belongs alongside him in partnership, not behind him in denigration (chauvinism) or in front of him in domination (feminism).

While God is not engendered, He does reveal himself as Father and comes to us as the God-man Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Nonetheless, He makes both men and women in his image. Practically, this means that though they are in some ways different, the man and woman are equal in dignity, value, and worth by virtue of the fact that they are equally God’s image bearers.

a Gen. 2:18 **b** Gen. 2:19–25 **c** E.g., Ps. 10:14; 118:6–7; Heb. 13:6

28. How does God define marriage?

God created the covenant of marriage; thus, He alone defines what it is. His definition of one man and one woman, husband and wife for life, as one flesh, eliminates the alternatives such as bestiality, homosexuality, fornication, polygamy, adultery, and the like. At the first wedding God brought the woman to the man, gave her away as her Father, and officiated the ceremony as their pastor. Upon seeing his bride for the first time, Adam responded to her beauty by singing her a song. Adam's poetic words to his bride on their wedding day are the first recorded words of any human being.

Genesis 2:24 then explains how a man can overcome his state of being single that is not good. First, a man should leave his parents' care and be responsible for himself. Second, a man should marry a woman he loves and who loves him and loves the Lord. Third, their marriage should be intimate in every way including sexual consummation, and they should spend the rest of their life becoming "one" as the Trinitarian God is "one."⁴ Both Jesus and Paul repeat this process throughout the New Testament as the pattern God intends for marriage and sexuality.³

Also important is that, in the creation account, God establishes an order to the covenant of marriage and organizes the family with the husband as the head (singular headship) and husband and wife as the leaders (plural leadership).

^a Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7–8; Eph. 5:31

29. What is the soul?

The Bible speaks of the soul (*nepesh*). *Nepesh* refers to the person as a creation in relation to God rather than immortal, immaterial substance. The term is occasionally used for God. In the broadest sense, it connotes all biological life. Both humans and animals are called living *nepesh* in Genesis, which simply means "living creature." It is not that people possess souls but that we are souls.

The soul (*psuche*) for Paul throughout the New Testament is neither the immortal in a person nor only the immaterial part of the person.^a Instead, the soul in Paul's thinking refers to the whole person created by God with an inner life of motive, thought, feeling, and the like. At times, Paul also speaks of the soul negatively, as that part of our being that is stained and marred by sin or lived without God in view.^b

a Rom. 2:9; 11:3; 13:1 **b** 1 Cor. 2:14; 15:44

30. How do we take care of both the body and the soul?

It is our conviction that the Bible reveals the aspects of our being according to the dichotomist view – an inner life that is spiritual and an outer life that is physical. Furthermore, we believe that it is best to minister out of the personal view, where we are dealing with a whole person, not merely aspects of someone, to best serve them.

Practically, this means that if someone has a chemical or hormonal imbalance that would benefit from medication or needs an operation for cancer, they should not be derided for not having enough faith, as if every issue is solely a spiritual issue. Conversely, sometimes people are depressed and struggling for spiritual, not physical, reasons; in these cases, rather than giving them a pill, we need to help them grow in the gospel and lovingly limp with them as empathetic friends.

We must minister to people physically by considering their health and diet and exercise, emotionally with love and compassion, intellectually by answering their questions biblically, volitionally by appealing to their will for obedience, familiarly by dealing with issues related to their family of origin and current family dynamics, as well as socially by dealing with the social network and interpersonal relationships both in and out of the church.

This is all necessary because the aspects of our being are not isolated but instead impinge upon and affect one another because we are whole persons.

31. When does human life begin?

Because human beings are God's image bearers and bestowed with particular dignity, value, and worth, the question of when life begins is incredibly important. The importance of this question is amplified because of the widespread practice of abortion and the issue of whether it is in fact the taking of a human life and therefore murder.

Scientifically and medically, it is beyond debate that human life begins at conception. From the initial joining of sperm and egg, the tiny baby is alive, distinct from its mother, and living and growing as a human.⁵

Scripture confirms human life does begin at conception and an unborn baby is an image bearer of God. Psalm 51:5 says we are both image bearers and sinners from conception. God called both Isaiah and Jeremiah for prophetic ministry from their mothers' wombs.^a Furthermore, Luke 1:15 said that John the Baptizer "will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb". Perhaps the most extensive section of Scripture on human life in the womb is Psalm 139:13–16. Christians have always followed the teaching of the Old Testament Jews, that abortion of a preborn child and ending the life of a born child are both murderous sins.

The medical doctor, Luke, writes more of the New Testament than anyone. The Holy Spirit who knows life in the womb says the following through Dr. Luke who uses the same Greek word in every verse below:

...when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby [John the Baptizer] leaped in her womb.^b

...the baby [John the Baptizer] in my [Elizabeth] womb leaped for joy.^c

...you will find a baby [Jesus] wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.^d

TOP 100 QUESTIONS

...they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby [Jesus] lying in a manger.^e

·Now they were bringing even infants to him [Jesus] that he might touch them.^f

·He [Pharoah] dealt shrewdly with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants, so that they would not be kept alive.^g

Scripture uses the same word (*brephos*) for Elizabeth's unborn child (John the Baptizer), newborn baby Jesus, and also for the children brought to Jesus along with kids killed in the Old Testament. A child in the womb and a child singing and dancing around Jesus in worship are equally human beings who bear the image of God. Not to extend legal protections to preborn children because of age, size, or phase of development is a grievous discrimination and injustice akin to racism, sexism, and ageism.

a Isa. 49:1b; Jer. 1:5 **b** Luke 1:41 **c** Luke 1:44 **d** Luke 2:12 **e** Luke 2:16 **f** Luke 18:15 **g** Acts 7:19

32. Why do Christians oppose abortion?

Here is a summary of the eight core biblical truths that pertain to the issue of abortion:

1. God is the Creator and Author of human life.^a
2. God made humanity in His image and likeness, making human life unique and sacred.^b
3. God intends for human beings to fill the earth.^c
4. God confirmed that life begins at conception and declares that an unborn baby is a sacred life.^d
5. God knows us from our mother's womb.^e
6. God declares that when human life is taken without just cause (i.e., capital punishment, just war, self-defense), the sin of murder has been committed.^f
7. God is sovereign over the womb and can ultimately open and close it as He wills.^g
8. Children are a blessing from God to be provided and cared for by parents as well as extended family and the church, including those who are adopted as Jesus was.^h

a Gen. 1–2; Deut. 32:39; Ps. 139:13–16 **b** Gen. 1:27; James 3:9 **c** Gen. 1:28, 9:1 **d** Exod. 1:16–17, 21:22–25; Lev. 18:21; Jer. 7:31–32; Ezek. 16:20–21; Mic. 6:7; Matt. 2:16–18; Acts 7:19 **e** Jer. 1:5; Job 10:9–12, 31:15; Ps. 119:73; Eccles. 11:5 **f** Gen. 9:5; Exod. 20:13 **g** Gen. 20:18, 29:31, 30:22; 1 Sam. 1:5–6; Isa. 66:9; Luke 1:24–25 **h** Gen. 1:28a; Ps. 127:3–5, 128:3–4; Matt. 18:5–6; Mark 9:36–37, 10:16; 1 Tim. 5:8

33. How is the Bible the only real defense of human equality?

No major faith apart from Christianity mandates a deep commitment to the equality of all people. In every other religion certain individuals and classes rank higher than others on a ladder of spiritual attainment (karma, caste system, male dominance in Islam). The foundation of a dominant secular worldview— evolution—leads to the conclusion that some are more fit than others. Some deserve to be winners, and losers deserve to die.

During the 20th C. alone, some 170 million people were killed by other human beings.⁶ Of those, roughly 130 million died at the hands of those holding an atheistic and evolutionary ideology such as Hitler, Stalin, and Mao.⁷ In addition to this is the more than one billion people worldwide who were aborted and killed in the wombs of their mothers.

Comparatively, roughly 17 million people were killed by professing Christians in 20 **total** centuries of Christian history. No Christian today lauds them or calls them heroes apart from cases of self-defending preservation. Those proclaiming but possibly not professing Christian faith have killed only a tiny fraction of the number of people that atheists and followers of other religions have killed in one century.

Unlike human religions & philosophies, the Bible espouses equality:

·Do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great."^a

·Showing partiality is never good.^b

...there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free...^c

...show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ...^d

Christians across time and geography have followed Jesus' example of welcoming all peoples. Today, Jesus is worshiped among more races and cultures in more languages than anyone in history. There is simply no organization of any kind that has as much diversity as Christianity because the Bible teaches that we all equally bear God's image.

a Lev. 19:15 NIV **b** Prov. 28:21 NLT **c** Col. 3:11 ESV **d** James 2:1 ESV

34. How does Satan attack our identity?

When you speak of yourself, you use the first-person pronoun “I.” When someone else speaks to you, they use the second person pronoun “you”. When a physical being talks to us in the second person, we easily recognize that we are being spoken to by someone else. But when a spiritual being talks to us in the second person, we have to decide if we are hearing from God or the devil and his demons. Sometimes, when a demon does speak to us, we can easily overlook the fact that we are being spoken to by a demon because they are unseen.

Here are some examples of common attacks on the identity of believers by Satan which are counterfeit lies seeking to undermine the truth of who God says His people are:

- You are worthless.
- You are a failure.
- You are disgusting.
- You are not a real Christian.
- God is sick of you.
- If people knew what you were really like, they would all hate you.
- You are probably going to hell.
- You should kill yourself.

These sorts of things are demonic. Our Father does not say things like this to any of His kids. Tragically, some people overlook the demonic and think they are saying awful things to themselves. Even worse, some people confuse the demonic messages as a Word from God.

When you receive a message regarding your identity in the second person, you need to test it by the Word of God. Jesus did this. When Satan attacked Jesus' identity, He kept quoting Scripture because truth casts out lies and light casts out darkness. Jesus kept saying, “It is written...” and quoting Scripture. Jesus did not get defensive or coerced into an argument. Jesus let the battle be between the enemy of God and the Word of God because that's a battle that the Word always wins.

10

QUESTIONS ABOUT SIN

God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes. -ECCLESIASTES 7:29

35. What is the unseen realm and how does it affect us?	44
36. What is binary thinking?	45
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35. What is the unseen realm and how does it affect us?

You cannot believe God's Word or understand God's world unless you embrace the supernatural. From beginning to end, the Bible is about an unseen realm as real as the visible world. Faith is required to believe in beings as real as we are who live in a world as real as ours and travel between these worlds, impacting and affecting human history and our daily lives. As a result, everything is spiritual, and nothing is secular. What happens in the invisible world affects what happens in the visible world and vice versa. Furthermore, everyone is both a physical being with a body that is seen and a spiritual being with a soul that is unseen. Spiritual warfare is like gravity—unseen, it exists whether or not you believe in it, and it affects you every moment of every day.

Christianity has largely downplayed, if not dismissed (cessationism), this truth for hundreds of years. Other than Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians, many denominations and seminaries seeking to win the approval of worldly scholarship were too influenced by the rationalism, naturalism, and skepticism of modernity that corresponds in large part with the history of America to support the truly supernatural.

On the other hand is sensationalism which includes wild speculation not anchored to sound biblical principles. As a result, some Christians find talk of Satan and demons to be concerning as they have heard so much bad teaching.

Thankfully, there is a biblical option between the deficit of supernatural teaching in cessationism, and the deficit of Scriptural teaching in sensationalism promulgated by scholars like Dr. Michael Heiser.

36. What is binary thinking?

Christians think in terms of black and white (binary thinking). Non-Christians think in terms of shades of gray. Biblical thinking is binary thinking.^a

Biblical Christianity requires black-and-white thinking because it is dualistic. From beginning to end, the Bible is thoroughly categorical: Satan and God, demons and angels, sin and holiness, lies and truth, darkness and light, wolves and shepherds, non-Christians and Christians, damnation and salvation, hell and heaven. An exhaustive list could fill a book—but you get the point. The Bible makes clear distinctions and judgments between categories.

God Creates

angels
obedience
Spirit-filled
humility
forgiveness
worship
contentment
peace
unity
God-esteem
freedom
revival
life
church
kingdom

Satan Counterfeits

demons
rebellion
demon-possessed
pride
bitterness
idolatry
coveting
fear
division
self-esteem
slavery
riot
death
world
hell

^a Driscoll, M (2019). *Christians Might Be Crazy: Answering the Top 7 Objections to Christianity*. Dunham & Company.

37. Who is God's divine family?

Divine beings (angels and others) are also called the “sons of God”. Just as “sons of man” means human beings in Hebrew, so “sons of God” means divine beings. Here are some examples:

·Psalm 89:6 (NASB) – Who among the sons of the mighty is like the Lord...

·Job 1:6 – There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.

·Job 38:4-7 – “Where were you when I [God] laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

In addition to angels, however, there are also numerous other divine beings referred to throughout Scripture as “watcher”, “holy one”, “holy ones”, “host of heaven”, and more. When God’s divine family gathers together they are referred to as the “divine council”. It was the divine council that met with Jacob travelling down a ladder at Bethel (meaning house of God), and it was the divine council that Daniel, Isaiah, and John reported seeing gathered around Jesus on the throne in the unseen realm.

There is a long-standing error within biblical scholarship interpreting the Old Testament word “elohim” as one of the names for God. The problem is that the word is not only used of God, but also numerous other divine beings which leads to the faulty conclusion that the Old Testament is polytheistic with many gods.

38. What happened to Satan?

Much like a commanding military officer that seeks to incite a coup to overthrow a king and overtake a kingdom, one of the highest-ranking spirit beings, also called the “strong man” or “prince of demons,”^a became filled with pride.^b We now know him by various names such as Satan, the devil, the evil one, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit of the world, Belial, the enemy, the adversary, the serpent, the dragon, the tempter, the god of this world, and the counterfeit spirit.^c

Rather than glorifying God, he wanted to be glorified as god. Rather than obeying God, he wanted to be obeyed as god. Rather than living dependently upon God, he wanted to live independently as his own god. Rather than building the kingdom, he wanted to expand his own kingdom. The battlefield report from the unseen realm says, “Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was 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.”^d

a Matt. 4:8–9; 9:34; 12:24, 29; Mark 3:22–27; Luke 4:6; 11:21–22; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1 John 5:19 **b** Isa. 14:11–23; Ezek. 28:12 **c** Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thess. 2:18; 2 Thess. 2:9; 1 Tim. 1:20; 5:15; Eph. 4:27; 6:11; 1 Tim. 3:6–7; 2 Tim. 2:26; Eph. 6:16; 2 Thess. 3:3; Eph. 2:2; 2 Cor. 6:15; Luke 10:19; 1 Tim. 5:14; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9; 1 Thess. 3:5; 2 Cor. 4:4; 11:4 **d** Rev. 12:7–9

39. Why do we sin?

Genesis 3 is one of the most important chapters in all of the Bible. It explains the source of and solution for sin and death. The scene is the beautiful and perfect garden made by God for our first parents to live in together.

Why did Satan come to the Garden of Eden? Likely because it was the place of God's divine council meetings. Throughout the Bible, God has chosen a connecting point on earth between the seen and unseen realms. The first such location chosen by God for divine council meetings was Eden.

The entrance of Satan the serpent^a marks the beginning of chaos in creation. He is called "cunning," which means that he is shrewd, deceitful, and incredibly dangerous. Satan began by tempting Eve to mistrust God's Word by changing its meaning, just as he did when likewise, later tempting Jesus. Rather than rebuking Satan, Eve entertained his lies and was subsequently deceived by his crafty arguments.^b Satan boldly accused God of being a liar; he tempted their pride by declaring that if they disobeyed God, they could become His peers and gods themselves. Satan invited humanity, starting with a husband and wife, to join him and his demons in their coup attempt against God—he was now continuing on earth the same battle he had lost in heaven. Again, this attack was in the realm of the divine council meeting held in Eden where God and His two staff families—angelic and human—would meet. God intended from the beginning that His two families would work together in both the physical and spiritual realms and Satan sought to rule both realms. Sin has temporarily separated the two families until Jesus reunites them in His Kingdom.

a Rev. 12:9; 20:2 **b** John 8:42-47; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14

40. Why does Adam's sin implicate all of us?

According to Romans 5:12–21. Adam's sin affects us all in three ways:

(1) There is inherited sin from the original sin of Adam that causes the rest of humanity to be born into a sinful state or condition. The corrupted sin nature that we inherit from Adam begins in our mother's womb.^a This is what John Calvin referred to as “a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature.”^b

(2) There is imputed sin whereby Adam's sin and guilt are attributed, or reckoned, to us and our legal standing before and relationship with God is negated. Additionally, by the grace of God, the sinner's guilt and condemnation is imputed to Jesus Christ, who atones for sin on the cross and enables his righteousness to be imputed to the sinner as a Christian.

(3) Adam's sin is imparted to us so that we are conceived in a fallen state and, apart from the enabling grace of God, are unable to respond to the gospel or remedy our depravity. Simply put, we are each sinners by both nature and choice.^c

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul called Jesus the “last Adam” because he is the remedy for sin and the redeemer of sinners, whereas the first Adam was the source of sinner and the downfall of sinners. The first Adam died as a sinner; the last Adam died for sinners.

a Ps. 51:5; 58:3 **b** John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 2.1.8.39 **c** Ps. 51:5; 58:3; Isa. 53:6; 64:6; Rom. 3:23, 1 John 1:8

41. What is sin?

Sin is so nefarious, complex, and far-reaching that it is difficult to succinctly define. The Bible uses a constellation of images to explain sin. To help you understand sin, in general, and your sin, in particular, we will examine eight aspects of sin that the Old Testament teaches us.

1. Sin is first a relational breach. This is painfully clear in Genesis 2–3 where our first parents are separated from God and one another; hide from God and one another, fear God, blame one another, and seek to cover their sin and shame while living apart from God.
2. Sin is social destruction because shalom has been vandalized.
3. Sin is a covenantal rebellion against God and his authority.
4. Sin is a legal transgression causing guilt that necessitates punishment.
5. Sin causes ritual uncleanness, pollution, and filth, marked by the use of words such as “filth,” “defiled,” “unclean,” and “whore.”^a
6. Sin includes emotional pain such as shame and disgrace.^b
7. Sin accumulates, piling up from one generation to the next.^c
8. Sin causes the finality of death.^d

The New Testament also speaks of sin in many ways, though four words are used most often:

1. *Hamartia*: wrongdoing, or missing the mark
2. *Paraptoma*: to trespass
3. *Parabasis*: disobedience, transgression
4. *Asebeias*: ungodliness and godlessness

a Gen. 34:5; Lev. 19:31; 21:14; Num. 5:27; 1 Chron. 5:1; Ps. 106:39; Prov. 30:11–12; Lam. 4:14; Ezek.14:11 **b** E.g., Jer. 6:15; Ezek. 36:16 **c** E.g., Gen. 15:16; Lev. 18:24–28; Deut. 9:4–8 **d** E.g., Genesis 5; Deuteronomy 30

42. Are all sins equal?

Some sinners seek to minimize their sin by comparing their sins to others' so that theirs appear minor and therefore somehow less sinful. Regarding degrees of sin, on one hand, God sees people in the categories of perfection and imperfection^a and considers any sin a violation of the entirety of his law.^b One example is Jesus' teaching that people cannot excuse lust because it is not as bad as adultery.^c Jesus doesn't say they are equal but that both are sin even though the Law of Moses only forbids adultery of the hands and not the heart. Legalists always look for creative ways to excuse their sin, but sinners must not compare themselves or their sin to others. They must rather compare themselves to Jesus and see all of their sin without diminishing any of it.

On the other hand, sins have degrees of consequence. Jesus told Pontius Pilate, "He who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."^d The Bible speaks of the sin that leads to death^e, more severe judgment^f, stricter judgment for teachers^g, greater punishment^h, greater consequences for intentional sin than unintentional sinⁱ, greater punishment for child abusers^j, greater punishment for a man who does not feed his family than for an infidel^k, and twice the judgment for self-righteous religious people than for "sinners."^m

This principle makes practical sense, seeing that, for example, it would be a sin for one man to lust after another man's wife, but the damage would be far greater if he actually seduced her and committed adultery with her. While shopping in the store, we would also prefer that someone covet our parked car rather than stealing it and forcing us to walk home. Sins are equally sinful, but their pains are not equally painful.

a Matt. 5:48 **b** James 2:10 **c** Matt. 5:27–28 **d** John 19:11 **e** 1 John 5:16–18 **f** Luke 12:47–48 **g** James 3:1 **h** Matt. 11:20–24 **i** Lev. 4:1–35; 5:15–19; Num. 15:22–30; Ezek. 45:20; Luke 12:48 **j** Matt. 18:6 **k** 1 Tim. 5:8 **m** Matt. 10:15; 23:15

43. What is total depravity?

Human depravity is an undeniable reality and explains why wars are fought, lawsuits are filed, arguments are had, doors are locked, and guns are loaded. Even atheists know humans are not as they should be. While people are not utterly depraved and as evil as they could be, all people are totally depraved in that motive, word, deed, and thought is affected, stained, and marred by sin. This includes the mind, will, emotions, heart, conscience, and physical body.^a

The totality of a person is pervasively affected by sin, and there is no aspect of their being not negatively impacted by sin. In this way, sin in our life is like sewage dropped into a glass of drinking water in that it infects and affects all of the water leaving none of it pure and clean.

Practically, we cannot fully trust any single aspect of our being (e.g., mind or emotions) because each is tainted and marred by sin and therefore not pure or objective. Subsequently, we need God's Spirit, God's Word, and God's people to help us see truly and live wisely.

^a Eph. 4:18, Rom. 6:16–17, Titus 3:3, Jer. 17:9, Titus 1:15, Rom. 8:10

44. What is the problem of evil?

Evil can be very hard to understand. Where does it come from? Why does it exist? How does it relate to God?

Since the early days of the church Christians have referred to evil as a privation. Evil is not so much a thing in itself but rather the corruption of the good, like cancer that preys on the host of a human body. Good can exist without evil, but evil cannot exist without good.

Surveying all of the evil, injustice, and suffering in the world, Habakkuk brought this question to God: “You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?”^a

Habakkuk is raising “the problem of evil”. Here’s the question: If God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good, why is there suffering and evil? This is one of the most practical, painful, and problematic questions that every generation asks about God. If this were a multiple-choice test, there are six possible answers.

1. There is no God.
2. God is not all-powerful.
3. God is not all-knowing.
4. God is not all-good.
5. There is no suffering and evil.
6. God is not done yet, so live by faith, not sight.

Biblical Christianity concludes that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good and that our good God has a problem with evil. Therefore, suffering and evil are not the way that God is, the way that God made the world, or the way that the world will be when Jesus returns and unveils His Kingdom. Until then, God reminds us that “the righteous shall live by his faith.”^b

a Habakkuk 1:3 **b** Habakkuk 2:4 (ESV)

3

QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

*The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him,
and he makes known to them his covenant.*

-PSALM 25:14

45. What is a covenant?..... 55
46. What does it mean that God is love?..... 56
47. What is the new covenant?..... 57

45. What is a covenant?

At the most basic level, a covenant is an agreement between parties.^a Various covenants are made between people, between people and God, and between God and people. Personally, Job made a covenant with his eyes not to look at women lustfully.^b Relationally, deep brotherly love is covenantal^c, as is marriage.^d Nationally, the elders of Israel made a covenant with King David.^e Benefits of covenants can include protection from an enemy^f, peace^g, financial blessing^h, and obtaining a homeland.ⁱ God also makes five major covenants in the Bible with the following:⁸

1. Noah and his family^j [
2. Abraham and his descendants^k
3. Moses and the Israelites^m
4. David and the kingdom of Israelⁿ
5. The new covenant of Jesus and the church^o

When the Bible speaks of God's covenant with His people, it is explaining how our relationship with God is made by His provision and exists by His terms. Through covenant with God, we enjoy a relationship with Him that is akin to marriage and includes protection from Satan our enemy, peace with God though we declared war on Him through sin, material provision in this life and the life to come, and a coming perfect kingdom as our home where Jesus will forever rule over all as our gracious covenant king.

a Gen. 26:28; Dan. 11:6 **b** Job 31:1 **c** 1 Sam. 18:3 **d** Prov. 2:16–17; Mal. 2:14

e 2 Sam. 5:3 **f** Gen. 26:28–29; 31:50–52; 1 Kings 15:18–19 **g** Josh. 9:15–16 **h** 1 Kings 5:6–11 **i** Gen. 23:14–16 **j** Gen. 6:18; 9:8–17 **k** Gen. 12:1–3; 15:18; 17:1–14; 22:16–18 **m** Ex. 3:4–10; 6:7; 19:5–6; 24:8 **n** 2 Sam. 7:8–19; Ps. 89:3 **o** Matt. 16:17–19; 26:28; Luke 22:20

46. What does it mean that God is love?

Throughout the Old Testament, covenant love is referred to in various terms, but the main one is *hesed* especially in the Psalms. The word *hesed* in essence summarizes the entire history of God's covenantal relationship with Israel. *Hesed* is God's lovingkindness – the consistent, ever-faithful, relentless, constantly pursuing, lavish, extravagant, unrestrained, one-way love of God. It is often translated as covenant love, lovingkindness, mercy, steadfast love, loyal love, devotion, commitment, or reliability.

Hesed is typically translated “love” and sometimes as “mercy.”^a However, *hesed* has a much narrower definition than the English term love conveys. *Hesed* refers to a sort of love that has been promised and is owed—covenant love—as in Hosea 11:1: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.”

Covenant love is the love God promised to His people, and which they, in turn, were to respond in kind, loving God with all their hearts, minds, and strength. *Hesed* does not suggest some kind of generic love of everyone. Rabbi Kamsler suggests that the best English word to use as a translation for *hesed* is loyalty, which refers to God's covenant loyalty because of His love for His people.⁹ Perhaps the children's *Jesus Storybook Bible* says it best: “God loves us with a never-stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.”¹⁰

^a Ps. 23:6

47. What is the new covenant?

Unlike previous covenants, the new covenant is God not merely giving us a human mediator but the second member of the Trinity Himself coming into human history as the man Jesus Christ. He also places the Holy Spirit in us to make us into a temple where worship occurs. The Spirit makes them new creations as the dawning and firstfruits of the finality of the new creation that culminate with Jesus' second coming. The Spirit's work includes transfiguring us into Jesus' image bearers, as Moses was.^a

When God speaks of His covenant relationship with His people throughout the Bible, the language is often that of marriage. God is like a groom. God's people are like a bride that He loves and is devoted to. In response, God desires that His people respond to His loving devotion with fidelity.

Some people wonder why God's people are forbidden to also worship other gods and participate in other religious and spiritual practices. The reason is simply because God sees such behavior as spiritual adultery. In the same way that a devoted husband does not want to have an open relationship with his wife where she can include others in intimate relations, so too God desires a faithfully devoted loving covenant relationship. For this reason, Christians need to be careful that they do not see God's requirements of fidelity as intolerant or narrow as the culture would decree. Instead, we need to look at our covenant with God in the most loving and serious of terms and be grateful that God wants our loving union to flourish by being fully devoted to one another.

^a Hebrews 8:6-9:28

8

QUESTIONS ABOUT JESUS

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. -JOHN 1:14

- 48. How did people know Jesus was coming?59
- 49. Where was Jesus born? 60
- 50. Why did Jesus come to earth? 61
- 51. Was Jesus fully God?62
- 52. Was Jesus fully human? 63
- 53. How could Jesus be both fully God and
fully man?64
- 54. What can we learn from Jesus' incarnation? 65
- 55. What was Jesus' relationship with the Holy
Spirit?66

48. How did people know Jesus was coming?

Because God is sovereign over the future, He alone is capable of giving prophetic insight into the future. In great mercy, He did this for His people in the Old Testament. He detailed for them who was coming to save them, how He would come, where He would come, when He would come, and why He would come, so that they would anticipate the incarnation and salvation of Jesus Christ.

After Adam and Eve sinned, God prophesied to them that the Messiah (Jesus) would be born of a woman; He makes no reference to a father. This notable omission makes one wonder and points toward his virgin birth. This prophecy was given by God Himself and was the first time the gospel was preached: "I will put enmity between you [the Serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."^a

Around 700 BC, Isaiah prophesied exactly how Jesus would come into human history: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."^b The promise that Jesus' mother would be a virgin who conceived by a miracle did, in fact, come true.^c Jesus' mother, Mary, was a godly young woman and chaste virgin who conceived by the miraculous power of God the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, Jesus, a name that means "he saves his people from their sins," came as "Immanuel," which means, "God is with us." God became a man at the incarnation of Jesus. Matthew 1:22–23 reveals that Isaiah's prophecy came true: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)."

a Gen. 3:15 **b** Isa. 7:14 **c** E.g., Matt. 1:18–23

49. Where was Jesus born?

Concerning Jesus' birthplace, in roughly 700 BC, Micah prophesied that Jesus would be born in the town of Bethlehem, saying, "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."^a D. A. Carson says that this verse reveals that the incarnation of Jesus was the entrance of the eternal God: "The Hebrew behind from ancient means from 'the remotest times,' 'from time immemorial'...when used with reference to some historical event; when it is used of God, who existed before creation, 'everlasting' is an appropriate translation (e.g. Ps. 90:2)."¹¹

This prophecy was fulfilled in Luke 2:1–7. Caesar Augustus had called for a census to be taken, which required that every family register in their hometown. Jesus' adoptive father, Joseph, was thus required to return to Bethlehem because he was a descendant of the family line of David. In God's providence, this census was required right when Mary was pregnant; she journeyed with her husband from their home in Nazareth to Bethlehem so that Jesus was born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of Micah's prophecy.

^a Mic. 5:2

50. Why did Jesus come to earth?

Isaiah prophesies in 700 BC about why Jesus would become incarnate—He is God’s arm of salvation reaching down to save sinners.^a Isaiah also says that Jesus would come from humble circumstances and suffer great sorrow and grief by men in order to deal with the human sin problem through His death, burial in a rich man’s tomb, and resurrection.^b The purpose of Jesus’ incarnation was fulfilled when, just as promised, He suffered and died in the place of sinners, though He Himself was sinless, was buried in a rich man’s tomb, and rose from death to make righteous the unrighteous.^c

a Isa. 53:1–12 **b** Isa. 52:13–53:12 **c** Matt. 27:38, 57–60; Luke 23–24; Acts 2:25–32

51. Was Jesus fully God?

Yes.

Demons said Jesus was God. Even demons called Jesus “the Holy One of God”^a and “the Son of God.”^b

Jesus said He was God. Jesus’ claim to be God is without precedent or peer, as no founder of any major world religion has ever said He was God. Yet, Jesus clearly, repeatedly, and emphatically said He was God in a variety of ways. This is why the people who disbelieved His claim kept seeking to put him to death. The eventual murder of Jesus for claiming to be God is recorded in Matthew 26:63–65.

Jesus is given the names of God. When picking a title for himself, Jesus was apparently most fond of “Son of Man.”^c

Jesus’ miracles confirm His claim to be God. The nearly forty miracles that Jesus performed throughout the New Testament demonstrate God is with Jesus.^d

People worshiped Jesus as God. The Bible is emphatically clear that only God is to be worshiped.^e To worship anyone other than God is both idolatry and blasphemy—two sins that the Bible abhors from beginning to end with the strongest condemnations. Jesus Himself repeats the command to worship God only when the Devil tempts Jesus to worship him.

a Mark 1:24; Luke 4:33–34 **b** Luke 4:40–41 **c** Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62–64; Luke 21:27; 22:69 **d** John 10:36–38; John 3:2; 5:36; 10:25, 32, 37–38; Acts 2:22; 10:38 **e** Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Matt. 4:10; Acts 10:25–26

52. Was Jesus fully human?

The Bible affirms the humanity of Jesus Christ in a variety of ways. Jesus had a human name—Jesus (meaning “Yah-weh saves”) Christ (meaning “anointed one”)—and a human genealogy.^a He was born of a woman^b, had brothers and sisters^c, and was racially Jewish.^d Jesus grew physically, spiritually, mentally, and socially^e, learned^f, experienced fatigue^g, slept^h, grew hungryⁱ and thirsty^j, worked as a craftsman^k, had male and female friends he loved^m, gave encouraging complimentsⁿ, loved children^o, celebrated holidays^p, went to parties^q, loved his mom^r, prayed^s, worshiped^t, and obeyed God the Father.^u

Furthermore, not only did Jesus have a physical body^v, but He also suffered and died “in the flesh.”^w In addition to His body, Jesus also had a human spirit.^x Jesus was emotional as well, for the Bible notes that Jesus experienced grief^y, had compassion^z, was stressed^{a2}, was astonished^{b2}, was happy^{c2} and told jokes^{d2}, and even wept.^{e2}

Taken together, these are clearly the ways we speak of human beings and reveal that Jesus was, as Jesus and other Scriptures state, a man.^{f2}

a Matt. 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38 **b** Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 2:7; Gal. 4:4 **c** Matt. 13:55 **d** John 4:9 **e** Luke 2:42, 52; 3:23 **f** Matt. 4:12; Mark 11:13–14; Luke 2:40, 52 **g** Matt. 8:24; Mark 4:38; Luke 8:23–24; John 4:7 **h** Mark 4:36–41 **i** Matt. 4:2; Mark 11:12; Luke 4:2 **j** John 4:7; 19:18 **k** Mark 6:3 **m** John 11:3–5 **n** Mark 12:41–44 **o** Matt. 19:13–15 **p** Luke 2:4 **q** Matt. 11:19 **r** John 19:26–27 **s** Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; 14:32–42; John 17 **t** Luke 4:16 **u** John 5:30; 6:38; 8:28–29, 54; 10:17–18 **v** Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:7–8; Heb. 2:14; 1 John 4:2–3 **w** Rom. 8:3; Eph. 2:15–16; Col. 1:21–22; Heb. 2:14; 10:19–20; 1 Pet. 2:24 **x** John 12:27; 13:21; 19:30 **y** Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:41 **z** Matt. 9:36; Mark 1:41; Luke 7:13 **a2** John 13:21 **b2** Mark 6:6; Luke 7:9 **c2** Luke 10:21–24; John 15:11; 17:13; Heb. 12:2, 22 **d2** Matt. 7:6; 23:24; Mark 4:21 **e2** John 11:34–35 **f2** John 8:40; Acts 17:31; 1 Tim. 2:5

53. How could Jesus be both fully God and fully man?

Jesus did not lose His divine attributes; He simply chose not to use them at certain times. In becoming a human being, Jesus did not lose anything but rather added humanity to His divinity.¹² Therefore, Jesus Christ retained all of His divine attributes. He did not, however, avail Himself of the continual use of His divine attributes.

Furthermore, Jesus did not use His divine characteristics (e.g., all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present) in a way to benefit Himself. When suffering, Jesus suffered as we do; when learning, Jesus learned as we do; and when tempted, Jesus faced temptation as we do. In no way did Jesus cheat to make His life easier by using divine attributes that we do not possess. Jesus' life was lived as fully human in that He lived it by the power of the Holy Spirit.¹³

In this regard, Jesus was not like Clark Kent. Superman had special powers that other people did not have, but he lived in disguise as Clark Kent, pretending to be like the rest of us when, in fact, He was not. Jesus is not like that. Jesus was not pretending to be a humble, homeless, hated peasant who was faking His suffering, learning, and tempting. When the Bible said Jesus was hungry, tired, wept, bled, and died, it was in His full humanity without an ounce of fakery.^a

^a Hebrews 2:17-18

54. What can we learn from Jesus' incarnation?

Jesus' incarnation is our missional model. Roughly forty times in John's Gospel Jesus declares that the Father sent him. Indeed, the incarnation is the sending of the second member of the Trinity into human history as a missionary. This is what Jesus meant when he taught that Christians would be sent as missionaries like him into cultures by the power of the Holy Spirit: "'As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"^a

From the missional life of Jesus, we learn five great missional truths for our own life.

1. An incarnational missional life is contextual and crosses cultural barriers.
2. An incarnational missional life is evangelistic.^b
3. An incarnational missional life is humble.
4. An incarnational missional life is one devoted to the church.^c
5. An incarnational missional life is global.^d

a John 20:21-22 **b** Luke 19:10 **c** 2 Corinthians 8-9 **d** Matt. 15:21-28; 8:5-13; Mark 5:1-20; 7:31-37; John 4:1-42; Luke 2:10, 32; John 1:29; Mark 11:17; Matt. 5:13-14; Matt. 21:43; Luke 13:28-29; John 1:9, 29; 3:16-17, 19; 4:42; 6:33; 12:47; 16:8; 17:21

55. What was Jesus' relationship with the Holy Spirit?

In the book *Spirit-Filled Jesus*, I write in detail about the personal relationship between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and how we can live by His power as Jesus did. The empowerment of Jesus by God the Holy Spirit is repeatedly stressed in the Gospel of Luke which precedes Acts in showing the Spirit-filled life of Christ and then Christians as the two-part history of our faith. Here are a few examples:

(1) Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and given the title “Christ,” which means anointed by the Holy Spirit.^a (2) Jesus’ relative Elizabeth was “filled with the Holy Spirit” when greeting Jesus’ pregnant mother Mary, and her husband Zechariah went on to prophesy in the Spirit that their son John was appointed by God to prepare the way for Jesus.^b (3) An angel revealed to Mary that she would give birth to Jesus because “the Holy Spirit will come upon you.”^c (4) Once born, Jesus was dedicated to the Lord in the temple according to the demands of the law by Simeon; “the Holy Spirit was upon [Simeon]” and the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until seeing Jesus Christ.^d (5) Simeon was “in the Spirit” when he prophesied about Jesus’ ministry to Jews and Gentiles.^e (6) John prophesied in the Spirit that one day Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit.^f (7) The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at His own baptism.^g (8) Jesus was “full of the Holy Spirit.”^h (9) Jesus was “led by the Spirit.”ⁱ (10) Jesus came “in the power of the Spirit.”^j (11) After reading Isaiah 61:1-2, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,” Jesus declared, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”^k (12) Jesus “rejoiced in the Holy Spirit.”^m

a Luke 1:2 **b** Luke 1:41-43, 67, 76 **c** Luke 1:35-37 **d** Luke 2:25-27 **e** Luke 2:27-34 **f** Matt. 3:11; Mar. 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:34 **g** Matt. 3:16; John 1:32-33 **h** Luke 4:1-2 **i** Luke 4:1-2 **j** Luke 4:14 **k** Luke 4:14-21 **m** Luke 10:21

10

QUESTIONS ABOUT JESUS' DEATH

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. -ROMANS 5:8

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56. What is crucifixion?

The pain of crucifixion is so horrendous that a word was invented to explain it—excruciating—which literally means “from the cross.” The victim was affixed to the cross with either ropes or nails. The pain of crucifixion is due in part to the fact that it is a prolonged and agonizing death by asphyxiation. Crucified people could hang on the cross for anywhere from three to four hours or for as long as nine days, passing in and out of consciousness as their lungs struggled to breathe while laboring under the weight of their body.

In an effort to end the torment, it was not uncommon for those being crucified to slump on the cross to empty their lungs of air and thereby hasten their death. Further, there are debated archaeological reports that suggest sometimes seats were placed underneath the buttocks of those being crucified to prevent slumping, thereby ensuring a lengthy and most painful death.

None of this was done in dignified privacy, but rather in open, public places at eye level. It would be like nailing a bloodied, naked man above the front entrance to your local mall. Crowds would gather around the victims to mock them as they sweated in the sun, bled, and became incontinent from the pain.

Once dead, some victims were not given a decent burial but rather left on the cross for vultures to pick apart from above while dogs chewed on the bones that fell to the ground, even occasionally taking a hand or foot home as a chew toy, according to ancient reports.¹⁴ Whatever remained of the victim would eventually be thrown in the garbage and taken to the dump unless the family buried it. Furthermore, the wooden crosses and nails were considered more valuable than the bodies of the deceased, and those resources were kept and reused.

57. What was Jesus' journey to the cross?

In the days leading up to his death, Jesus was a young man in his early thirties. He was in good health due to his job as a carpenter and his constant walking of many miles as an itinerant minister. Jesus began speaking openly of his impending death, including at the Passover meal he ate with his friends as the Last Supper. He showed that the Passover meal, which God's people had been eating annually, found its ultimate fulfillment in him.

During the Last Supper, Satan entered one of Jesus' disciples, Judas, who had been stealing money from Jesus' ministry fund for some time and had agreed to hand him over to the authorities to be crucified. After Judas left the meal to lead the soldiers to Jesus, Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemane, where he spent a sleepless night in the agony of prayer. The Bible records that he sweat drops of blood.

Judas arrived with the soldiers and betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Jesus was then arrested and forced to walk through a series of false trials where contradicting false witnesses were brought forward to offer false testimony. He was then stripped in great shame, and the Bible simply says that they had him scourged.

Scourging itself was such a painful event that many people died from it without even making it to their cross. Jesus' hands would have been chained above His head to expose His back and legs to an executioner's whip called a cat-o'-nine tails or a flagrum. Two men, one on each side, took turns whipping the victim. The whip was a series of long leather straps. At the end of some of the straps were heavy balls of metal intended to tenderize the body of a victim, like a chef tenderizes a steak by beating it. Some of the straps had hooks made of glass, metal, or bone that would have sunk deeply into the shoulders, back, buttocks,

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and legs of the victim. Once the hooks had lodged into the tenderized flesh, the executioner would rip the skin, muscle, tendons, and even bones off the victim. The victim's skin and muscles would hang off the body like ribbons as the hooks dissected the skin to the nerve layers.

Jesus' bare back and shoulders, though bloodied and traumatized, were then forced to carry his roughly hewn wooden cross to his place of crucifixion. If Jesus carried the entire cross, it would have weighed a few hundred pounds, and many think it is more likely he carried just the crossbar (patibulum), which would have been about one hundred pounds.

Understandably unable to continue carrying His cross on the roughly one-mile journey to His execution, a man named Simon of Cyrene was appointed to carry Jesus' cross. Upon arriving at His place of crucifixion, they pulled Jesus' beard out—an act of ultimate disrespect in ancient cultures—spat on Him and mocked Him in front of His family and friends.

Jesus the carpenter, who had driven many nails into wood with his own hands, then had five-to seven-inch rough metal spikes driven into the most sensitive nerve centers on the human body, through His hands and feet. Jesus was nailed to His wooden cross. His body would have twitched involuntarily, writhing in agony.

58. What did Jesus endure on the cross?

In mockery, a sign was posted above Jesus that said, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”¹⁵

At this point during a crucifixion, the victims labored to breathe as their bodies went into shock. Naked and embarrassed, the victims would often use their remaining strength to seek revenge on the crowd of mockers who had gathered to jeer them. They would curse at their tormentors while urinating and spitting on them. Some victims would become so overwhelmed with pain that they would become incontinent and a pool of sweat, blood, urine, and feces would gather at the base of their cross.

Crucifixion usually kills by asphyxiation in addition to other factors—the heart is deeply stressed, the body is traumatized, the muscles are devastated, and the blood loss is severe. Doctors have thought that Jesus likely had a chest contusion and possibly a bruised heart from falling with the cross on top of Him, which caused an aneurysm.¹⁶ Subsequently, Jesus’ heart would have been unable to pump enough blood and His lungs would have filled up with carbon monoxide. Jesus not only lived through all of this, but He even spoke lucidly and clearly with enough volume to be heard by those present.

Jesus hung on the cross for at least six hours—from the third hour to the ninth hour, when the darkness ended.¹⁷ In accordance with the promise of Scripture, Jesus died quickly enough that His legs were not broken to speed up the process, as was customary.¹⁸

To ensure Jesus was dead, a professional executioner ran a spear through His side, which punctured His heart sac, and water and blood flowed from His side. This is further evidence that Jesus died of a heart attack; the sac around the heart filled with water until the pressure caused Jesus’ heart to stop beating. Thus, Jesus possibly died with both a literal and metaphorical broken heart.

59. What did Jesus say on the cross?

From the cross Jesus announced forgiveness for those who crucified Him, assured the criminal crucified next to Him that they would be together in paradise, commended His mother to John, cried of forsakenness showing His spiritual death and separation from the Father, and expressed his agonized thirst.¹⁹

At last Jesus said in a loud voice of triumph, "It is finished."²⁰ At this moment, the atonement for sin was made and the holiness, righteousness, justice, and wrath of the triune God were satisfied in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Jesus then said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"²¹ Jesus reserved His final breath from the cross to shout his triumphant victory to the world by confirming that He had been restored to God the Father after atoning for human sin.

60. Why did Jesus have to die?

The Old Testament often used the theme of blood to prepare people for the coming of Jesus to die for our sins. In fact, it was God who shed the first blood in human history in response to sin. In Genesis 3 when our first parents, Adam and Eve, committed the original human sin, it was God who slaughtered an animal to make clothes to cover their nakedness. From then on, blood sacrifices were the standard way to worship God.²²

This theme of blood, like every theme of Scripture, finds its fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ into human history. Early in Jesus' life, his cousin John saw Jesus coming and declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"²³ This, of course, would be accomplished when Jesus was slaughtered on the cross where his blood flowed freely.

The results of Jesus' shed blood are staggering. 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."

In the Bible the word covenant appears more than three hundred times and is therefore essential to our rightly understanding how God relates to us. In the new covenant, all of the prophecies, promises, foreshadowing, and longing of the old covenant are fulfilled. In the new covenant it is Jesus Christ who serves as our covenant head.²⁴ Jesus went to the cross to shed His blood in our place for our sins so that we can have a new covenant relationship with Him.

61. What is God's wrath?

God's anger at sin and hatred of sinners causes him to pour out His wrath on unrepentant sinners. This doctrine is not as popular among professing Christians in our day as it was in past times, but the fact remains that in the Old Testament alone nearly twenty words are used for God's wrath, which is spoken of roughly six hundred times. The wrath of God also appears roughly twenty-five times in the New Testament.²⁵ Not only does God the Father pour out wrath upon unrepentant sinners, but so does Jesus Christ.²⁶

God's wrath is both active and passive. When people think of God's wrath, they generally think of God's active wrath, where people are swiftly punished for their sin with something like a lightning bolt from heaven. God can and does enact His active wrath upon occasion.²⁷ Still, He seems to also frequently work through His subtler passive wrath. Passive wrath occurs when God simply hands us over to our evil desires and allows us to do whatever we want.²⁸

The truth is that everyone but the sinless Jesus merits the active wrath of God. None of us deserves love, grace, or mercy from God. Demons and sinful people who fail to repent will have God's wrath burning against them forever.²⁹ The place of God's unending active wrath is hell.

However, God's active wrath is diverted from some people because of the mercy of God. This is made possible because on the cross Jesus substituted Himself in our place for our sins and took God's wrath for us.

62. What is justification?

Like us, God deserves justice. Because of our sinful condition and ensuing sinful actions, though, our impending day in God's proverbial courtroom seems utterly hopeless for anything other than a guilty verdict and a sentence to eternity in the torments of hell. In light of our obvious guilt, if God were to declare us anything but guilty, he would cease to be a just and good God. God Himself says that he "will not acquit the wicked."³⁰

Guilty sinners would likely prefer that God simply overlook their offenses against him. To do so, however, would by definition render God unjust, unholy, and unrighteous, which is impossible because he is always just, holy, and righteous.

Clearly, God does not owe us anything. If we were to spend forever in the torments of hell as guilty and condemned sinners, we would have simply gotten what we deserved.

Thankfully, God is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, loving, faithful, and willing to forgive.³¹ Thus, the dilemma is this: how could God justify us and remain just?

The answer is the doctrine of justification: guilty sinners can be declared righteous before God by grace alone through faith alone because of the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. Justification is mentioned more than two hundred times in various ways throughout the New Testament alone.

To be justified means to trust only in the person and work of Jesus and no one and nothing else as the object of our faith, righteousness, and justification before God.³²

63. What is gift righteousness?

Because we were created for righteousness, people continue to yearn for righteousness. However, we sinfully pursue it through self-righteousness.³³ Self-righteousness exists in both irreligious and religious forms.

On the cross what Martin Luther liked to call the “great exchange” occurred. Jesus took our sin and gave us his righteousness. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, “For our sake he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Unlike the self-righteousness of religion, gift righteousness is not something we bring to God to impress Him, but rather something that God does in us and we receive as a gift by personal faith in Him alone. It gives us a new identity as child of God, a new nature through new birth, a new power which is the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, and a new community, the church. The goal and final outcome of His working will be the full Christ-like righteousness of the people of God individually and as a Spirit-unified community.

The gifted righteousness of Jesus is imparted to us at the time of faith, simultaneous with our justification. Not only does God give us family status, but He also gives us new power and a new heart through the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is what theologians call regeneration. Therefore, we not only have a new status by virtue of being justified, but we also have a new heart from which new desires for holiness flow and a new power through God the Holy Spirit to live like, for, and with Jesus.

64. How did Jesus pay our debt to God?

Most people are well aware of their financial debt to lenders. What most people are not nearly as aware of is their financial debt to the Lord. We need a ransom, which is a repayment sufficient enough to erase our debt to God the Father. The problem, though, is that our sins are against a completely holy and perfect God and therefore require a perfect payment. Since all human beings are sinful, we cannot be a ransom for another. There is no way that any other sinful human can ever repay God for our spiritual debt.^a

Like the people in Moses' day, we sinners are completely unable to free ourselves from slavery. As slaves we need to be redeemed from our slavery. Redemption is synonymous with being liberated, freed, or rescued from bondage and slavery to a person or thing. The word and its derivatives (e.g., redeemer, redeem) appear roughly 150 times in the English Bible, with only roughly twenty occurrences in the New Testament.

Sadly, it has been commonly taught by some Christian theologians since the early days of the church (e.g., Origen) that the concept of redemption was adopted from the pagan slave market where a price was paid to free a slave. This led to wild speculation that Jesus died to pay off Satan, which is preposterous because Jesus owes Satan nothing.

The prototype for redemption is not the pagan slave market but rather the exodus. There, God liberated His people but in no way paid off the satanic pharaoh. God simply crushed him.^b

a Psalm 49:7–8, Mark 10:45 **b** Exodus 6:6

65. Who did Jesus die for?

The question of who Jesus died for has generated some of the most heated and varied answers in church history. There are three options within the bounds of evangelical orthodoxy:

1. Some Christians believe that Jesus died for the sins of all people. This position is commonly referred to as Arminianism (after James Arminius), Wesleyanism (after John Wesley), or unlimited atonement. Arminians appeal to those Scriptures that speak of Jesus dying for all people³⁴, the whole world³⁵, everyone³⁶, and not wanting anyone to perish.³⁷ Arminians then teach that to be saved, one must make the decision to accept Jesus' atoning death and become a follower of Jesus. Furthermore, it is said that anyone can make that choice either by inherent free will (Arminians) or by God's universal enabling, so-called prevenient, or first, grace (Wesleyans). Subsequently, election is understood as God choosing those He foreknew would choose Him, and since people choose to be saved, they can also lose their salvation.

2. Second, some Christians believe that Jesus died only for the sins of the elect. Election means that before the foundation of the world, God chose certain individuals to be recipients of eternal life solely on the basis of His gracious purpose apart from any human merit or action. He calls them effectually, doing whatever is necessary to bring them to repentance and faith.³⁸ This position is commonly referred to as five-point Calvinism (after John Calvin), Reformed theology, or limited atonement, which is also sometimes called particular redemption. These Calvinists commonly appeal to those Scriptures that speak of Jesus' dying only for some people but not all people³⁹, His sheep⁴⁰, His church⁴¹, the elect⁴², His people⁴³, His friends⁴⁴, and all Christians.⁴⁵ They disagree with unlimited atonement, pointing out that if Jesus died for everyone, then everyone would be saved, which is the heresy

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of universalism. They also teach that people are so sinful that they cannot choose God, and so God regenerates people before their conversion and ensures they will be preserved until the end because salvation cannot be lost.

3. At first glance, unlimited and limited atonement appear to be in opposition. But that dilemma is resolved by noting two things. First, the two categories are not mutually exclusive; since Jesus died for the sins of everyone, this means that He also died for the sins of the elect. Second, Jesus' death for all people does not accomplish the same thing as his death for the elect. This point is complicated but is in fact taught in Scripture. For example, 1 Timothy 4:10 makes a distinction between Jesus' dying as the savior of all people in a general way and the Christian elect in a particular way, saying, "For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe." Simply, by dying for everyone, Jesus purchased everyone as his possession, and He then applies his forgiveness to the elect—those in Christ—by grace and applies His wrath to the non-elect—those who reject Christ. Objectively, Jesus' death was sufficient to save anyone, and, subjectively, only efficient to save those who repent of their sin and trust in Him. This position is called unlimited limited atonement, or modified Calvinism, and arguably is the position that John Calvin himself held as a very able Bible teacher.⁴⁶ Christ died for the purpose of securing the sure and certain salvation of His own, His elect.

4

QUESTIONS ABOUT JESUS' RESURRECTION

Jesus said... "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." -JOHN 11:25-26

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66. What is resurrection?

Resurrection refers to the eventual reuniting of our body and soul. N.T. Wright proposes that in the first century, resurrection did not mean “life after death” in the sense of “the life that follows immediately after bodily death.”⁴⁷

Resurrection was a way of “speaking of a new life after ‘life after death’ in the popular sense, a fresh living embodiment following a period of death-as-a-state.”⁴⁸ According to Wright, the meaning of resurrection as “life after ‘life after death’” cannot be overemphasized. This is due in large part to the fact that much modern writing continues to use “resurrection” as a synonym for “life after death.” In contrast, belief in “resurrection” for the ancients meant belief in what Wright calls a “two-step story”:⁴⁹ *“Resurrection itself would be preceded...by an interim period of death-as-a-state. Where we find a single-step story—death-as-event being followed at once by a final state, for instance of disembodied bliss—the texts are not talking about resurrection. Resurrection involves a definite content (some sort of re-embodiment) and a definite narrative shape (a two-step story, not a single-step one). This meaning is constant throughout the ancient world.”*⁵⁰

Wright reiterates what resurrection is and what it is not: *“‘Resurrection’ denoted a new embodied life which would follow whatever ‘life after death’ there might be. ‘Resurrection’ was, by definition, not the existence into which someone might (or might not) go immediately upon death; it was not a disembodied ‘heavenly’ life; it was a further stage, out beyond all that. It was not a re-description or redefinition of death. It was death’s reversal.”*⁵¹

Therefore, resurrection is not revivification, a second chance for salvation after death, or soul sleep.

67. What is the biblical evidence for Jesus' resurrection?

The biblical evidence for Jesus' resurrection is compelling and can be briefly summarized in ten points. Each of these points is consistent, and together they reveal that the Bible is emphatically and repeatedly clear on the fact of Jesus' resurrection.

1. Jesus' resurrection was prophesied in advance.^a
2. Jesus predicted His resurrection.^b
3. Jesus died.
4. Jesus was buried in a tomb that was easy to find.^c Had Jesus truly not risen from death, it would have been very easy to prove it by opening the tomb and presenting Jesus' dead body as evidence.
5. Jesus appeared physically, not just spiritually, alive three days after His death. Following Jesus' resurrection, many people touched His physical body: His disciples clung to his feet^d, Mary clung to Him^e, and Thomas the doubter put His hand into the open spear hole in Jesus' side^f ⁵²
6. Jesus' resurrected body was the same as His pre-resurrection body. His disciples recognized Him as the same person who had been crucified^g and Mary Magdalene recognized Him by the sound of His voice^h
7. Jesus' resurrection was recorded as Scripture shortly after it occurred.ⁱ
8. Jesus' resurrection was celebrated in the earliest church creeds.
9. Jesus' resurrection convinced His family to worship him as God.^j
10. Jesus' resurrection was confirmed by his most bitter enemies, such as Paul.^k

a Isa. 53:8-12 **b** Matt. 12:38-40; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; John 2:18-22 **c** Isa. 53:9 **d** Matt. 28:9 **e** John 20:17 **f** John 20:20-28; Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:6 **g** Luke 24:31; cf. John 21:7,12 **h** John 20:16 **i** Mark 14:53, 54, 60, 61, 63 **j** John 7:5; 1 Cor. 15:7; James 1:1; Acts 12:17; 15:12-21; 21:18; Gal. 2:9; Acts 1:14; Acts 1:14; Jude 1 **k** Phil. 3:4-6; Acts 7:54-60; Acts 9

68. What is the circumstantial evidence for Jesus' resurrection?

1. Jesus' disciples were transformed. Prior to the resurrection, His disciples were timid and fearful, even hiding when Jesus appeared to them.^a Following the resurrection, however, they were all transformed into bold witnesses to what they had seen and heard, even to the point of dying in shame and poverty for their convictions, including Peter.
2. Jesus' disciples remained loyal to Jesus as their victorious Messiah.
3. The disciples had exemplary character, even without their leader.
4. Worship changed. The early church stopped worshipping on Saturday, as Jews had for thousands of years, and suddenly began worshipping on Sunday in memory of Jesus' Sunday resurrection.^b Not only did the day of worship change after the resurrection of Jesus, but so did the object of worship. Considering that one of the Ten Commandments also forbids the worship of false gods, it is impossible to conceive of devout Jews simply worshipping Jesus as the one true God without the proof of Jesus' resurrection.
5. Women discovered the empty tomb.^c Since the testimony of women was not respected in that culture, it would have been more likely for men to report discovering the empty tomb if the account was fictitious and an attempt were being made to concoct a credible lie about Jesus' resurrection.
6. The entirety of early church preaching was centered on the historical fact of Jesus' resurrection.
7. Jesus' tomb was not enshrined.
8. Christianity exploded on the earth and a few billion people today claim to be Christians.

a John 20:19 **b** Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2 **c** Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1

69. What is the historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection?

Because Jesus' death is a historical fact, the corroborating evidence of non-Christian sources in addition to the Bible helps to confirm the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The following testimony of Romans, Greeks, and Jews is helpful because these men are simply telling the facts without any religious devotion to them.

Josephus (AD 37–100)

Josephus was a Jewish historian born just a few years after Jesus died. His most celebrated passage, called the "Testimonium Flavianum," says: "Now there was about this time Jesus...He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day."⁵³

Suetonius (AD 70–160)

Suetonius was a Roman historian and annalist of the Imperial House. In his biography of Nero (Nero ruled AD 54–68), Suetonius mentions the persecution of Christians by indirectly referring to the resurrection: "Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition [the resurrection]."⁵⁴

Pliny the Younger (AD 61 or 62–113)

Pliny the Younger wrote a letter to the emperor Trajan around AD 111 describing early Christian worship gatherings that met early on Sunday mornings in memory of Jesus' resurrection day.⁵⁵

12

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CHURCH

*Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.
-EPHESIANS 5:25*

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70. How did Jesus prepare His people for the coming of the church?

Before His death and resurrection Jesus announced His plan for His Church, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."^a Jesus' imagery is one of spiritual warfare. Satan has held people captive and surrounded them with bars to hold them in their cell. The bars are things like lies, temptations, addictions, and deceptions that keep them in bondage. The Church is to be the equivalent of a spiritual military force coming in to kick down gates and set captives free.

This offensive, on-mission kind of Church is possible only by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the days leading up to His death, Jesus also said, "it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you...When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."^b

Following His resurrection, just prior to his ascension back into heaven, Jesus promised the first Christians, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."^c Jesus' promise has come true and remained true every day since. The Church has exploded on the earth from one hundred and twenty people in one nation with one language to a few billion people in a few thousand languages in countless nations. What accounts for the power of the church is not its amazing leadership, political strength, or favorable press? The only thing that can explain the power of the Church is the presence of the Spirit.

a Matt. 16:18 **b** John 16:7-14 **c** Acts 1:8

71. How did the new covenant church begin?

The fulfillment of Jesus' promise that the Holy Spirit would come in power once He ascended back into Heaven is historically reported by Luke in Acts 2:1-7, 14-18. The new covenant church of Jesus Christ began with the pouring out of the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost. What happened that day "came from heaven" as the unseen realm flooded and invaded the seen realm and included "a sound like a mighty rushing wind" (Spirit of God) as "tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit."

God intended that His two families—human and divine—live and work together as one united family with the unseen and seen realms united. Sin caused humanity to rebel against God and side with Satan and demons, separating us from God and angels. Everything changed with Jesus defeating the demonic realm on the cross, reclaiming us as His people, and reconnecting human beings and divine beings as God's one family. At Pentecost the two realms and two families were reunited once again, as the divine council was present at Pentecost with the first Christians.

72. What is Jesus' relationship to the church?

As we take the gospel to the world, churches, as communities of Jesus followers, will come together. It is essential that we never forget that Jesus and Jesus alone is:

- The head of the church.^a He is supreme. He is prominent. He is preeminent.
- The apostle who plants a church.^b There is no church that comes into existence apart from Him. Those who are caught up in the hard work of church planting must always remember that Jesus is the apostle. While we can start an organization, only He can plant a church.
- The leader who builds the church.^c Ministry leaders go to work with Him, but unless He shows up, a church will not be built.
- The Chief Shepherd who rules the church.^d The Bible is clear that all the other pastors and leaders in churches are supposed to work under His leadership following His teaching and extending His mission.
- Present with the church.^e Jesus is the one who says, "I am with you always." In his exaltation, and through the Spirit, He is with us^f and we are in Him.^g
- The judge of the church.^h Since churches belong to Jesus, He has the authority to judge them, scatter them, close them, or whatever else He wants for whatever reasons He decides.

a Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23 **b** Heb. 3:1 **c** Matt. 16:18 **d** 1. Pet 5:4 **e** Matt. 28:18-20 **f** Col. 1:27
g John 17:21; Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:17; Phil 3:9 **h** Rev. 2:5

73. Where do we get the concept of church?

The assumption that Christians innately know what the church is has a long history. The early church debated many things, such as the Trinity and the relationship between the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. Everything changed in the sixteenth century when the Reformation forced Protestants and Roman Catholics alike to actually define church. This led to numerous definitions and debates, which continue to this day with no widespread agreement.

Part of the confusion is that the Greek word *eκκλῆσία*, which is translated “church,” has a wide range of meaning.⁵⁶ Originally, it sometimes designated any public assembly, including a full-blown riot.^a In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament), the word is translated *qāhāl*, which designates the assembly of God’s people.^b So in the New Testament *eκκλῆσία* may signify the assembly of the Israelites.^c

Most of the uses of the word *eκκλῆσία* in the New Testament designate the Christian church, both the local church^d and the universal church.^e

The English word church derives from the Greek word *kyriakon*, which means “the Lord’s.”^f Later it came to mean the Lord’s house, a church building which is not the originally biblical emphasis. The church is a family, and every family needs a house to live in. But the important thing is the family and not the house.

a Acts 19:32, 39, 41 **b** Deut. 10:4; 23:2–3; 31:30; Ps. 22:23 **c** Acts 7:38; Heb. 2:12 **d** Matt. 18:17; Acts 15:41; Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 14:33; Col. 4:15 **e** Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:28; 15:9; Eph. 1:22 **f** 1 Cor. 11:20; Rev. 1:10

74. What does the Bible say about the local church?

If we follow the definition of church summarized from Acts 2, we can identify eight key characteristics of the local church. Understanding them will provide standards for planning for and evaluating health in every church.

1. The church is made up of believers born again of the Spirit^a who are devoted to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers^b, and to attending meetings together and fellowshiping in their homes with glad and generous hearts as the family of God.^c There are unbelievers and outsiders who participate in the activity of the church and have an important place in the extended community.^d
2. The church is organized under qualified and competent Spirit-led leadership.^e The Bible also describes leaders in the church with a myriad of terms, including ministry teams led by both men and women.^f
3. The church regularly gathers for Bible preaching and worship.^g Importantly, not only is the Church to gather to hear the preaching of Scripture, but it also is to respond to God's truth and grace with worship.^h
4. The church is where the biblical sacraments of baptism and communion are performed regularly as visible symbols of the gospel in the life of the Church.
5. The Church is unified by the Spirit by confessing Christ as Lord and sharing life together. The unified life of the Trinity itself is manifested among God's people who live in loving unity together as the Church. This unity comes in several concrete aspects:
 - o Theological unity

TOP 100 QUESTIONS

- o Relational unity
 - o Philosophical unity
 - o Missional unity
 - o Organizational unity
6. The church corrects works of the flesh for the fruit of the Spirit which is holiness.
7. The church obeys the Great Commandment to love which is also the fruit of the Spirit.ⁱ
8. The church obeys the Great Commission to evangelize and make disciples.^j

a Acts 2:36-41 **b** Acts 2:42 **c** Acts 2:46 **d** 1 Cor. 14:22-25 **e** Acts 2:42; Acts 6:1-6; Acts 8:14; Acts 14:23 **f** Acts 6:1-6; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13 **g** Acts 2:42 **h** Acts 2:47; Acts 2:11; John 17:21; 1 John 4:12-15; Matt. 2:11; 4:9; 8:2; 28:9; Rev. 19:10; Rom. 1:9; 12:1; Rev. 7:15 **i** Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 5:4; 11:17-20; 14:23-26; Heb.10:25; Eph. 5:25; 6:1-4; Titus 2:4; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17; 1 John 3:14; Matt. 22:39; Luke 10:30-37; Rom. 13:9-10; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8; Heb. 13:2; Matt. 5:43-45; Luke 6:32 **j** Acts 2:47; Acts 1:8

75. What does the Bible say about the global church?

The Bible uses a number of images to help us understand what is meant by the church. Each of these images helps us understand an aspect of the Church. Furthermore, each image helps various people and people in various cultures best understand and love the church.

(1) The Church is an assembly or gathering, meaning a beloved people called out from the world to meet with God.^a (2) The Church is God's people who are in special relationship with Him now and forever.^b (3) The Church is the Family of Abraham, born again of the Spirit and part of a great legacy of faith.^c (4) The Church is the temple of God's presence, the place where God uniquely chooses to be present with His people.^d (5) The Church is the priesthood of believers set apart for ministry to glorify God by doing good for others.^e (6) The Church is a branch of Jesus the Vine, so that the power of His life-giving Spirit flows through us to bear much fruit that nourishes others.^f (7) The Church is a body with many parts, which explains how we have unity and diversity when we work together.^g (8) The Church is a community of the Spirit, spiritually reborn and sustained by the power and presence of the person of the Spirit.^h (9) The Church is a flock with a Shepherd who protects them from wolves, feeds them, and leads them.ⁱ (10) The Church is a field planted by God to bring a harvest of righteousness to the earth.^j (11) The Church is the bride of Christ deeply beloved and faithfully served by Jesus the groom.^k (12) The Church is God's Family adopted by the same Father and saved by the same Big Brother.^m

a Acts 5:11, Rom. 16:5 **b** Acts 15:14; Rom. 9:25-26 **c** Gal. 3:29, 6:16 **d** 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16-18 **e** 1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6 **f** John 15:1-17 **g** Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:12-31 **h** Eph. 4:1-16; 1 Cor. 12:13 **i** John 10:1-21 **j** 1 Cor. 3:6-9 **k** Eph. 5:25; Rev. 19:7 **m** 1 Tim. 3:15; Gal. 6:10

76. Why is preaching important?

Paul warned that times would come when people would not tolerate preaching.^a God's people have always viewed preaching as something to be done when the church gathers. Preaching is proclaiming with authority and passion the truth of God's Word. In preaching, the authority of God's Word is upheld, and God's people are collectively led and taught according to the Scriptures. The willingness of Christians to sit under preaching is an act of worship, as they are humbly submitting to Scripture. Preaching is among the most essential ministries of a church because the authoritative preaching of Scripture informs and leads God's people in the rest of the church's ministries. The Bible tells us to simply "preach the word" but does not tell us exactly how this is to be done, thereby leaving some creative freedom for preachers.^b

A healthy church will always have Bible preaching. The preaching will be (1) biblical, focusing on what Scripture says; (2) theological, teaching what Scripture means; (3) memorable, practically speaking to the lives and culture of people; (4) transformational, leading to repentance, response, and spiritual maturity; (5) missional, explaining why this matters for the mission of God and the salvation of lost people; (6) Christological, showing how Jesus is the hero-savior; (7) apologetical, answering the likely objections of the hearers to remove as many barriers as possible to believing the Bible.

Faithful gospel proclamation, which began with God in Genesis, is to continue by faithful gospel preachers until the gospel is consummated in the return of Jesus, to whom all biblical preaching points.

a 2 Tim. 4:3-4 **b** 2 Tim. 4:2

77. What is baptism?

While some faithful Christians would disagree with us, we believe that water baptism is for those Christians who have already received Spirit baptism, making them part of the church.^a In water baptism, Christians are immersed in water, which identifies them with the death and burial of Jesus in their place for their sins. Coming up out of the water identifies them with the resurrection of Jesus for their salvation and new life empowered by the Holy Spirit. Altogether, baptism identifies a Christian with Jesus, the universal Church, and the local church.

When we speak of baptism, we must remember that we are talking about more than a simple rite that people undergo. Baptism is an external expression of an internal transformation. Being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit expresses the believer's death to sin, burial of the old life, and resurrection to a new kingdom life in Christ Jesus.

Jesus and the apostles commanded that all Christians be baptized as an initial act of discipleship.^b In the book of Acts and in the early church, baptism is administered upon conversion.^c Practically speaking, we think it is best that believers be baptized immediately upon credible profession of faith in Jesus.

a Rom. 6:1–10; 1 Cor. 12:12–13; 1 Pet. 3:2. See also 1 Cor. 10:1–4; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12; Titus 3:5–6 **b** Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38 **c** Acts 2:38–41; 8:12, 36–38; 9:18; 10:47–48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5

TOP 100 QUESTIONS

78. Do I need to be baptized to be a Christian?

Salvation is a gift given to people whose faith rests in the grace of God to forgive their sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus.^a For example, when the Philippian jailer asked what was required of him to be saved, Paul did not mention baptism but rather simply said “Believe in the Lord Jesus...”^b Likewise, the thief who died on the cross next to Jesus was promised by our Lord that “...today you will be with me in paradise”, though he had not been baptized.^c Saved people should get baptized in the same way that a married person should wear a wedding ring. But, the absence of either sign pointing to a covenant relationship does not negate that relationship. An unbaptized Christian who does not wear a wedding ring is still in relationship with God and their spouse even though the outward sign of the inward commitment is not present.

a Eph. 2:8-9 **b** Acts 16:31 **c** Luke 23:43

79. How should baptism be conducted?

We believe that Christians should be baptized like Christ, by immersion for a number of reasons. First, the Greek word used for baptism in the New Testament means to plunge, dip, or immerse in water. In secular ancient Greek this word was used, for example, to explain such things as the sinking of a ship which had been submerged in water. Curiously, even the great theologians John Calvin and Martin Luther who practiced and strenuously advocated the baptism of newborn infants agree.

Second, John the Baptizer immersed people in water.^a John also selected the Jordan River as the place for conducting his baptisms because there was “plenty of water”.^b

Third, when Jesus was baptized, He was immersed in water.^c

Fourth, Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch by immersion in water.^d

Fifth, baptism is the remembrance of Jesus’ burial and resurrection and therefore is best conducted with immersion.^e

Sixth, when someone who was not racially Jewish would convert to Judaism in both the Old Testament and present day, they underwent a Jewish Proselyte Baptism to show cleansing from sin. The mode of this baptism was (and is) by immersion.

a Mark 1:5 **b** John 3:23 **c** Mark 1:10 **d** Acts 8:34-39 **e** Rom. 6:1-10; Col. 2:12

TOP 100 QUESTIONS

80. What is communion?

It is a dramatic presentation that (1) reminds us in a powerful manner of the death of Jesus Christ in our place for our sins; (2) calls Christians to put our sin to death in light of the fact that Jesus died for our sins and compels us to examine ourselves and repent of sin before partaking; (3) shows the unity of God's people around the person and work of Jesus; and (4) anticipates our participation in the marriage supper of the Lamb when His kingdom comes in its fullness.

Practically speaking, Communion is to be considered as participation in a family meal around a table rather than as a sacrifice upon an altar. Furthermore, it should be an occasion when God's loving grace impacts us intensely so that the gospel takes a deeper and deeper root in our lives. Understood biblically, grace is unmerited favor or God's goodwill^a, His helpful enablement for life and service^b, and a transformational power from the Spirit that brings blessing to us.^c Each of these aspects of God's grace is inextricably connected to the partaking of Communion.

a John 1:16, 17; Eph. 2:8 **b** Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 9:8 **c** Rom. 6:1, 14–17; 2 Cor. 6:1ff.; Eph. 1:7; 2:5–8

81. What is church hurt?

In talking about the church, we know many people, starting with Christians, who have had a painful experience with the church. The result is often a gnawing sense of guilt that they should be connected to a local body of believers, but some level of anxiety triggered by past troubles which keeps them at arm's length. As pastors and ministry leaders, we have to admit that not only have we experienced church hurt from others, but that we have also created church hurt for others. Like any family, our church family can be complicated and messy.

Christ is perfect, Christians and our churches most certainly are not. The New Testament is painfully honest about this fact, and it was written to correct churches that had problems. For starters, in Revelation 2-3, we see Jesus as Head of the Church speaking to seven kinds of churches.

There are churches on the spectrum from amazing to abysmal. There are Christians in every church who are on that same spectrum. Which kind of church do you attend? Which kind of Christian are you? If we are going to be honest about churches, we need to also be honest about ourselves as Christians.

The church needs you, and you need the church. We would encourage you to forgive whatever church hurt you have, find a group of godly people you can trust to do life with you, and commit yourself to that local church like a family with all of its faults and flaws but love and serve because that's what family is all about. There's no such thing as a perfect family or church family, but both become better if we become part of the solution rather than just pointing out the problems.

10

QUESTIONS ABOUT WORSHIP

True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. -JOHN 4:23

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82. What is worship?

The purpose of a mirror is to reflect an image. When we look in the mirror, we expect the mirror to image, or reflect, who we are. In the same way, God made people as His mirrors on the earth, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”^a We worship God by mirroring Him.

Jesus never sinned because He was always worshipping. When we look at Jesus, we see perfectly and continually the character of God the Father reflected in His life. When we see Jesus’ love, forgiveness, rebuke, and the like, we are witnessing the perfect reflection of God the Father. Paul says, “He is the image of the invisible God”, and Jesus said, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”^b

Since Jesus lived by the power of the Holy Spirit, the only way that we worship God by reflecting His character is to also live by the power of the Holy Spirit. The person without the Spirit can be a good neighbor, kind person, and helpful friend but they simply cannot worship God. For the Christian, however, we can live like Moses. He entered into God’s presence, and the glory of God literally reflected off of him as he imaged God, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”^c

a Genesis 1:27 **b** Colossians 1:15; John 14:9 **c** 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

83. What is Christian worship?

Christian worship is not just a musical style, religious issue, something that happens in a church building, or something that starts and stops although it does include all of those things. The Bible says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the *glory* of God."^a In some ways, worship involves every nook and cranny of life.

First, worship is who/what we live for. The language of "glory" speaks of who/what weighs heaviest on your heart and in your life as your priority. Who/what is in the glory position lives at the center of your life and your life revolves around them/it.

Second, worship is how we live. When the Bible speaks of worship, it often does so in terms of sacrifice. Since we have limited time, energy, thoughts, money, and emotion, we must decide where to spend it.

As a Christian, it is possible to belong to God and get sidetracked from living as a worshipper of God. We've all done it. Sometimes, we even get upset with God and try to use Him to get what we really want to worship instead of worshipping Him alone. Here's a few diagnostic questions to check your soul:

1. Who or what do I make sacrifices for?
2. Who or what is most important to me?
3. If I could have any possession or experience I wanted, what would that be?
4. Who or what makes me the happiest?
5. What is the one person or thing I could not live without?
6. What do I spend my money on?
7. Who or what do I devote my time to?
8. What dominates the thoughts of my mind?
9. When I have extra time, money, or energy, where do I invest it?
10. On a bad day, where do I turn for comfort?

^a1 Corinthians 6:20, 10:31

84. What is idolatry?

Worship is war. When we worship God, we are engaged in spiritual warfare against the demonic realm. God creates, and Satan counterfeits. The counterfeit of worship is idolatry. Every human being—at every moment of their life, today and into eternity—is unceasingly doing either the former or the latter.

Christian counselor David Powlison says, “Idolatry is by far the most frequently discussed problem in the Scriptures.”⁵⁷ While idolatry is manifested externally, it originates internally with people who, “have taken their idols into their hearts.”^a Before people see an idol with their eyes, hold it with their hands, or speak of it with their lips, they have taken it into their heart. This violates the first two of the Ten Commandments, choosing something as a functional god longed for in their heart and then worshipping.

One of the great evils of idolatry is that, if we idolize, we must also demonize, as Jonathan Edwards rightly taught in *The Nature of True Virtue*. If we idolize our gender, we must demonize the other gender. If we idolize our nation, we must demonize other nations. If we idolize our political party, we must demonize other political parties. If we idolize our socioeconomic class, we must demonize other classes. If we idolize our family, we must demonize other families. If we idolize our theological system, we must demonize other theological systems. If we idolize our church, we must demonize other churches. This explains the great polarities and acrimonies that plague every society.

a Ezekiel 14:1–8

TOP 100 QUESTIONS

85. What does God require in corporate worship?

When God's people gather, it is incumbent upon the church leaders to do three things.

1) Forbid What God Forbids: Throughout the Old and New Testaments, people who profess to worship the God of the Bible do so in ways that He forbids and are rebuked.

The New Testament church at Corinth is forbidden from worshipping with members of other religions because doing so is to entertain demons.^a

2) Employ Biblical Methods. Not only are we to worship the right God, we are to worship in the right way:

- God centered^b
- Intelligible^c
- Seeker sensible^d
- Unselfish^e
- Orderly^f
- Missional^g

3) Do what Scripture commands

There are certain elements that Scripture prescribes for gathered corporate worship services. Many theologians refer to these as the elements of corporate worship, and they include the following:

1. Preaching^h
2. Sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Tableⁱ
3. Prayer^j
4. Reading Scripture^k
5. Financial giving^m
6. Singing and musicⁿ

a 1 Corinthians 10:14–22 **b** Matt. 4:8-10 **c** 1 Cor. 14:1-12 **d** 1 Cor. 14:20-25 **e** 1 Cor. 14:26
f 1 Cor. 14:40 **g** 1 Cor. 9:19-23 **h** 2 Tim. 4:2 **i** Matt 28:19; 1 Cor. 11:17-34 **j** 1 Tim. 2:1 **k** 1
Tim. 4:13 **m** 2 Corinthians 8-9 **n** Col. 3:16

86. With what behaviors does the Bible tell us to worship?

Regarding the worship of God by His people, here are some things the Bible does reveal:

(1) Heartfelt internally^a (2) Holy forms externally^b; Prostrate face down^c (3) Dancing^d (4) Clapping^e (5) Reverence^f (6) Bowing^g (7) Kneeling^h (8) Laying on of handsⁱ (9) Lifting hands^j (10) Falling down^k (11) Playing musical instruments^m (12) Writing new worship songsⁿ (13) Singing loudly^o (14) Kneeling^p (15) Standing^q (16) Sitting^r (17) Shouting Amen^s (18) Serving with your spiritual gift(s)^t (19) Giving tithes and offerings^u

a Gen. 4; Deut. 11:16, 30:17; Is. 1:11-17; 29:13; Jer. 7:9-10; Mic. 6:6-8; Matt. 15:8; Mark 7:6; 1 Cor. 14:25 **b** Lev. 10:1-2; Deut. 12:31; 1 Ki. 11:33; Dan. 3; Is. 1:11-17; Ez. 8-9; Jer. 7:9-10 **c** Num. 24:4,16, Deut. 9:18, 9:25; 1 Ki. 18:39; 1 Chron. 29:20; Is. 15:3; Dan. 2:46, 8:17 **d** 2 Sam. 6:14; Job 21:11; Ecc. 3:4; Jer. 31:4, 31:13; Matt. 11:7 **e** Job 21:5; Ps. 47:1, 98:8; Is. 55:12 **f** Neh. 5:15; Ps. 5:7; Mal. 2:5; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:21; Col. 3:22; Heb. 12:28; 1 Pet. 3:2; Rev. 11:18 **g** Gen. 19:1, 24:26, 24:48, 24:52, 27:29, 47:31; Ex. 4:31, 12:27; Numbers 22:31; Deut. 26:10; 2 Sam. 9:8; 1 Ki. 1:47; 2 Ki. 5:18, 17:16, 21:21; 2 Chron. 29:28; 29:30; Ps. 5:7, 38:6, 66:4, 95:6, 138:2, 145:14, 146:8, 45:14, 45:23, 49:23, 58:5, 66:23; Lam. 2:10; Ez.8:16; Dan. 10:15; Mic. 5:13, 6:6; Matt. 2:11; Luke 24:5; John 19:30; Philippians 2:10 **h** 1 Ki. 8:54; Ps. 22:29; Job 40:4; Eph. 3:14 **i** Matt. 19:13, Mark 5:23, 10:16; Luke 20:19; Acts 8:18-19, 9:12, 9:17, 28:8; 1 Tim. 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6; Heb. 6:2 **j** Ps. 28:2, 63:4, 76:5, 119:48, 134:2; Lam. 2:19; 3:41-42; 1 Tim. 2:8 **k** Dan. 3:4-7; 1 Cor. 14:22; Rev. 3:7-10, 4:9-11 **m** 1 Sam. 16:15-18; 18:6; 1 Chron. 15:16, 16:42, 23:5; 2 Chron. 5:13, 7:6, 23:13, 29:26-27, 34:12; Neh. 12:36; Ps. 45:8, 98:4; Ps. 150 **n** Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9, 149:1; Is.42:10; Rev. 5:9, 14:3 **o** Ps. 5:11, 9:2, 9:11, 13:6; Acts 16:25; Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; James 5:13; Rev. 14:3, 15:3 **p** Is. 45:23; Rom. 14:9, Philippians 2:10 **q** Num. 5:16; Deut. 10:6-9, 19:16-17; 1 Ki. 19:11; 1 Chron. 23:28-31; Ps. 24:3; 26:12; Hab. 3:2 **r** Ps. 110:1; Lam. 3:27-28; Mic. 4:4, 7:8, Zech. 3:10 **s** Deut. 27:15-26; I Ch. 16:36; Neh. 5:13, 8:6; Ps. 41:13; 72:19, 89:52, 106:48; Jer. 11:5, 28:6; Rom. 1:25, 9:5, 11:36, 15:33, 16:27; 1 Cor. 16:24; Gal. 1:5, 6:18; Eph. 3:21; Philippians 4:20, 4:23; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 4:11, 5:11; 2 Pet. 3:18; Jude 1:25; Rev. 1:6, 1:7, 3:14, 5:14, 7:12, 19:4, 22:20-21 **t** 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 12:28-30; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 4:11 **u** Ex. 25:2, 35:22, 36:5; 1 Chron. 29:3-4; 2 Chron. 24:10; Prov. 3:9; Mal. 3:10; Acts 4:34-35; 2 Cor. 8-9

87. What is a steward?

Jesus devoted roughly 25 percent of his words in the Gospels to the resources God has entrusted to our stewardship. This includes some 28 passages in the Gospels. In the Old and New Testaments combined, there are over 800 verses on the subject, addressing topics ranging from planning and budgeting, to saving and investing, to debt and tithing. Furthermore, money and wealth and possessions are among the greatest idols in our culture, and there is simply no way to be a disciple of Jesus apart from learning to worship God. That worship includes the stewardship of time, talents, and treasures as the average person has around 27,000 days on the earth during which time, they will speak 400,000-800,000 words.

Generally speaking, there are two ways to see our life and possessions. One is through the perspective of ownership, whereby I and my life and possessions belong to me alone. The other is through the perspective of stewardship, whereby I and my life and possessions belong to God and are to be invested for his purposes.

Four traits distinguish a steward:

1. I belong to the Lord. This is exactly what Paul says reminding Christians that we “belong to Jesus Christ.”^a
2. Everything I have belongs to the Lord.^b
3. Everything I have is a gift from the Lord^c
4. I want to manage God’s resources wisely. Since God is the owner, and I am the manager, I want to steward God’s resources in the way that God wants.^d

a Romans 1:6 **b** Hag. 2:8; Psalm 50:10; Deuteronomy 8:17-18 **c** 1 Cor. 4:7; James 1:16-17 **d** 1 Peter 4:10

88. How should we worship God with our time and work?

God has meaningful and purposeful things for His people to accomplish during their life on the earth.^a To accomplish this, we must always seek God's priorities for our life and remain devoted to them and balance our work and Sabbath so that we can steward our time well.

Until roughly 30 years of age, Jesus worked as a carpenter. For the remaining roughly three years of his life, Jesus said He was about his Father's work.^b Jesus' ministry work included exhausting preaching, teaching, demon-confronting, feeding, healing, traveling by foot, and more. He did exactly the job that the Father had planned for Him.

To sabbath is to rest from one's labor. The first Sabbath day was a Saturday and was enjoyed by God.^c The first recorded command for humans to sabbath is in Exodus 16:23, and honoring the Sabbath is listed as the fourth commandment.^d Our true Sabbath is not found in a day but ultimately in a saving relationship with Jesus, where we can rest from trying to earn our salvation and find rest in his finished work.^e Therefore, the Sabbath is not a law for believers to obey but instead a grace to enjoy.

a Eph. 2:10 **b** John 4:34; 5:17, 36 **c** Gen. 2:2 **d** Ex. 20:8-11 **e** Matt. 11:28-30; Rom. 4:5; Col. 2:16-17

89. What are spiritual gifts?

During his life on earth, Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit to do ministry. In 1 Corinthians 12, a pivotal exposition of the work of the Spirit in believers, Paul summarizes an astonishing variety of manifestations of the Spirit.

Verse 4 speaks of gifts (*charismata*), enduring abilities you have that the Spirit can pick up, animate, magnify, and repurpose to carry on the work of Jesus. Verse 5 goes on to speak of services or ministries (*diakonia*), the place or role or office where believers are called by God to serve inside and/or outside the church. Verse 6 speaks of workings or activities (*energema*) the Spirit does. Finally, in verse 7, he speaks of manifestations (*phanerosis*) of the Spirit and gives a list of them in verses 8-11.

The New Testament has many lists of the wide variety of talents or “spirituals.” 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 lists the manifestations of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 lists the talents of serving as an apostle, prophesying, teaching, performing miracles, healing, helping, administrating, speaking in tongues, and interpreting tongues. Romans 12:6-8 lists gifts of prophesying, serving, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading, and showing mercy. Ephesians 4:11 lists serving as an apostle, prophesying, evangelizing, pastoring, and teaching. And 1 Peter 4:11 distinguishes between speaking and serving gifts, as some people minister primarily with their words while others do so with their works.

There has been no shortage of controversy regarding the so-called “sign gifts” — tongues, miracles, and prophecy—and whether they are to be practiced by the church today. The following chart outlines the basic positions without getting into great detail, which would require another book to be written on the

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subject. We will simply say here that we hold the continuationist position.

Cessationist	Functional Cessationist	Continuationist	Word-Faith
<p>Supernatural gifts, especially the speaking gifts (tongues, miracles, and prophecy) functioned only in the early church and are not to be practiced today. God speaks today but only in Scripture. Contemporary "revelations" do not come from God.</p>	<p>Supernatural gifts are given to every generation and God may continue to speak but the abuses are so rampant that it is better to avoid them. It is safer to rely solely on the Bible and Spirit-empowered wisdom.</p>	<p>Supernatural gifts are given to every generation. Contemporary revelations are valued but always secondary to Scripture. Supernatural manifestations are sought but must show the fruit of the Spirit.</p>	<p>Supernatural gifts are given to every generation. God's kingdom is a present reality with immediate healing and prosperity for anyone who exercises a faith confession. Contemporary revelations are highly valued.</p>

90. How should we worship God with our wealth?

Jesus was rich in Heaven, poor on earth, and is rich right now in Heaven. Therefore, someone can be like Jesus whether they are rich or poor. To help you grow as a worshiper with wealth rather than as a worshiper of wealth, five principles are helpful.

1. *God takes our worst and gives His best.* In coming to the earth and going to the cross, God took our worst (sin) and gave us His best (Son). John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that who ever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

2. *Your wallet is God's scalpel for heart surgery.* Sometimes the fastest way to change your heart is to change your budget, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."^a

3. *Firstfruits grows faith.* When we give to God our first and best, we are thanking Him for what we have, prioritizing our lives to be God-centered, and trusting Him to provide for the rest of our needs, "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce..."^b

4. *You cannot take it with you, but you can send it ahead.* All of the things that we own in this life will stay behind when we go to the Kingdom of Heaven. But, good stewards can send eternal rewards ahead, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."^c

5. *Giving is a blessing.* Every parent or grandparent who has given a gift to a child knows that they are blessed to watch the child be blessed because giving is a blessing. Christians do not give to get a blessing. Christians give knowing that the blessing is the giving, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."^d This blessing of giving includes forgiving others as a giver is also a forgiver.

a Matt. 6:21 **b** Prov. 3:9 **c** Matt. 6:19-20 **d** Acts 20:35

91. Should Christians tithe?

Tithe literally means “tenth.” In the Old Testament, the tithe referred to God’s people giving the first 10 percent of their gross income (also called “firstfruits”) to God to fund the Levite priests’ ministry.^a There were additional tithes and offerings required of God’s people, including 10 percent paid for festivals to build community and for celebration, 3.3 percent given to help the poor, crop gleanings collected for the poor and aliens, and other occasional additional tithes above and beyond regular giving.^b Therefore, the total “mandatory” Old Testament tithe resulted in over 25 percent of a family’s gross income going to God and ministry.

Perhaps the most thorough teaching in all the New Testament on giving is found in 2 Corinthians 8–9, where we discover eight principles regarding generous giving.⁵⁸

1. Generous giving is sacrificial.^c
2. Generous giving is something that some people are spiritually gifted for.^d
3. Generous giving is a gospel issue.^e
4. Generous giving encourages churches to share with other churches and ministries in need.^f
5. Generous giving is motivated by friendly competition.^g
6. Generous giving is about sowing and reaping.^h
7. Generous giving is one of many evidences that someone is truly a Christian.ⁱ
8. Generous giving promotes the worship of Jesus as God.

a Num. 18:21–29; 27:30 **b** Deut. 12:10–11, 17–18; 14:22–27; Deut. 14:28–29; Lev. 19:9–10; Neh. 10:32–33 **c** 2 Cor. 8:1–6, 10–12 **d** 2 Cor. 8:7 **e** 2 Cor. 8:8–9 **f** 2 Cor. 8:13–15 **g** 2 Cor. 9:1–5 **h** 2 Cor. 9:6–12 **i** 2 Cor. 9:13–14

9

QUESTIONS ABOUT HEAVEN

*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it
is in heaven. -MATTHEW 6:10*

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92. What happens when we die?

Losing someone you know, and love, is perhaps the most painful experience in life. In those seasons of loss, something in us simply knows that something has gone terribly wrong as what we are experiencing is unnatural. Having been to numerous funerals as pastors, we have seen the grieving family and friends respond in one of six ways.

One, some people don't know what to believe or say and so they echo pithy statements from greeting cards meant to make people feel better.

Two, some people do not believe in life after death and so their grief is final.

Three, some people believe in a concept of Heaven, but not Hell, and assume that once you die, you get to go to Heaven.

Four, some people believe in the concept of purgatory. A bit like an airport, it's the place where you wait as you travel from earth to Heaven.

Five, people who believe in reincarnation claim that, after you die, you will come back repeatedly until you have paid off your karmic debt, trapped in a cycle of rebirth where the only hope is that after millions of attempts, you finally get it right and escape into the eternal oneness (Nirvana) which is the end of all personhood.

Six, Bible-believing Christians grieve the loss of someone they love, but with the reassurance of eternal life, resurrection of the dead, and reunion of God's entire Forever Family. This is grieving God's heart, "Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope."^a

^a 1 Thess. 4:13 (NIV)

93. What is the Kingdom of God?

At its simplest, the Kingdom of God is about God ruling as King over everyone and everything forever, bringing His rule and reign to bear on every inch of creation for all eternity. This is the result of God's mission to rescue and renew his sin-marred creation. Jesus not only saves our souls, He's King over all kings and Lord over all lords, establishing His rule and reign over all, defeating the human and divine evil powers, bringing perfect order to all, enacting justice, and being worshiped as Lord. God's kingdom is both a journey and a destination, both a rescue operation in this broken world and a perfect outcome in the new earth to come, both already started and not yet finished. This distinction is incredibly important. When the already-ness of the kingdom is overly stressed, the result is an over-realized eschatology. In this case, the presence and power of sin are not fully accounted for, and there is a naive belief that life should be enjoyed with health and wealth, as if the kingdom has already been fully unveiled, and a sort of simplistic optimism sets in. Conversely, when the not-yet-ness of the kingdom is overly stressed, the result is an underrealized eschatology. In this case, sin seems to be at least as powerful as the gospel and there is little hope or enthusiasm for evangelism, church planting, or opposing injustice in the world, and a sort of hopeless fatalism sets in. The world is seen as a hopeless mess without the Kingdom of God showing up much in any power until the Second Coming of Christ.

94. What judgment awaits Christians at the end of this life?

Christians will not be judged at the end of this life in the same way that non-Christians will be. The Bible teaches this truth clearly and repeatedly. Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”^a Paul says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”^b Simply stated, in Christ, all sin is forgiven having been judged at Jesus’ cross.^c Subsequently, Christians are members of the family of God now and forever.

Nonetheless, Christians will be judged at the end of this life in a way that is different from the judgment of non-Christians. This life, and what we do and do not do with it, matters greatly. The Holy Spirit has given every Christian time, talent, and treasure that they are to steward well for the Kingdom. The Christian’s judgment is a day of assessment when “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”^d

This theme of accountability and reward runs all through Scripture as a continual reminder not to waste our life but rather steward it in light of eternity.^e

a John 5:24 **b** Romans 8:1 **c** Col. 2:13; 1 John 2:12 **d** 2 Cor. 5:10 **e** Matt. 24:45–47; 25:14–30; Luke 12:42–48; 16:1–13; 17:7–10; 19:12–27; Rom. 2:16; 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:8–15; 4:5; 9:17–27; Col. 3:23–25; 1 Tim. 2:3–6; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:7; 5:4; Rev. 4:4, 10; 22:12

95. What judgment awaits non-Christians at the end of this life?

Just as Jesus said that believers store up treasures for themselves in Heaven by their works in the Spirit, so Paul says that unbelievers similarly store up wrath for themselves in Hell by their works of the flesh.^a

Jesus said, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”^b The new creation can be new only if everyone in it loves God and obeys him. There can be no sin or sinners. They must be separated out. In the kingdom, the twin sins of idolatry and injustice will be transformed into obedience of Jesus’ twin commands to love God and neighbor.^c

A day is coming when God will judge the living and the dead^d through the Son.^e When the Son of Man’s throne arrives on the earth, all will stand before Him for judgment.^f From the beginning of creation^g to the end^h, the Bible makes it clear that the basis of God’s judgment is our deeds.ⁱ

There are degrees of punishment in hell like there are degrees of reward in Heaven. Jesus told the people of Capernaum that it would be worse for them in the judgment than for Sodom.^j The one who sins knowingly and willfully will receive a more severe beating than the one who did not know.^k Both in life and in hell, some sins receive more severe punishment, because that is just.^l This fits the scriptural teaching that some sins are qualitatively worse than others in that the depth of their evil and the damage that ensues is greater. Jesus illustrated this when he told Pilate, “He who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”^m

a Matt. 6:19; Rom 2:5; Rom. 2:6-8,11 **b** John 3:36 **c** Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 30:6; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:37–40; Mark 12:30–31; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9–10; 15:2; Gal. 5:14; 6:10; James 2:8 **d** Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5 **e** Ps. 2:12; Mark 14:62; John 5:22; Acts 17:31 **f** Matt. 25:31–46; Rev. 20:11–15 **g** Gen. 2:15–17 **h** Rev. 20:12–13 **i** Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; Gal. 6:7–8; Rev. 2:23; 22:12 **j** Matt. 11:21–24 **k** Luke 12:47–48 **m** Num. 15:22–30; Lev. 4:1–35; 5:15–19; Matt. 18:6; 1 Tim. 5:8; James 3:1; 1 John 5:16–18 **n** John 19:11

96. What does Scripture teach about Heaven?

Right now, there is a place called Heaven that exists in the unseen realm. Living there are God, divine beings including angels, and departed saints who loved Jesus in their life on earth. When you die, you go there to be with them if you love Jesus. Theologians call this the “intermediate heaven”.

One day, maybe in hours or centuries, Jesus Christ will return to this sin-cursed, tear-soaked world with Heaven as the King and everyone and everything in His Kingdom make the big move to earth. Just as Jesus brought Heaven and earth together at His first coming, He will bring the New Heaven and New Earth together at His Second Coming.^a

For the Christian, dying is really just moving. Like any move, it’s important to do some research so you can prepare yourself for your new home, get directions (which is basically following Jesus, who is the way home) and pushing through the hassles of this life to move to your Forever Home in Heaven.

There are six ways that the Bible describes Heaven: a Sabbath, a Kingdom, City, Home, Garden, and Party. For starters, you will need to use your imagination. When we are kids, it seems we can think in creative and faith-filled categories a lot easier than adults do, “The disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ 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, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.’”^b

a Isa. 65:17; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1-3 **b** Matt. 18:1-3

97. What does Scripture teach about Hell?

The Bible does not give us a detailed exposition of Hell, but there are many descriptions of the fate of its inhabitants in that place of eternal punishment. They include (1) fire^a; (2) darkness^b; (3) punishment^c; (4) exclusion from God's presence^d; (5) restlessness^e; (6) second death^f; and (7) weeping and gnashing of teeth.^g

The Bible's portrait of hell is nothing like the mocking cartoon caricatures drawn by Matt Groening or Gary Larson. Satan will not reign there. Hell is a place of punishment that God prepared for the Devil and his angels.^h It is where the beast and the false prophet and those who worship them will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of His anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur 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.ⁱ

At the end of the age, the Devil will be "thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."^j Hell will be ruled by Jesus, and human and demon alike, including Satan, will be tormented there continually.

Hell is real and terrible. It is eternal. There is no possibility of amnesty or reprieve. Daniel says that some of the dead will be resurrected "to shame and everlasting contempt."^k Jesus says, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...And these will go away into eternal punishment."^m

a Matt. 13:42, 50; 18:8, 9; Rev. 19:20; 20:14–15 **b** Matt. 25:30; Jude 13 **c** Rev. 14:10–11 **d** Matt. 7:23; 25:41; Luke 16:19ff.; 2 Thess. 1:9 **e** Rev. 14:11 **f** Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8 **g** Matt. 13:42, 50; 22:12–13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28 **h** Matt. 25:41 **i** Rev. 14:10–11 **j** Rev. 20:10 **k** Dan. 12:2 **m** Matt. 25:41,46

98. Do people who have never heard about Jesus go to Hell?

The conclusion is simple: there is only one way to the Father and that is through Jesus Christ. All other religious roads lead to false gods and a real Hell.

But there are many ways to Jesus. While the norm is responding to the preached Word of God,^a there are biblical examples as well as life experiences where God gives special revelation of the Messiah to unsaved people in other forms, including direct speech, dreams, and visions. God called Abraham directly.^b He gave Pharaoh dreams.^c He spoke to the treacherous prophet Balaam in a vision so that he prophesied about the Messiah.^d He appeared to Cornelius in a vision, which resulted in his being saved.^e

Therefore, while there is no salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ, there is also no reason to overlook the creativity of God to get the gospel out. His creativity includes using us to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth as pioneering missionaries to unreached people groups and generous givers to ministries that translate the Bible into new languages.

a Rom. 10:13–15 **b** Gen. 12:1–3 **c** Gen. 40–41 **d** Num. 24:4, 16–19 **e** Acts 10:3–6

99. Do unborn babies and young children go to Heaven?

The loss of a child is deeply personal and painful. The eternal fate of unborn children and infants is a mystery that has always haunted the church. There are six options available as possible answers:

1. All babies are reprobate sinners and thus immediately banned from Heaven, awaiting the final eternal judgment for their sin nature inherited from Adam and sentenced to Hell.
2. All babies are elect by God and thus immediately translated into God's presence in Heaven upon death.
3. God chooses whom He saves and damns, therefore some babies are taken to Heaven and the rest are left to spend eternity in Hell.
4. All babies are innocent until they reach the age of accountability, therefore all children who die before the age of accountability go to Heaven.
5. All babies who are baptized into a covenant family are part of the New Covenant and therefore go to Heaven upon death.
6. God is both the Father and Son who make the decision about salvation, the Spirit can save from the womb, and the decision is ultimately the Lord's, whom we trust by faith.

There are three towering truths that help frame our understanding of infant life:

1. We are sinners from our mother's womb.^a
2. God knows us and is intimately involved with us from our mother's womb.^b
3. God can and does save people from their mother's womb.^c

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Regarding what happens to a child after they die, and whether or not they go to Heaven, the most common Scripture given to answer that question is from the Old Testament. There, David is the father of a beloved child who died.^d David was in mourning, pleading with God to spare the life of his child who was very ill. David was in the pit of despair, so grieved that others wondered if he was suicidal. Yet, David stopped grieving and quickly moved on with his life once the child died. Why? David had hope for his deceased child on the other side of death, and so should we.

For parents who have lost a child, the gospel of Jesus Christ is a great comfort. God is a Father, and Jesus Christ is the Son of God. When the Son of God died on the cross, the Father experienced exactly what it feels like to lose a beloved child.

a Ps. 51:5 (NLT) **b** Ps. 139:13-16 (NLT) **c** Ps 22:9-10 (NKJV) **d** 2 Sam. 12:15-23

100. How can I live for Heaven in a world gone to Hell?

When all is said and done, only two cultures will remain – the cultures of Heaven and Hell. Today, you live between the two and experience a bit of each every day. The decisions you make every day either pull hell up into your life (e.g. bitterness, lies, pride, hard-heartedness), or invite heaven down into your life (e.g. forgiveness, truth, humility, tender-heartedness). For this to happen, we must be intentional in all our decision-making by first ensuring you have, “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”^a Once we have seen things from the perspective of God’s culture in Heaven, we are then ready to respond in the Spirit and live Kingdom down rather than hell up. Jesus taught us to pray and live exactly this way, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”^b

Until we get to the Kingdom of Heaven, we have to endure some hellish days here on earth. Heaven is coming, hell is ending, so trust Jesus who is coming and keep on going. For the unbeliever, this life is your Heaven and what awaits you is hell. For the believer, this life is your hell and what awaits you is Heaven. As Winston Churchill is believed to have famously said, “If you’re going through hell, keep going...”

a Col. 3:2 **b** Matt. 6:10

NOTES

1. The Standard Bible Society, "Translation Philosophy,," 2009, <http://www.esv.org/translation/philosophy>
2. Historic creationism is best articulated by John Sailhamer in *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Dawson Media; 2nd edition, 2011), esp. pp. 44–45, and *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 81–100. Sailhamer sees the central idea as telling the story of humanity rather than the story of cosmos. He let the text itself define key terms like land and day.
3. Proponents include Creation Ministries International; <http://creation.com>; Henry Morris, Institute for Creation Research, <http://www.icr.org>; Ken Hamm, *Answers in Genesis*, <https://answersingenesis.org>.
4. The same Hebrew word for “one” is used for a husband and wife in Gen. 2:24 and for the Trinity in Deut. 6:4.
5. See Douglas Consideine, ed., *Van Nostrand’s Scientific Encyclopedia*, 5th ed. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1976), 943; Keith L. Moore and T. V. N. Persaud, *Before We Are Born: Essentials of Embryology and Birth Defects*, 6th ed. (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 2001), 2; Bruce M. Carlson, *Patten’s Foundations of Embryology*, 6th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996), 3; Jan Langman, *Medical Embryology*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1975), 3; Ronan O’Rahilly and Fabiola Müller, *Human Embryology and Teratology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Wiley-Liss, 1996), 8, 29.
6. D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?* 225.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Some systematic theologies add a sixth covenant with Adam.

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They appeal to Hosea 6:7, which is the only place the word covenant is used in connection with Adam. The debate that surrounds this point on such things as a covenant of works in covenantal theology or a dispensation of innocence in dispensational theology is more than we can address in this one chapter on covenant. Still, since the Genesis account of Adam does not speak of him as being in covenant with God, we have chosen not to include the possibility of the Adamic covenant as part of this chapter, but we do acknowledge that there were Adamic commands.

9. Rabbi Harold M. Kamsler, "Hesed—Mercy or Loyalty?" *The Jewish Bible Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 3 (1999): 184–85.

10. Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 200.

11. D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), Mic. 5:1.

12. For example, in 1 Timothy 1:17, Jesus is the King who has the divine attributes of eternity, immortality, invisibility, and is called "the only God." According to other Scriptures, Jesus other divine attributes possessed by him during His life on earth include omnipresence (Ps. 139:7–12; Matt. 28:20), creator (Isa. 37:16; 44:24; John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2), savior (Joel 2:32; Rom. 10:9–13), and deity as the only God (Isa. 45:21b–23; Phil. 2:10–11).

13. For a more thorough study of this and other issues regarding the Holy Spirit, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* by Graham A. Cole (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007) is a helpful resource.

14. Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, Vesp. 5.4.

15. John 19:19.

16. Crucifixion, A&E Television and The History Channel.

17. Mark 15:25, 33.

18. Ps. 34:20; John 19:36.

19. Luke 23:34; Luke 23:43; John 19:26–27, Psalm 22:2, Matt. 27:46

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cf. Mark 15:34 as this is the only statement from the cross appearing in more than one gospel, John 19:28-29. It is possible that the sponge and wine vinegar were part of the military kit used by soldiers to clean themselves after going to the bathroom in the field, the ancient version of both toilet paper and disinfectant.

20. John 19:30.

21. Luke 23:46.

22. Gen. 8:20; 12:7-8; 13:4, 8; Job 1:5; 42:7-9.

23. John 1:29.

24. Eph. 1:10, 22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:10, 19.

25. John 3:36; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:9-10.

26. Rev. 6:16-17.

27. Genesis 38; 1 Cor. 11:28-29.

28. Rom. 1:18, 24, 26.

29. Deut. 32:21-22; John 3:36; Eph. 5:6; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 14:9-11.

30. Ex. 23:7.

31. Ex. 34:6-7.

32. Acts 13:38; Rom. 4:3-5; 5:1.

33. Rom. 10:3.

34. 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 Tim. 2:1-6; 4:10; Titus 2:11.

35. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 1 John 2:2; 4:14; Rev. 5:9.

36. Isa. 53:6; Heb. 2:9.

37. 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9.

38. Isa. 55:11; John 6:44; Rom. 8:30; 11:29; 1 Cor. 1:23-29; 2 Tim. 1:9.

39. Matt. 1:21; 20:28; 26:28; Rom. 5:12-19.

40. John 10:11, 15, 26-27.

41. Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25.

42. Rom. 8:32-35.

43. Matt. 1:21.

44. John 15:3.

45. 2 Cor. 5:15; Titus 2:14.

46. E.g., see his commentaries on Romans 5, Galatians 5, Colos-

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sians 1, and Hebrews.

47. See N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 30–31.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*, 83.

52. William Lane Craig, “Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?” in *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

53. Flavius Josephus, “Jewish Antiquities,” in *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999), 18.63–64, emphasis added. There is great controversy about the authenticity of this text. Kostenberger, Andreas J.; Kellum, L. Scott; Quarles, Charles L. (2009). *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 104-108 is an excellent summary of the controversy.

54. Suetonius, *Vita Nero* 16.11–13.

55. Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.96.1–7.

56. R. L. Omanson, “The Church,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984).

57. David Powlison, “Idols of the Heart and ‘Vanity Fair,’” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* vol. 13 (Winter 1995): 35. Also available here: [http://www.greentreewebster.org/Articles/Idols%20of%20the%20Heart%20\(Powlison\).pdf](http://www.greentreewebster.org/Articles/Idols%20of%20the%20Heart%20(Powlison).pdf).

58. These points are adapted from John Stott’s book *The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007).

ABOUT PASTOR MARK DRISCOLL & REAL FAITH

With Pastor Mark, it's all about Jesus! Mark and his wife Grace have been married and doing vocational ministry together since 1993. They also planted The Trinity Church with their five kids in Scottsdale, Arizona as a family ministry (thetrinitychurch.com) and started Real Faith, a ministry alongside their daughter Ashley that contains a mountain of Bible teaching from Pastor Mark as well as content for women, men, parents, pastors, leaders, Spanish-speakers and more.

Pastor Mark has been named by *Preaching Magazine* one of the 25 most influential pastors of the past 25 years. He has a bachelor's degree in speech communication from the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University as well as a master's degree in exegetical theology from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon. For free sermons, answers to questions, Bible teaching, and more, visit **RealFaith.com** or download the **Real Faith app**.

Together, Mark and Grace have authored "Win Your

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War” and “Real Marriage”. Pastor Mark has authored numerous other books including “Spirit-Filled Jesus”, “Who Do You Think You Are?”, “Vintage Jesus”, and “Doctrine”. Recently, Pastor Mark also released “Pray Like Jesus” with his daughter Ashley Chase as a father-daughter project.

If you have any prayer requests for us, questions for future Ask Pastor Mark or Dear Grace videos, or a testimony regarding how God has used this and other resources to help you learn God’s Word, we would love to hear from you at hello@realfaith.com.



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