

Questions/answers on the Interpretation of New Testament Scriptures

by James Blaine Chapman

The sermon explores the interpretation of New Testament scriptures, addressing common questions and misconceptions while emphasizing the importance of context and theological understanding.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:31

Topics: "New Testament", "Sanctification"

Description

James Blaine Chapman delves into various questions and answers from the Bible, harmonizing apparent contradictions and providing insightful explanations. He addresses topics such as the distinction between hearing the voice and understanding its meaning, the daily struggle of living for the gospel, Christ's proclamation to spirits in prison, maintaining a conscience void of offense, and the importance of doing good without expecting anything in return. Chapman also discusses the significance of God's choice and sanctification, the joy in heaven over repentant sinners, the concept of a conscience void of offense, and the warning against fruitless works. He emphasizes the need for surrendering to God's will, the importance of faith and love, and the consequences of rejecting God's grace.

Transcript

QUESTION #122 -- In Acts 9:7 it is said that the men who were with Paul heard the voice, and in Acts 22:9 it says they "heard not the voice." How do you harmonize this apparent contradiction?

ANSWER #122 -- These fellow travelers heard the sound of the voice, but they did not hear the meaning of the voice. This is a very common distinction, especially in countries where more than one language is in current use. In such instances it is not uncommon for a man to tell you he cannot hear Hebrew or whatever language is being discussed.

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QUESTION #123 -- What did Paul mean by his saying "I die daily"? (1 Corinthians 15:31).

ANSWER #123 -- One of the marvels of human ingenuity is the fact that contenders for the retention of inbred sin through life have tried to apply this saying to sin or to spiritual experiences of any kind. The plain meaning, taken along with the context is simply that the apostle was exposed to danger and death for the

gospel every day, and his argument was that he did it because the hope of resurrection was so strong in him. On the subject of inbred sin, that is crucified in us when the Holy Ghost comes in sanctifying fullness and there is no occasion for further deaths or "deeper deaths."

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QUESTION #124 -- Please explain I Peter 3:19, "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison," etc.

ANSWER #124 -- Verses 18, 19 and 20 of the third chapter of I Peter are recognized as constituting one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament. In the verses immediately preceding the apostle has been instructing his brethren as to their manner of conduct when they were being persecuted for righteousness' sake, and holds up the example of Christ and His death for sin. Then he proceeds to tell what happened after death. Dr. Godbey used to explain that after His death upon the cross Jesus passed on into the world of spirits and there proclaimed His atoning work and accomplished His resurrection in the sight of the spirits of men who had refused to believe this message in the days of their flesh, and the antediluvians are cited as a specific example of those who heard Him there. And there is no necessity for complicating the passage by giving full content to the word "preach" in this connection, forcing it to mean that He offered grace to those who refused in the days of their flesh. Rather, the word, as in the classical Greek, can mean simply heralding. And it is rational to believe that the work of Christ was thus heralded among the spirits of Christ rejecters by which means their doubts were the more fully condemned. Incidentally the passage serves to show that the human soul continues immediately after death in conscious existence and enlarged activity, and this is very valuable as respecting the revelation of divine truth.

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QUESTION #125 -- What does Paul mean in Acts 24:16 by "A conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men"?

ANSWER #125 -- He means that state of inner moral approval which one can have only when he is aware of no intention of doing another evil, but is assured within himself of his intention of doing nothing but good to all. This estate is found only by always following the plan of Abraham Lincoln of "doing the right, as God gives me to know the right," in all things both great and small.

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QUESTION #126 -- In the 6th chapter of Luke it says, "Do good and lend, hoping to receive nothing again." What does this mean?

ANSWER #126 -- It means that you are to do good in the hope that you will not require a like favor. There is no thought here that you are to lend hoping that your neighbor will forget or refuse to return what he borrows. But you lend to him hoping that you will not need to borrow from him, and give to others hoping that you will not yourself become needy and require their gifts. This is the only motive that will entitle one to a reward in heaven; for any other motive is born of self-seeking, if not of selfishness.

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QUESTION #127 -- Please explain Deuteronomy 7:7-9; Ephesians 1:4, 5; and 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

ANSWER #127 -- I take it that you are troubled about the suggestion that God chose Israel without respect to their fitness and that He chose sanctification for His people even before they had an existence. In the instance of the choice of Israel it is well to remember that the choice was for a given purpose, and that it did not directly concern the salvation of the soul. God used the heathen King Cyrus, but there is no evidence that Cyrus was ever saved. In the other instances God chose the means for making His people holy before they were ever created and later marred by sin. The last text mentioned shows that God, without any conference with man, chose that the way to salvation should be the way of saving from sin, and not saving in sin. But remember, also, that this does not indicate that anyone can be saved without his own consent and co-operation. God chose the means and the process without consulting man. But if men are to be saved through the means and by the process they must come to God of their own consent and take the way He has chosen for them.

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QUESTION #128 -- Luke 15:10 says, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Does that mean that the saints in heaven rejoice when a sinner repents?

ANSWER #128 -- It does seem to include that, although I do not think that is the principal thought. The principal thought is that there is real joy of the highest order over the salvation of a soul that finds his way to God. A joy that can be only just dimly prefigured by the joy of a woman who finds the coin that is necessary to restore her symbol of marital fidelity and her badge of purity and honor.

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QUESTION #129 -- Please explain I Corinthians 3:15, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

ANSWER #129 -- I heard a noted preacher in his "eternal security" argument, say this means that we are saved by grace, no matter what we do. So that once we have been regenerated, we will go to heaven, no matter how many sins of commission and omission we may commit, but that we will lose our reward in heaven if we do not live right and well. This application is, according to my judgment, fallacious and without warrant. The text, as I understand it, is a warning that in addition to taking heed to the saving of our own souls, we should take heed to our life of service as well, lest we spend our time at something that does not count, and thus come to the end of life with no worthwhile accomplishment. Just let us take foreign missionary work for example: like every Christian hearted visitor, when I came to my first missionary field I saw so much physical misery that I wanted to give away everything I possessed and ask my friends to do likewise, and turn the mission into a relief agency. But the seasoned missionaries said, "That will not do. It is not always a good thing to give 'things' to the people. Much of their misery comes of their own sins, and if they could be saved morally and spiritually, they would save themselves mentally and physically. When we give the people too many physical blessings, we make 'rice Christians' out of them -- that is we tempt them to profess to be Christians for the physical benefits derived, and that becomes a snare to them. We must patiently and persistently give them the gospel and work for inner, rather than for outer changes." And I myself have seen programs there and here which were of such a nature that no real good was done, even though the workers were earnest enough. Let us all take heed that we give ourselves to tasks that count. Take another example: our preachers are constantly beset with requests to give over their meetings to various reform ideas. And if they did it, there would be little opportunity to preach the gospel and save souls, and so the reforms would fail anyway. It is a strong

temptation when some leader says, "Now, the church can put this over, if you will just turn your attention to it." But the church has a ministry, given her by her divine Lord, and whenever she takes up some other, she is in danger of building of hay, wood and stubble, which will in the end come to naught.

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QUESTION #130 -- Please explain what is meant by "dispensation of the gospel" in I Corinthians 9:17.

ANSWER #130 -- The Greek word *oikonomēa* primarily means "management of household," and is about the equivalent of our English "economy." But it has several meanings in popular usage. But in the passage mentioned and in Colossians 1:25 Paul uses it to indicate the office which God entrusted to him of proclaiming the gospel.

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QUESTION #131 -- What does it mean in the Scriptures when it speaks of certain ones believing and being saved "and their house"? Some such instances are John 4:53, Acts 16:31, and Acts 16:15.

ANSWER #131 -- Expressions of this sort are nothing like so confusing in the Orient as they are in the individualistic West. Of course we think our way is the normal and right way, but we must not forget that the Oriental way is older, and that ours, and not theirs, is the innovation. It seems quite natural in China or India for people to come to Christ by the family, and it is not unusual for them to want to come by the village and even by larger contingencies still. The "mass revival" which some people think is the invention of present-day evangelists is as old as the East. Of course coming to Christ is a personal matter, and in discriminating language we might have to say that in these cases of men "and their houses" coming there was an element of formality, and that likely not every one in the group was truly saved. But the remark of their coming is sufficient to show that the impression which brought the head of the house to Christ and true faith was not entirely lost upon the other members of the family, and that the other members at least professed to make the same step the head of the family made. I was just ready to begin the ceremony for the baptizing of a fine group of believers in the camp meeting at Buldana, India, when a commotion was created by a man in the audience. Upon inquiry I found that it was the husband of one of the women in the group of believers, and that he was raising objection to our baptizing his wife unless we would also baptize him, for in a case like this the act would be the equivalent of acknowledging his wife as advanced above him, and that would destroy the order and tranquillity of his home. The missionaries thought this man had not served his probation sufficiently, and advised against admitting him to the group to be baptized. But the man's mother-in-law, a Christian, sustained the man's objections, and upon the advice of the missionaries, we asked the woman to step aside and wait a few months until her husband could prove himself sufficiently to be admitted along with herself. In the West this would have been considered compromise on the part of leaders and undue and unjustifiable interference on the part of the non-approved husband. But India is the East, and the maintenance of the family unit is important. And before we judge harshly perhaps we should meditate a little upon the case of the Western man who believes in Christianity and the church and would not have his wife and children left out of their benefits, but who, with all his boasted independence, is such a moral coward that he leaves the leadership in this most difficult of all fields of responsibility to his wife -- an Eastern man could not respect him.

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QUESTION #132 -- What is the meaning of the "second death" (Revelation 21:3).

ANSWER #132 -- The first death is condemnation for sin, the second death is damnation for sin. The sinner dies in that he is separated from fellowship with God while in this world. But his separation is final and irreparable when he dies in his sins and goes to "the bottomless pit," and this is the "second death" -- damnation, the execution of the penalty of guilt

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QUESTION #133 -- Please explain Matthew 16:19 about the giving of the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

ANSWER #133 -- It cannot be that Christ gave the keys of eternal destiny for souls to any mortal man. (Read Revelation 1:18.) The explanation could be made lengthy, but I believe it is enough for me to say that Christ left His Word and His work altogether to His disciples when He went back to heaven, and that the gospel is the key which He has given, not to Peter only, nor to the other apostles exclusively, but to all Christians, and He has no other plan for saving men except by publishing the gospel among them through His Church.

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QUESTION #134 -- John 7:7 says, "The world cannot hate you." John 15:19 says, "The world hateth you." How do you harmonize these two statements?

ANSWER #134 -- John 7:7 was addressed to the brethren of Jesus in the flesh who were unbelievers and because of the world unhated by the world. John 15:19 was addressed to Christ's own true disciples who are hated by the world because they are not of the world.

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QUESTION #135 -- Please explain the scripture that says, "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Some say it means we are to enjoy the pleasures of this life regardless of God's cause and those about us who are in need.

ANSWER #135 -- The passage you mention is in I Corinthians 15:32, and this in turn is based upon Isaiah 22:13. The argument is that of a worldly person who does not believe in the resurrection, and for such a person the argument is valid. Paul admits the argument to show how definite the contrast between the worldly person and the Christian whose hope is in the resurrection from the dead, and for such the choice is just the opposite. The formula for the Christian is not given in this study of contrasts, but evidently it would be, "Let us live soberly, righteously and godly, even though this may involve the loss of many fleshly pleasures, for we shall come out of the grave in the resurrection and then shall enter upon joys that will compensate many times over for all we have lost by our way of self-denial and devotion to God."

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QUESTION #136 -- Does the falling away mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 have reference to the Dark Ages?

ANSWER #136 -- Yes. That is, the reference is to the great apostasy which reached its depths in what Protestants call the Dark Ages.

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QUESTION #137 -- Please explain Matthew 5:40-42, "And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke. also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

ANSWER #137 -- The Christian way of getting rid of an enemy is to forgive him, love him, and do him service without limit, and this is the only way that has ever been found of successfully dealing with an enemy. Every other way of dealing with him gives you the worst of it.

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QUESTION #138 -- If charity (love) is greater than faith (1 Corinthians 13:13), why did not Peter say, "Lord, increase our love," instead of "faith," when the Lord told him to forgive his brother seven times seven times in one day? (Luke 17:5, 6).

ANSWER #138 -- Henry Drummond said love is greater than faith because it is the result, while faith is only the condition. It is greater than hope because it is the only true source of hope. Looking at the question as you present it, it does seem to me that what Peter and the others needed was an increase in love. But since faith is the condition, an increase in faith would result in an increase in love. It is on the very same basis that we are not to seek the witness of the Spirit to our salvation. Rather we are to repent and seek salvation, for we are sure that when we find salvation, God will graciously give us the witness to it. And if the Lord will give us an increase in faith, that will result in an increase of love and of all graces.

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QUESTION #139 -- What does the word Nicolaitanes in Revelation 2:15 mean?

ANSWER #139 -- It is generally admitted that there is no authority for an ancient sect known by this name. So about the best we can do is to define the word. It is from nikao, which means to conquer, and laos which means the people or the laity. It would seem therefore to describe people who held to the distinction between clergy and laity, especially to those who hold that the clergy are to rule the laity. Historically the reference is to the beginning of the hierarchy which eventuated in Roman Catholicism.

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QUESTION #140 -- Why is the word "unknown" printed in italics in the 14th chapter of First Corinthians in the reference to tongues?

ANSWER #140 -- The italics are to indicate that in the judgment of the translators the original word did not fully justify this qualifying word, although they thought the meaning in English was not clear without its insertion. Usually it is just as well to omit the italicized words in reading the Bible.

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QUESTION #141 -- What do you understand to be the meaning of the words of Jesus immediately following "The Golden Rule," "For this is the law and the prophets"?

ANSWER #141 -- I understand that the Master meant, "This is the sum of all that is required by the holy Scriptures as relating to the relationship of man to his fellowmen."

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QUESTION #142 -- What does the phrase "in earth as in heaven," in the Lord's Prayer, mean?

ANSWER #142 -- It means that our prayer is and should be for the coming of God's kingdom into our own hearts and lives and into the hearts and lives of all men. There are, so far as I can see, no limitations whatsoever.

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QUESTION #143 -- Regarding I Corinthians 14:34, 35: do you believe this means women should not talk or vote on matters pertaining to the church?

ANSWER #143 -- I believe this passage is pretty much of local application, as are a number of passages in Corinthians. It forbids the women's asking their husbands about church matters in the services of the church (which practice was noisy and confusing), and permits them to ask their husbands at home. The domestic order set forth in the New Testament is, as I believe, valid for the family and for the home for which it was intended. But the rights and privileges of grace and of the Church are set forth in their essential form, as I believe, in Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." And under this essential order, as I believe, sex is not a consideration, and as General Superintendent Walker used to say, "Some of our very best men and best preachers are women."

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QUESTION #144 -- Please explain Matthew 18:18, "Whatsoever ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," etc.

ANSWER #144 -- This is just another form of saying that the gospel of reconciliation is committed to the Church, and that there is no other agency for bringing God and men together.

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QUESTION #145 -- What is the meaning of Mark 4:12 where Jesus seems to speak with fear that some would be converted and forgiven?

ANSWER #145 -- Moral unwillingness results in moral inability -- they will not and therefore they cannot. The fault is altogether in the people and not in God. But always the means intended to save will harden when rejected, and the language of the present text is that of the declarative future, and not that of effective purpose.

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QUESTION #146 -- Does Romans 11:26 mean that the ten lost tribes of Israel will be restored to divine favor?

ANSWER #146 -- It means that all, Jews, Israel and Gentiles, are restored to divine favor in the sense of having grace and salvation offered to them. But there is nothing in the Bible to warrant anyone in believing that godless men or godless nations will be elected to God's favor and promotion without repentance. Salvation through Christ is by grace and not by race.

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QUESTION #147 -- My mother's preacher referred to that scripture about the man being caught up into the third heaven and seeing things unlawful to utter (2 Corinthians 12:24), and said he thought this man was Paul himself. Mother thinks it could have been John the Baptist or Lazarus. Who do you think it was?

ANSWER #147 -- I agree with your mother's preacher, I believe it was Paul. The subject was so delicate that modesty suggested the use of the third person, just as John sometimes called himself, "that other disciple."

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QUESTION #148 -- What are we to understand by "take no thought for the morrow, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink or what ye shall put on"?

ANSWER #148 -- We must take all the Bible has to say on any subject before we make our deductions. The Bible condemns anxious, tormenting care, but commends care in business and industry in labor. This, I think, indicates the middle ground we are to take. We must be careful to earn our living, and careful to conserve the fruits of our labors to the best of our ability. Then we must not worry, but leave the outcome entirely with the Lord.

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QUESTION #149 -- What does Hebrews 10:29 mean? How can one tread under foot the Son of God, count His blood unholy, and do despite to the Spirit of grace? And if one does all this what is his state before God?

ANSWER #149 -- The book of Hebrews was written to people who were quite familiar with the imagery of the Old Testament and passages like this were doubtless more natural and less strained with them than they usually are with us. But since the warnings of this book were largely addressed to those in danger of apostatizing from Christianity to Judaism, we may make a summary by saying that anyone who leaves Christ for any other hope whatsoever does in the spiritual sense what is implied in this full imagery and is in grave danger always of crossing the line which separates God's goodness from His wrath, although it is not given us to know when special individuals do this, and we should hold on in prayer and faith for the salvation of the most abandoned backslider, for some of such return to God, like John Wesley Redfield, even after they have espoused the cause of infidelity. We cannot measure the mercy of God.

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QUESTION #150 -- Our Bible study class has had difficulty with Matthew 5:19, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven," and James 2:10, which says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. These verses seem to us to contradict each other.

ANSWER #150 -- Perhaps I do not see the point in your difficulty. Let us take the text from James first: It is evident, I think, that the apostle is speaking of the unity of the law as an exponent of the will of God. In this sense any disobedience is disobedience to God, and there cannot be degrees of sin any more than there are degrees in death. To be obedient at all one must be obedient to all the light he has received from God. The text from Matthew simply shows the risk involved in letting down the standards of doctrine and moral conduct which God has set up in His Word. And if you read on into the next verse you will see that

acceptable righteousness must take in not the letter of the law only, but also its spirit and design.

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QUESTION #151 -- Referring to Matthew 14:15-21, they were said to be in "a desert place;" and yet Jesus commanded them to sit down "on the grass." How do you harmonize this? Also what were they doing with twelve baskets and only five loaves and two fishes?

ANSWER #151 -- The word desert (Greek eramos and translated wilderness in Matthew 3:1) describes either an uninhabited or an uninhabitable place, and there is nothing inconsistent with the suggestion that in such a territory belonging to the city of Bethsaida there were grass plots sufficient to provide seating for great multitudes. This was the case regarding the desert or wilderness through which the Children of Israel passed on their way to Canaan. It was customary for transient men, like the apostles of our Lord, to always take along their "haversacks" in which to carry their food supplies, and since there were twelve of the apostles, this accounts for the twelve baskets (Greek kofivos -- hand-basket) which were filled at the close of the feast.

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QUESTION #152 -- In Matthew 5:22 Jesus condemned calling people fools. But in I Corinthians 15:36 Paul says, "Thou foal" to those who questioned the Resurrection. How do you explain?

ANSWER #152 -- The Scriptures acknowledge intellectual fools, i.e., idiots, and spiritual fools, i.e., the willingly blinded. To call one a fool in the first sense is sinful and wrong. To call him a fool in the second sense may sometimes be necessary and useful. The examples you give illustrate the difference.

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QUESTION #153 -- Please explain Luke 7:28, "For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

ANSWER #153 -- As a man and a prophet John was without a superior. But he was dispensationally just at the door of the gospel age. Therefore the least Christian was and is dispensationally greater than John.

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QUESTION #154 -- How do you harmonize the two parables in Matthew 13:24-30 and 13:47-50, where it is indicated that the wheat and tares must be allowed to grow together until the "time of harvest," and the drag net brings in good fish and bad, with Deuteronomy 17:7 and I Corinthians 5:13 in which the duty of purging the church is implied?

ANSWER #154 -- I explain it on the theory that the field where the wheat and tares grow is the world, and that the drag net is all saving forces, including civil government and secular education. In order that the Church shall be a real force for the reformation and regeneration in the world it must be purged, and discipline must be enforced. Always a Christian spirit is to prevail, and always it must be remembered that salvation is the high objective. But still the membership of the church must be selective as to doctrine believed, experience enjoyed, and ethics practiced.

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QUESTION #155 -- In the seventh chapter of I Corinthians we note the following expressions: "But I speak this by permission and not of commandment (verse 6); "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord" (v.12); "I have no commandment of the Lord; yet I give my judgment" (v.25). And a similar expression in 2 Corinthians 8:8. Does this mean that in these instances Paul gave his individual opinion or judgment, and was not inspired?

ANSWER #155 -- It means that on the questions under consideration Paul did not claim to have a special revelation, but gave what seemed to him to be the necessary deductions. But this does not affect the matter of inspiration for us. The whole Bible is the inspired Word of God, and those words of Paul, even the ones in which he expresses his liberality as to God's revelation, are in the Bible by the will and through the inspiration of God. In other words, God inspired Paul to write the words in which he said he did not claim the highest inspiration for every word he said.

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QUESTION #156 -- John 10:28 says, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Does this mean that if we are once saved we are always saved?

ANSWER #156 -- It means that if we put our trust in God we shall find Him dependable forevermore, and that no outside force shall be able to separate us from Him. But it certainly does not mean that one who has been converted cannot break his obedience, cast away his faith and fall back into wickedness and die in his sins and be everlastingly lost. It cannot mean that, for the Bible in other instances teaches that we are always in danger of such apostasy as I have mentioned, and the Bible does not contradict itself.

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QUESTION #157 -- Please read Luke 1:15 and tell me, was John the Baptist born without sin?

ANSWER #157 -- Jesus Christ, who was born of a virgin and without a human father, is the only sinless one that has appeared since the creation of our first parents.

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QUESTION #158 -- It seems to me that our Lord, in Matthew 23:23, commends the keeping of at least a part of the law of Moses. But if this is right, how do you harmonize Galatians 5:18, which says, "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye, are not under law."

ANSWER #158 -- Well, to start with, I do not understand that the passage from Galatians says anything about the law of Moses in particular, but rather of the whole question of law as relating to rules of conduct, and that the statement is the equivalent of saying, "If ye follow the Spirit you will live so holily and righteously that the law will have no claims against you." Then as concerning Matthew 23:23, I understand that the Master did commend the observance of tithing, although this, too, was enjoined and practiced, as may be seen by Genesis 14:20, 28:22 and other passages, a long time before Moses' day, and is a regulation ordained for the support of God's work, which existed before the law was given, while the law was in force, and all the time since the Christian dispensation has held sway. This is evident from the fact that no other plan for the financing of God's work in the world is presented to take its place in the New Testament. As a further observation, I think it should be remembered that it was only the ceremonial and certain administrative phases of the civil law that were "done away in Christ." The moral law as it underlies

the Ten Commandments, and as expressed by the Ten Commandments, is in force now as ever, in the sense that no one can break it with immunity. There are a few who think to catch us about the seventh day Sabbath when we make this statement. But the spirit of the Sabbath is transferred and expressed in our Lord's Sabbath, and the fourth commandment is preserved in this memorial day of the new creation. Perhaps I will speak a little more fully on this at another time. Enough here to say that the literalists who preach the seventh day Sabbath have a thesis that is absurd when they attempt to apply it to the people of all the world. It was made for the Hebrews and for the little land of Palestine, but it will not work in the Arctic Circle and is impossible when taken in connection with the International Date Line and the world-wide society of men. And those who ignore and break the Lord's Day Sabbath are voting and laboring to stultify the propagation of the gospel, for the gospel could scarcely survive the utter abolition of its own special day for conservation and preservation.

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QUESTION #159 -- Does Romans 11:32, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all" refer to all people or just to the group to whom Paul was writing?

ANSWER #159 -- The particular reference in this case was to Israel, but the same thing in substance is said in the third chapter of Romans regarding Gentiles also. God has accounted all as in unbelief and all who get to heaven will be saved by faith and will sing the song of redemption there.

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QUESTION #160 -- Please reconcile these two statements: In Luke 23:43, the Savior said to the penitent thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." In John 20:17, He said to Mary, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father."

ANSWER #160 -- Perhaps the difficulty arises from a too literal interpretation of the text from John. The thought is, "Do not detain me now by acts of worship. I will not be immediately ascending to heaven, and later there will be opportunities for such worship. Hasten, now, to tell my disciples that which I have bidden you." And with this thought made clear, there is no inconsistency between this and the other text at all. The converted thief was with Jesus in heaven the day of the crucifixion, and now Jesus was back in His resurrected body. Later in the same body he ascended again to heaven.

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QUESTION #161 -- Please explain the parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke 16:1-9.

ANSWER #161 -- The unjust steward is not commended for being unjust, but for being wise to extend the advantages of his position on into the days when he should be no longer employed. And the lesson which Jesus draws is this: "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of money and such goods as you possess that when these earthly things shall fail those whom you have saved by your right use of your goods shall receive you and welcome you into heaven."

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QUESTION #162 -- What is the meaning of Matthew 7:6 about casting your pearls before swine?

ANSWER #162 -- It is a metaphor enforcing the thought that it is useless to press the claims of the gospel upon some who have set themselves against it. For example, Jesus refused to speak before His enemies at His trial, for they had decided to condemn Him anyway and defense was useless. There are times when we are thrown into company where we can do nothing better than just hold our peace, for there is no chance that our rebuke or witness will be heeded.

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QUESTION #163 -- I was told by a Bible scholar that Jude 9 refers to Moses being resurrected, so that he could appear at the Transfiguration. How then could Christ be the "firstfruits of them which slept"? (1 Corinthians 15:20).

ANSWER #163 -- Without venturing upon the meaning of the passage in Jude, you face the same difficulty regarding Enoch and Elijah, both of whom were translated into their glorified bodies in advance of the resurrection of Jesus, that you have concerning Moses in the case mentioned. Christ's position as the "firstfruits of the resurrection" and head of the new creation is a precedence in something more than time. Just as He was "A Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," it is by Him and through Him that any enter the glorified life. Therefore, in this more important sense, He was before Enoch and Moses and Elijah.

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QUESTION #164 -- In I Thessalonians 5:23 Paul prays for the sanctification and preservation of "spirit, soul and body." Please define and distinguish spirit, soul and body.

ANSWER #164 -- As to essence, as I believe, all there is of man is described as material and immaterial -- that is body and spirit (or body and soul, to use the more current terms). But in function man is compound and complex, consisting of soma, body, an organized system composed of bones, muscles, nerves, blood, etc.: psyche, soul, which is the animal life and the seat of the affections, passions and appetites: and of pneuma, spirit, the immortal principle, which alone possesses the faculties of intelligence, understanding, thinking and reasoning. And the apostle prays that this whole compound and complex being may be sanctified wholly and preserved unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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QUESTION #165 -- Mark 11:13 puzzles me. It seems that Jesus expected fruit on the fig tree, and cursed the tree for not having it, even though it was not the time for figs as yet. How do you explain that?

ANSWER #165 -- People familiar with the fig tree in Palestine tell us that such fig trees as held their leaves through the winter usually have figs at the time of year mentioned, although it was still too early for new leaves and new fruit. The tree with leaves and no fruit was a symbol of nations and of individuals who have profession, but have neither the experience nor the life.

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QUESTION #166 -- Matthew 24:34 says, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." What does the word generation mean here?

ANSWER #166 -- The Greek word genea, in primary definition, means "race, kind, stock, breed," as all lexicons show. The promise, therefore, is that the family of Israel shall be preserved until Christ comes again the second time.

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QUESTION #167 -- Please compare Mark 5, Luke 8 and Matthew 8 and explain. Matthew says there were two demoniacs healed, and the other two writers mention but one.

ANSWER #167 -- The simple explanation is that there were two demoniacs who were healed, but one was much more notorious than the other, so the two evangelists mention but the one outstanding case. But there is no inconsistency here, since the two evangelists do not deny there were two, although they mention but the one. This is evidence that the evangelists wrote independent stories of the life of Jesus, and that there was no connivance among them. This gives the greater value to what they wrote and also testifies to their honesty and independence in the matter.

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QUESTION #168 -- Please identify the "seven spirits of God" mentioned in Revelation 3:1, 4:3, and 5:6.

ANSWER #168 -- I am aware that some think this is a reference to the Holy Spirit, and that the number seven denotes His manifold gifts and graces. But I stand with the older writers who believe that seven angels are meant (although the original word is the word for spirits), and that these angels or ministers were necessary to complete the picture of the throne of God which the apostle is drawing. The place, the number and the traditions of the times all agree in the idea that it is to angels that the references are made.

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QUESTION #169 -- Please explain Matthew 5:3. Who are the poor in spirit?

ANSWER #169 -- Men have commonly interpreted meekness as weakness, and have given credence to the claims of the proud. But Jesus Christ said the man who is conscious of his own weakness and limitations is on the way to get those needs supplied. The poor in spirit are such as He described Himself to be "meek and lowly in heart."

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QUESTION #170 -- Please explain Romans 8:36, "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

ANSWER #170 -- The place where "it is written" is Psalm 44:22. Both in its original setting and in its place in Romans the statement is used to show how God's people are sharers in the common lot of human suffering, and to indicate the need of patient faith to wait for the justification of all that comes to pass as God may choose to do some time, and also to express assurance that in the long process God has not forgotten and will bring His own out triumphant in the end.

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QUESTION #171 -- What is the meaning in Mark 9:44-48, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"?

ANSWER #171 -- In this connection Isaiah 66:24, and Matthew 5:29, 30 should also be read. The descriptive metaphor is taken from the "Valley of the son of Hinnom" (Joshua 18:16), where the Jews went to the extremes of idolatry, even to the point of burning their children to Molech, and which Josiah deified to prevent any repetition of such abominations (2 Kings 23: 10). Later Jewish writers claim that a continual fire was kept burning here to consume the carrion and all sorts of impurities that collected about the capital. And Jesus used this metaphor as a description of hell. I think the details should not be too much strained in application. "Their worm" as I believe, simply stands for the individual, and efforts to confine the application to conscience or to make it mean something like literal worms in hell are, as I believe, uncalled for and unnecessary in sound exegesis. You have the whole point when you learn that temptation to sin should be instantly and ruthlessly rejected, lest you be overcome, yield to sin, die in your sins and spend eternity in hell.

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QUESTION #172 -- What is the meaning of Mark 13:17, where a woe is pronounced upon mothers who live at the time these words are to be fulfilled?

ANSWER #172 -- Portions of the discourse recorded in Mark 13 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans and portions to the great tribulation which comes at the end of the present age. In other words, the Jewish and the Gentile tribulations are both mentioned and in such connection that it requires discriminate study to distinguish between them. But the text to which you refer with its immediate connections, I have no doubt refers to the Jewish tribulation-the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and is therefore in the past.

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QUESTION #173 -- Please explain Luke 9:60, "Let the dead bury the dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

ANSWER #173 -- The injunction means that earthly duties must not be allowed to interfere with the heavenly calling. It can never be anyone's duty to do wrong. Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead, but go thou and serve God. The father in question was not actually dead, but (according to the Jewish thought on such matters) was old and needed care. So the son whom Jesus called said in substance, "It is more important for me to take care of my father until his life is finished than to become a disciple." Jesus said, "No, it is more important to become a disciple." And in another passage Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto thee." This means that when we give God first place we serve our loved ones and friends better than if we give them first place and by so doing relegate God to second place. And thus we find that duty is a unit, and that when we serve God fully we fulfill all duty in doing so.

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QUESTION #174 -- Hebrews 7:3 says Melchisedec was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, no end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." What does this mean?

ANSWER #174 -- The subject is the priesthood of Christ, and of this Melchisedec was typical in that he did not receive his priesthood from his father nor pass it on to his son, but was, in the historic sense, a priest of God the first, last and the only time in which he appears on the stage of human affairs. As a man, Melchisedec had father, mother, beginning and end of days, as have all mortals in this world. But in the priesthood he had no pedigree, and thus became a type of Christ in His ever continuing intercession for us.

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QUESTION #175 -- In Matthew 2:18 is a quotation from Jeremiah regarding Rachel weeping for her children. Why is this quoted here, and what is the meaning?

ANSWER #175 -- When Jacob was on his way home -- back to his father's home -- from Haran, Rachel died at the birth of Benjamin and was buried just outside what later became the site of Bethlehem, where her tomb is found, as I myself have seen, until this day. Rachel was the typical mother, and the mothers of Bethlehem whose children were slain by Herod when he sought the life of the Christ child, are fitly set out under the personal name of Rachel as the ancient prophet saw them weeping bitterly about the tomb of their prototype. The quotation by Matthew was for the purpose of definitely identifying the massacre by Herod with the ancient prophecies concerning Christ.

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