

Frequently Asked Questions

*Volume 2 of a Thirteen Lesson Bible Study
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Introduction

This series of Bible studies originated as a series of articles in the *Woodmont Beacon*, the bulletin of the Woodmont church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas. The articles have been reproduced here as a class text and questions have been appended to facilitate a consideration of questions that often arise among believers and seekers alike.

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LESSON 1: IS GENESIS 1 TRUE?

In this age of deified, but oddly atheistic science, can the account of creation reported by Moses in Genesis be perceived as accurate?

The scriptural account proclaims without reservation “In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth.” Over a period of six days, Jehovah is credited with speaking light and life into existence through his own miraculous power. On the sixth day, it is stated that God created animals and human beings, a grouping that would include our most ancient ancestors and the dinosaurs that once wore the bones that are regularly found in west Texas and on every continent. Yet modern science, which is supposed to be based on observation, hypothesizes forcefully that man and dinosaur never coexisted and that the Earth is billions of years older than it could possibly be through the most liberal computation of Bible dating.

Most religious people in America have bent their understanding of the Bible to obey the edicts of scientists, even though the scientific estimate of the Earth’s age is constantly evolving. The children of Christians are regularly taught that the Earth is billions of years old and that man and dinosaur lived millions of years apart. The creation account of Genesis 1 is considered “flat Earth” dogma in our schools, in spite of the fact that a belief in atheistic evolution requires at least as much “faith” as believing in creation. Faith in man, that is.

If Genesis 1 conflicts with the assumptions of science, which should prevail? Many brethren suggest reinterpreting the scripture so that it bends to scientific estimates. The six-day creation week is padded with million year nights or the days themselves are reconstituted as eras. Some cry that such a process commits no foul, but at the very least, it suggests a surrender of Truth to the world.

Miracles themselves are rejected by science and yet one cannot be a Christian without believing in them (First Corinthians 15:12-13, John 20:30-31). If God could create Adam with the appearance of an adult on his birthday, could he not mold the Earth the same way, giving it an appearance of advanced age so that it would function for its inhabitants immediately?

Those of firm faith will never reject the foundation of God’s relationship with mankind just to make nice with the world.

Questions For Discussion

1. According to Genesis 1:1-2, what was the condition of the Earth as God began his work? Are all three persons of the Godhead present? Even Jesus (Colossians 1:16, John 1:10)?

2. Read Job 38. In this passage, what is God's point? Think!

3. Is there anything in this text at all to indicate that the days were not literal, consecutive 24-hour days? Is there anything to lead the reader to believe that millions of years could have existed in between the days, or that the days could have lasted millions of years themselves?

4. Consider Matthew 19:4. When was man created? Could this have been billions of years after creation commenced? Why or why not?

5. Consider Psalm 19:1-3. How do the heavens declare the glory of God? See also Romans 1:18-21.

6. Miracles are hard for modern people to accept and creation is the broadest miracle of them all. List a few other miracles that Christians must believe.

7. What is true of those who deny the existence of God and his power to create, according to Psalm 14:1?

8. What does the Genesis historian mean that man was made in God's image (1:27)?

LESSON 2: WHAT IS FAITH?

It is an abstract term that seems to defy easy definition. Many ask, “What is faith?”

The Bible answers this important question very succinctly in Hebrews 11:1-2: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Christian faith is a confidence in God that his promises are reliable and his testimony is true. Without actually seeing God himself, we recognize him through the deeds of providence, his fingerprints on creation and his witness through the inspired word.

John began to close his account of Christ’s life by suggesting that the record of the Lord’s miracles is evidence enough to believe in him (John 20:30-31). He was commenting upon the Lord’s gentle rebuke of “doubting” Thomas: “Blessed are those have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Those miraculous works of Christ ceased with the death of the last apostle, but the providential care of God never ends. In our lives, we can see and sense the concern of God as he answers prayer and gives blessing.

Even many secular scientists are coming to the conclusion that the universe shows evidence of design. That is because the fingerprints of a creator are all over the world. To believe that the solar system and the human body are mere cosmic accidents would require an immensely ungodly faith in statistical absurdities. Paul warned, “For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20). It is the fool who has no faith and says there is no God when the world around him shouts that there is (Psalm 14:1). Indeed, the heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1).

Moreover, the preservation of the Bible testifies to the sovereignty of Almighty God. Although its ink was supplied by dozens of writers over many centuries, the Bible is without contradiction and its prophecies are without fail. It is a message that testifies to its own inspiration and divine plan. Bible faith is confident in God’s will without doubting (James 2).

Questions for Discussion

1. How does Hebrews 11:1-2 define faith? Explain what this means to you.

2. Is faith, then, blind? How do the following contribute to the validity of faith in God?

- Signs of intelligent design in creation
- Presence of conscience and morality in humans alone
- Amazing cohesiveness of Bible, including fulfilled prophecies and absence of internal contradiction

3. Must modern men witness miracles in order to have faith (John 20:29-31)? What should be sufficient, in light of the fact that a providential God obviously exists?

4. What is “divine providence”? Give some Bible examples. How does it bolster people’s faith in God (Matthew 6:25-33)?

5. Modern thinkers contend that religion is foolish and that atheistic evolution is the answer to man’s origins. Which scientist has actually observed universe creation or one species evolving into another?

6. What is true of the person who ponders the universe and refuses to believe in God (Romans 1:18-23, Psalm 14:1)?

7. The sacrifices of many people who were in a position to know for certain because of their convictions is further testimony to the validity of the Bible message about faith. What did these people sacrifice and what could they have done and saved simply by recanting their convictions?

- Mary, the mother of Jesus
- Saul of Tarsus
- The apostles

LESSON 3: WHAT IS A GOSPEL MEETING?

I saw the sign beside the church building that said, “Gospel Meeting Tonight,” but what, pray tell, is a “Gospel Meeting”?

Whenever gospel meeting season rolls around, Christians are given the opportunity to hear a guest speaker in their home congregation preach nightly for a few days or even a week. It is also a period in which the members are encouraged to invite friends, neighbors, acquaintances, relatives and strangers to come and hear the gospel. The church then is meeting for the purpose of the good news. Hence, it is a “gospel meeting.”

The more popular phrase for similar events among denominations is “revival” and that phrase really is no more or less scripturally sound than “gospel meeting.” A periodic revival of zeal is precisely one of our ambitions in conducting a “gospel meeting.” Peter’s epistles were attempts at revival (Second Peter 1:13), as were those of Christ (Revelation 3:3) and of Paul (Second Timothy 1:6). Certainly, however, we should take care not to confine our meetings for the gospel and attempts at revival to a couple of weeks in the spring and autumn.

Questions For Discussion

1. Why is the phrase “gospel meeting” appropriate? What benefits or drawbacks could the term have?

2. Is the term “revival,” commonly used among denominations, appropriate as well? What benefits or drawbacks would it have?

3. What responsibilities is the church authorized to undertake according to these passages:
 - a. First Corinthians 11:26:
 - b. Ephesians 4:12:
 - c. Ephesians 3:10:
 - d. First Corinthians 16:1-4:

4. Into which category (or categories) does a gospel meeting fit?
5. Why is the emphasis so much on teaching in gospel meeting efforts?
 - a. Romans 1:16-17:
 - b. Romans 10:17:
 - c. Acts 18:8:
 - d. Ephesians 6:17:
6. Many churches today sprinkle in carnal appeals when offering the gospel to the lost. Why did Jesus refuse to perpetuate such a policy in his own ministry (John 6:4-14, 22-27, 21-66)?
7. Some churches are booming today because of Wednesday Night Dodge Ball and Video Games. How does recreation and entertainment compare to sober instruction as force to convert souls (First Timothy 4:8)?
8. Zeal should always describe the faith of the redeemed, but we would be lying if we suggested that such enthusiasm never flags. How does the writer recommend that Christians renew their zeal?
 - a. Romans 12:1-2:
 - b. Hebrews 5:14:
 - c. Second Timothy 1:6-7:
9. What did Peter do in an attempt to revive others' zeal (Second Peter 1:12-15)? Did he start a church softball league, institute a \$5 a day attendance bribe or hide free cookies under the pews?
10. How did Christ warn these churches where revival was needed?
 - a. Revelation 2:4-5:
 - b. Revelation 3:1-3:

LESSON 4: IS THE RESURRECTION REAL?

We live in a world that has deified science to the point that even certain hypotheses cannot be questioned without a charge of heresy being leveled. Certainly, the miracles of the Bible and the Genesis creation account defy scientific approval, but the issue of resurrection is at least as difficult. Modernists, even among theologians, are suggesting that this doctrine is impossible and unnecessary. Is the resurrection real?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ soon after his death and the eventual resurrection to judgment of all mankind is a central tenet of Christianity. It cannot be abandoned without destroying the faith.

First, the prophet Jesus predicted his resurrection: “I lay down my life that I may take it again ... I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again” (John 10:17-18). Speaking of the temple of his body, Jesus challenged the Jews: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19-21). If his resurrection did not occur, Jesus is a false prophet and deserving of no adoration or audience (Deuteronomy 18:22).

Second, the king Jesus only sits upon the throne of David by virtue of a bodily resurrection and ascension into Heaven. The establishment of his kingdom, the church, was predicated upon his breaking through the prison bars of Hades (Matthew 16:16). Peter testified after seeing the risen Christ that death could not hold him in its power (Acts 2:24), but that God raised him from the tomb before his flesh suffered decay (Acts 2:31-33). If Jesus rotted in the tomb, he is not our king as the Bible states (First Timothy 6:15).

Third, the high priest Jesus mediates for us in Heaven because he is worthy, having lived a perfect life, died an atoning sacrifice and been raised to enter the holy place which is God’s throne room (Hebrews 9:11-15, 10:10-13). There he is our advocate with the Father (First John 2:1), ever living to make intercession for his brethren (Hebrews 7:25).

Belief in our future resurrection is also integral to our faith. If Christ is not raised, our faith is vain, preaching is useless and the dead are all doomed. “If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied” (First Corinthians 15:12-19).

Questions For Discussion

1. When called the “firstborn from the dead,” Jesus is described as the first to rise from the dead, never to die again. List a few Bible characters who were raised from the dead, but who died bodily again later.

2. How does the Bible define physical death (James 2:26)? Where does the body go? Where does the spirit go (Luke 16:19-23)?

3. A great fixed gulf separates the two sides of Hades. How do Jesus and Peter describe each side (Luke 16:19-31 and Second Peter 2:4-11)?

4. Where did the spirit of Jesus spend the three days that it was separated from his lifeless body in Joseph's tomb (Luke 23:40-43, Acts 2:25-28)?

5. How did the prophet Jesus predict his own resurrection (John 10:17-18, John 2:19-21)? When was it accomplished? How did it fulfill the prophecy of Matthew 16:18?

6. Paul's first Corinthian epistle provides the longest discourse on the meaning of the resurrection in the New Testament. Read chapter 15; why is it wrong for one to claim to be a Christian while rejecting the resurrection?

7. How does our resurrection hope destroy the sting of death and strength of sin (First Corinthians 15:54-57, Hebrews 2:14-15)?

8. What is our duty in light of this hope (First Corinthians 15:58, Second Corinthians 5:1-11)?

9. Paul discusses the resurrection of the righteous in First Thessalonians 4:13-18. How will they be summoned from their graves?

LESSON 5: WHAT IS OUR BENEVOLENT ROLE?

Since God himself has always concerned and his people with the needy and vulnerable among them, it is fitting that we wonder, “What is our role in benevolence?”

A distinction is made in the New Testament between responsibilities that belong either to the local congregation or to the individuals that make it up. Since there is no organization or activation of the universal church and there is no precedent for denominational organizations or treasuries, those missions are works without divine authority.

Some argue that anything an individual can do, the church can do, but that logic falls flat when one reads First Corinthians 7:2-3. There are some things that individuals can do that the church cannot.

One example is found in the realm of benevolence. According to First Timothy 5, the individual can and must care for everyone in his household, including young and dependent widows. “If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows” (First Timothy 5:16).

The church does, however, have a special role in the realm of benevolence. Especially in the famine- and persecution-stricken first century, benevolence was an important consideration. The pattern that the apostles developed, though, was limited to assisting fellow saints in need. The churches did not use benevolence as a lure to attract potential converts or as public relations ploy to gain popular approval in hostile lands. Church benevolence is a ministry to the saints (First Corinthians 16:1-4, Acts 11:29, Romans 15:25, Second Corinthians 8:4, 9:1, 12).

Questions For Discussion

1. How did Jehovah attempt to instill a concern for the needy in people through the Old Testament (Leviticus 25:35, Deuteronomy 14:28-29, Deuteronomy 15:7-11)?

2. Before the church was established, Jesus taught his disciples about their benevolent responsibility in almsgiving. What does he urge in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:42)? What motivation does the Hebrew writer add later (13:16)?

3. What are some bad motivations for turning people away who seek our financial aid?
4. Romans 12:3-13 specifies how individual members of the body of Christ interact one another and touches on situations that require almsgiving. As members of one another, how should we give (share) and distribute to the needy saints?
5. What part of a person's pure and undefiled religion is germane to this study (James 1:27)? What do you think James means by "visit"?
6. What is true of the Christian who refuses to share or extend any benevolence?
- James 2:14-17:
 - First John 3:16-17:
7. There were needy people in the Thessalonian church, however, whom Paul forbade other brethren from assisting (Second Thessalonians 3:6-12). Why? Under what similar circumstances would we find sound reasoning for not sharing today?
8. New Testament churches were commanded to take up a weekly offering for the purpose of benevolence (First Corinthians 16:1-4). How does the Holy Spirit describe this aspect of the church's function?
- First Corinthians 16:1:
 - Acts 11:29:
 - Romans 15:25:
 - Second Corinthians 8:4:
 - Second Corinthians 9:1:
 - Second Corinthians 9:12:

LESSON 6: WHY NO WOMEN PREACHERS?

Because it seems like a vestige from a time before the nineteenth amendment to the Constitution, some wonder about the churches of Christ, “Why are there no women preachers?”

It is not because women are untalented, second-class Christians, or because the men have consistently voted them down. It is not because we are simply slow in catching up with societal trends, Juanita Bynum and Marilyn Hickey. I would suggest that you will never see a woman preacher in a church of Christ, and that if you do, the church is no longer Christ’s.

Although the New Testament takes note of female prophets (Acts 21:9) and many honorable women who served the kingdom in various ways (Romans 16:1, Philippians 4:2-3), it offers no precedent for female preachers. The roster of New Testament preachers is entirely male (e.g., Timothy, Titus, Epaphras, Barnabas, Philip, etc.).

Just as importantly, the New Testament explicitly forbids women from taking spiritual authority over men or teaching over them. “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence” (First Timothy 2:11-12). Paul then offers God’s reasoning, but never retreats from his stance that women must not take on the role of preacher, lest they usurp the role of both man and God (First Corinthians 11:3).

A similar passage in First Corinthians 14:34-35 says, “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive as the law also says ... for it is shameful for women to speak in church.” Women who have cultivated a meek and quiet spirit will respect the authority of God to create her role; such women will also excel in that role and do magnificent things in the kingdom. She will teach children (Second Timothy 1:5), other women (Titus 2:4) and serve the congregation and other ministers (First Corinthians 16:19). Like Priscilla, she will share the gospel with everyone and like Dorcas, she will be appreciated and beloved.

Questions For Discussion

1. Consider First Timothy 2:8-15. How do verses 8-10 establish a distinction in roles between men and women?
2. Two things are forbidden women in the church in verse 12; what are they?
 - Women are not permitted to
 - Women are not permitted to

3. What is Paul's reasoning behind this decree (verses 13-14)?

4. It is suggested that this policy results from Paul's misogyny (hatred for women) or an unnaturally patriarchal society that demeaned women. How must the Christian answer such complaints (Second Timothy 3:16-17, Second Peter 1:21)?

5. Based on First Timothy 2, which would be allowable or prohibited?

- a. Woman preaching to mixed audience would be
- b. Woman teaching mixed-gender adult Bible class would be
- c. Woman teaching class of toddlers would be
- d. Woman teaching her own children at home would be
- e. Woman teaching photography class at college would be

6. Consider First Corinthians 14:26-40. The first century not only had worship services like ours, but the presence of gifts of the Holy Spirit also made tongues speaking and prophecy services possible. Did women sometimes possess such gifts (Acts 21:8-9)?

7. Were such gifted women permitted to exercise their gifts in these assemblies? How could they control themselves when "the Spirit moved them"?

8. Can women serve as elders or deacons? Why or why not?

9. How did these women play important roles in the early church while remaining in submission to God and the male leadership of the church?

- Phoebe
- Priscilla

LESSON 7: WHAT ABOUT ABORTION, EUTHANASIA AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT?

Matters of life and death are always important and even controversial in our nation, so what does the Bible say about abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment?

To define our terms: Abortion is the intentional disruption of the development of an unborn human being, resulting in a termination of life. Euthanasia is the intentional termination of life, often of the elderly or seriously infirm, so as to prevent further suffering. Capital punishment is the intentional termination of life, as decreed by a governing authority, for one convicted of a serious criminal offense, such as murder or treason.

In all three situations, the end result is the termination of life, less politely known as death. In abortion, a completely innocent unborn child is prevented the opportunity to live and pursue liberty and happiness. In euthanasia, a person becomes guilty of the sin of suicide or a victim of the sin of murder. In capital punishment, a person duly convicted of a crime is denied life according to lawful judgment. In all of scripture, God only approves of one of these scenarios, and it is capital punishment.

God recognizes life in the womb (Psalm 139:13-16) and protects the vulnerable ones (Exodus 21:22). Suicidal euthanasia, while committed many times in scripture, is playing God by taking time in one's own hands. Practiced by Saul, Iscariot and others, suicide is the murder of self. Practiced by accomplices, it is homicide. Capital punishment, however, is approved of God for serious crimes in both testaments (Exodus 21:23, Romans 13:1-7). In this last dispensation, God has entrusted that delegated authority to governing authorities, which do not bear the sword in vain.

Is it inconsistent to favor capital punishment, but not abortion rights? Hardly. God allows for the execution of the guilty but judges the execution of innocent to be an act of great injustice.

Questions For Discussion

1. Define the following terms:

- Abortion:
- Euthanasia:
- Capital punishment:

2. Although each of these issues is a controversial one politically in America, the life and death ramifications suggest that the Bible may speak to them. When Scripture conflicts with human law, how should the Christian handle the conflict (Acts 4:18-22, 5:26-32)?

3. American law allows parents and doctors to terminate the lives of unborn children between conception and birth, but not after. The righteousness of such action revolves around the question of just when life commences, that is, when God invests a human body with an eternal soul. How do we know that this occurs prior to birth (Psalm 139:13-16)?

4. What was God's attitude toward unborn life in the Law of Moses (Exodus 21:22-24)?

5. Because euthanasia removes God from the equation, it becomes either murder or suicide, depending upon who is involved. Is murder ever justifiable in such cases (Galatians 5:19-21)?

6. Is suicide ever encouraged or approved in Scripture? What harm would have resulted from the Philippian jailer's contemplated suicide (Acts 16:25-34)?

7. Both of these subjects—abortion and euthanasia—are regularly defended as within the rights of the individual regarding his own body. What is wrong with that argument? Think!

8. Why does not the sixth commandment of Moses apply to this subject (Exodus 20:13)?

LESSON 8: DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

Part of rightly dividing the Bible is recognizing the distinction made between the old and new testaments. Because the Old Testament has been taken out of the way as a source of authority, many ask, “Do you believe in the Old Testament?”

Every word of God is both inspired and useful to his children: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (Second Timothy 3:16-17). Without an appreciation and knowledge of the Old Testament, any child of God is incompletely prepared to prove the will of Christ. The law that Moses gave was inscribed in stone by the finger of God and the prophecies came as “holy men from God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (Second Peter 1:21).

The mission of Christ, however, was to fulfill the Law and Prophets (Matthew 5:17) and to replace the Old Testament system because it lacked a component of grace that would redeem sinners from death (Hebrews 9:11-22). He accomplished this feat of atonement on the cross and the old covenant became obsolete as a pattern of authority (Hebrews 8:13). The “law of commandments contained in ordinances” was abolished (Ephesians 2:15) by being nailed to the cross with Jesus (Colossians 2:14). The law was changed (Hebrews 7:12) so that all men could become a party to the new covenant of mercy.

If the Old Testament is no longer in effect, this means that the 10 commandments have also been done away with (Second Corinthians 3:7-18). Nine of them, though, were renewed as part of the New Testament; only the Sabbath was not (Acts 20:7).

What value, then, is the Old Testament? It still contains timeless wisdom that will guide our choices and steady reminders of the goodness and severity of God. “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning” (Romans 15:4, cf. First Corinthians 10:1-13).

Questions For Discussion

1. Specifically, what does Paul have in mind when he praises Timothy for having been raised to know the “Holy Scriptures” (Second Timothy 3:14-15; cf. First Corinthians 15:3-4)?

2. How did man receive the Old Testament (Second Peter 1:19-21)?

3. Did Jesus come to destroy the Law or the Prophets or the Psalms (Matthew 5:17-18)? Why did he come (Luke 24:44-49)? What is the difference?

4. What did the Old Testament system lack that is present only in the New (Hebrews 10:1-10)? What made this possible?

5. As the book of Hebrews is written, the majority of Jews were continuing to worship as their parents had done before Christ came by burning incense, observing the Sabbath and slaughtering animals. What does the writer say about the old covenant, or law, in that era (Hebrews 8:13)?

6. What became of the Law of Moses according to Ephesians 2:14-16? According to Colossians 2:13-14? When did this occur?

7. Does this include the abolition of the 10 commandments (Second Corinthians 3:7-11)? If so, does this mean that murder and adultery are not forbidden? If not, how are they forbidden?

8. How does each passage prove the abolition of the old law?
 - Acts 10:9-23:

 - Hebrews 7:11-13:

LESSON 9: WHY NOT CALL HIM REVEREND?

You might have noticed that preachers in churches of Christ are a little touchy about someone calling them “Reverend.” Why not call the preacher by the title, “Reverend” or “Father”?

The fact of the matter is that he does not deserve either title, nor does any religious minister who currently accepts it. The word, “Reverend,” is used only once in the entire Bible and is applied there to Jehovah God, not any man. Psalm 111:9 says, “Holy and reverend is His name.” “Reverend” conveys the idea of a sacred character (Vine) and is only applied in scripture to the name of God, which men are forbidden to use in vain (Exodus 20:7, Matthew 5:33-37). While ministers should partake of the divine nature and exhibit holy character, it goes too far to elevate their names to the level of Jehovah’s.

Billions of people refer to their religious leaders as “Father.” As a biological or metaphorical description, “father” is certainly harmless. Boanerges was the father of James and John and Paul was a father in the faith to Timothy in that he raised him up in the gospel. Neither of these examples however causes the word “father” to become a clergy title such as is popular today.

In fact, the practice of making a clergy/laity distinction through special vestments, titles and privileges is openly condemned in Scripture. In Matthew 23, Jesus spoke out against the hypocrisy of the clergy of his day, the Pharisees and scribes, who arrogantly sat in Moses’ seat. They exaggerated their authority by enlarging the borders of their garments and by demanding special greetings from others. Jesus outlawed this practice in his kingdom: “But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi,’ for one is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on Earth your father, for one is your father, He who is in heaven” (8-9).

We reject all clerical titles based on this kingdom principle, intended to prevent pride among those who would minister to others.

Questions For Discussion

1. What are the three most common titles in America, according to these systems?
 - Roman Catholicism:
 - Protestantism:
 - Judaism:
2. List as many other religious titles as you can think of.

3. In the Bible, to whom do these titles refer when used scripturally?

- Reverend (Psalm 111:9):
- Father (Matthew 23:9):
- Rabbi or Teacher (Matthew 23:10):

4. According to Psalm 111:9, specifically what is reverend? What is the implication when a man attaches that title to his own name?

5. The most famous “Father” in the religious realm lives in Rome, Italy. What do these passages suggest about his claim of spiritual superiority?

- Ephesians 1:22-23:

- Second Thessalonians 2:1-4:

6. Before the church was established, Jesus instructed his disciples about the dangers of a clergy system by pointing out the failures of the Pharisees before him. Consider Matthew 23:1-12. What is the theme of this warning? Besides religious titles, list two other improper distinctions afforded those in this clergy system (verses 5-6).

7. In this passage, Jesus prevents the use of titles like Teacher and Father and yet the apostles used those words to describe themselves and others (First Timothy 2:7, Titus 2:3, Hebrews 5:12, First Corinthians 4:15, First Corinthians 5:1). Is there a contradiction? Explain.

8. Can you think of ways in which modern churches of Christ sometimes

have struggles with titles?

LESSON 10: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PASTOR AND A PREACHER?

When I said, “Good morning, Pastor,” to the speaker this morning, he told me that he was a preacher, not a pastor. What’s the difference?

In the New Testament, the work of “pastoring” deals more with the oversight of a local congregation, whereas “preaching” is the work of proclaiming the gospel. There is a distinction between the “offices” and their functions, and relatively few men serve in both of them simultaneously.

The word “pastor” is used only in Ephesians 4:11 and is a rather poor translation from the Greek than a much simpler word, “shepherd.” In that passage, it is used as a noun, but the same root is used as a verb in Acts 20 and it is there that we truly discover the identity of the pastors.

In Acts 20:17, Paul summoned the elders of the church in Ephesus to visit him and he commanded them to “shepherd the church of God” where they were its overseers (verse 20). Pastoring, then, is a work given to the elders of the congregation, not its preacher. These older and wiser men are chosen to feed the flock and tend to each sheep as precious in God’s sight.

The qualifications to serve as an elder are revealed in First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and it is vitally important that every congregation seek to appoint a plurality of them as soon as worthy men who desire the office can be identified. Timothy, on the other hand, was a younger man as he interacted with the apostle and is never referred to as a pastor. Likewise, Titus is enlisted to appoint elders on Crete, but is not referred to as a pastor.

In fact, five New Testament words have reference to this office. They are bishop (Titus 1:5,7), elder, overseer, presbyter (First Timothy 4:14) and pastor (Acts 20:17,28). The words all derive from three Greek terms and are used interchangeably by inspired writers to emphasize certain aspects of their work. Ephesians 4:11 shows them to be distinct from others in the church.

Questions For Discussion

1. List the roles numbered in Ephesians 4:11.
2. What does the word “pastor” mean? Is it a noun or a verb? Is it used anywhere else in the New Testament?

3. Although the word “pastor” is quite common today, its New Testament usage is limited. Fortunately, the translators render forms of the Greek word *poimen* in other passages that will tell us about the identity of this office. Paul used a form of *poimen* in a conversation recorded in Acts 20:17-28. Whom does he tell to shepherd the flock in the midst of ravenous wolves?

4. In this one passage what two synonyms for “pastor” are described?

5. A form of *poimen* is also used by Peter in his first epistle. To whom did Peter attribute the work of shepherding, or pastoring (First Peter 5:1-4)? What particular expertise did Peter add to the subject.

6. We learn then that “elder” is synonymous in Scripture with “pastor” and that “preacher” or “evangelist” are not. Three Greek words are actually used interchangeably throughout the New Testament to describe this office (*poimen*, *presbuteros*, and *episkopon*). List the five Biblical synonyms for this one office:

- a. Ephesians 4:11:
- b. First Peter 5:1:
- c. First Peter 5:2:
- d. First Timothy 3:1:
- e. First Timothy 4:14 (KJV):

7. Why don’t Mormon elders qualify for the office (First Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-7)? Why don’t most Protestant “pastors” fit the bill?

8. What is involved in pastoring a flock of God’s people (Acts 20:17-31, First Peter 5:1-4)?

9. How does Scripture limit pastors’ authority (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5, First Peter 5:2)?

2. Now using your New Testament, find at least one reference for these:

- Protestant:
- Roman Catholic:
- Christian:

3. Of these three, which has scriptural authority? Does it matter which one characterizes us? Why or why not (First Peter 4:11, Matthew 28:18-20, Colossians 3:17)?

4. How is the state of being a “Jew” recognized within Christianity, even by early Jewish Christian writers like Paul of Tarsus (Romans 2:25-29, Galatians 3:26-29)?

5. Using an accurate dictionary definition of Roman Catholicism, determine whether each of the following is scripturally sound or not:

- worldwide hierarchy of priests under the pope
- a liturgy entered in the Mass
- veneration of the Virgin Mary and saints
- clerical celibacy
- catechism with creeds of tradition and papal edict

6. Protestantism and Roman Catholicism share one fundamental doctrine, called by the former, “total hereditary depravity” and by the latter, “original sin.” Are men born covered in the guilt of Adam or are they accountable only for their own choices (Ezekiel 18:18-20, Second Corinthians 5:9-10)?

LESSON 12: WHY DO THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFER?

Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper?

The question is an exaggerated generalization, for many righteous people prosper while many wicked also suffer. Still, the question presumes that good people should live the life of the rich man while wicked people should live on Earth as Lazarus did. Yet, especially in their experiences, those prospects were exactly reversed. The rich man fared sumptuously each day as Lazarus begged at his gate. When death called for both, justice was sorted out and their roles were exchanged. Suddenly, we find Lazarus in the paradise of Abraham's bosom while the rich man enters into torment (Luke 16:19-31).

The more you look at the question, the less relevant it seems, because both prosperity and poverty on Earth are so temporal and fleeting. God's eternal justice in the last day promises that the truly righteous in Christ will be rewarded forever and those who did not know him or did not obey the gospel will face fiery retribution (Second Thessalonians 1:1-10). Peter, James and Paul all warn that righteous people will suffer persecution, threats and the same temptations and hardships common to all men (First Peter 3:13-17, James 1:2-3, Second Timothy 3:12).

In reality, the question itself betrays a lingering carnality in the curious, a discontentment with eternal promise and an inordinate emphasis upon this shallow life (Romans 8:5-11). The overwhelming weight of future glory eclipses every trifle in tragedy man faces today.

All this is not to belittle the suffering that righteous men endure. God, however, is not the author of misery (James 1:16-17). Satan, with the cooperation of Adam and his offspring have corrupted the Earth so that disease, pain and disappointment are incurable maladies. The righteous suffer for the same reason that the wicked suffer. Sin. And rejecting God because he does not treat us like puppets or transform Earth into Eden II is the surest way to assign oneself to an eternity of wondering why suffering is so pervasive. The answer to such wretchedness is in Christ and in time.

Questions For Discussion

1. One three letter word will answer the question: why do the righteous suffer? Does this mean that all suffering is the direct result of personal transgression (James 5:1-6)?

2. Consider Job 1-2. Who inflicts hardships and pain upon humanity (cf. James 1:13-15, Ephesians 6:16)? What is God's role in human suffering (Second Corinthians 12:7-10, First Peter 1:6-7)?

3. What does James say about the concept of a dark side to God that compels him to inflict misery on men for his own amusement (1:16-17)?

4. Paul suffered much for his righteousness and once pleaded with God to remove one aspect of his anguish (Second Corinthians 12:7-10). How did God answer? What should this teach us about the suffering of the righteous?

5. Job questioned why God permitted him to suffer so terribly. How does God respond to him and to us when we question why the righteous should suffer (Job 38:1-11)?

6. The most difficult aspect of understanding why the righteous suffer is coming to grips with our incapacity to understand the mind of an eternal God. As a parent has much greater insight, foresight and experience than his child, so our heavenly father infinitely dwarfs us in comprehending the universe. We obsess on our little brief lives where God oversees the all the past, everyone's present and the entirety of the future. Even when we don't understand why, what should we accept about God (Isaiah 55:8-9)?

7. Coming to grips with the sometimes-confusing works of an eternal God depends on approaching the temporal nature of life on Earth. How might the following passages help us put time, suffering and joy in better perspective?

- James 4:13-17:
- Second Corinthians 4:16-18:
- Luke 16:19-31:
- Second Thessalonians 1:3-12:

LESSON 13: REVIEW

1. *Is Genesis 1 True?* Consider Psalm 19:1-3. How do the heavens declare the glory of God? See also Romans 1:18-21.

2. *What is faith?* How does Hebrews 11:1-2 define faith? Is idle faith a saving faith? How does faith bring the victory (First John 5:1-5)?

3. *What is a gospel meeting?* Zeal should always describe the faith of the redeemed and gospel meetings attempt to revive flagging enthusiasm. How does the writer recommend that Christians renew their zeal?

a. Romans 12:1-2:

b. Hebrews 5:14:

c. Second Timothy 1:6-7:

4. *Is the resurrection real?* Paul's first Corinthian epistle provides the longest discourse on the meaning of the resurrection in the New Testament. Read chapter 15; why is it wrong for one to claim to be a Christian while rejecting the resurrection? How does our resurrection hope destroy the sting of death and strength of sin (First Corinthians 15:54-57, Hebrews 2:14-15)?

5. *What is our benevolent role?* What attitudes should characterize the individual's benevolence (Matthew 6:1-4)? How is the local church limited in its collective benevolence?

6. *Why are there no women preachers?* Consider First Timothy 2:8-15. How do verses 8-10 establish a distinction in roles between men and women?

7. *What about abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment?* Which of these three is rendered valid by both the Old and New Testaments?

8. *Do you believe in the Old Testament?* What became of the Law of Moses (Ephesians 2:14-16)? According to Colossians 2:13-14? When did this occur? What is the value in studying the Old Testament (Romans 15:4)?

9. *Why not call him "Reverend"?* In the Bible, to whom do the following titles exclusively refer when used scripturally?

- Reverend (Psalm 111:9):
- Father (Matthew 23:9):
- Rabbi or Teacher (Matthew 23:10):

10. *What is the difference between a "pastor" and a "preacher"?* We learn that "elder" is synonymous in Scripture with "pastor" and that "preacher" or "evangelist" are not. Three Greek words are actually used interchangeably throughout the New Testament to describe this office (*poimen*, *presbuteros*, and *episkopon*). List the five Biblical synonyms for this one office:

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11. *Protestant, Catholic or Jew?* Protestantism and Roman Catholicism share one fundamental doctrine, called by the former, "total hereditary depravity" and by the latter, "original sin." Are men born covered in the guilt of Adam or are they accountable only for their own choices (Ezekiel 18:18-20, Second Corinthians 5:9-10)?

12. *Why do the righteous suffer?* One three-letter word will answer the question: why do the righteous suffer? Even when we don't understand suffering, what should we accept about God (Isaiah 55:8-9)?

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