

Summary: Tough Questions with Dave Maxham – September 25, 2007

This is a summary of all the things we discussed during the special tough questions devotional. Unfortunately we were unable to cover to all of the questions, but here are the responses to the ones we could.

1. How can we trust the bible is true?

2 Writers: God and the person he inspired

The bible was written in a span of 1400 years by different people with different languages and different cultures, yet it is consistent throughout, as if a single person wrote it. God wrote the bible. He just selected who he inspired to write it down.

Accuracy and Authenticity

The bible is the only controversial antiquity manuscript. Why is that?

For example, there are 643 copies of manuscripts for Homer's Iliad which were written 500 years after Homer wrote the original, but nobody questions the accuracy and authenticity of it. Other examples include the Caesar's commentary on the Gallic Wars and the writings of Aristotle. The manuscripts of Caesar's Commentaries were written 1000 years after the original and only 9 copies still remain. Aristotle lived 300+ before christ, and the manuscripts for his works were dated 1400 years from the original and only 5 remain to this day.

There are over 20000 manuscripts for the bible which were dated to within 200 years of when they were written with several dating to within 30-40 years of when the Bible was originally written.

Logically speaking, it would seem the bible is far more accurate than other antiquity writings, but the bible is the one scrutinized.

God has preserved the bible for thousands of years, it is His word and he wants it protected.

Translation vs. Transcribing

The bible was translated into hundreds of languages, but the originals we have in Greek and Aramaic were transcribed. Transcribing is that act of making an exact copy. We have manuscript and copies of the original text. Not only do we have lots of copies, it was copied with extreme precision. The Hebrew scribes would check and recheck their writing and would literally count the number of letters over multiple pages to verify that a certain letter corresponded to the proper position in the text. If a page had an error in it, it was ripped up and thrown out. Unlike other antiquity writings, where over the course of centuries a word or letter would be replaced or switched, the bible remains in its original form.

2. How can we take some parts of the bible literally and other parts figuratively?

To understand what is literal and figurative you must read the bible properly. The bible is filled with different types of writing; prophecy, poetry, wisdom, parables, history, songs, etc. A key to

knowing when something is to be taken literally or figurative is to have a good understanding what type of writing it is. For example is the book of Proverbs a list of stories or promises? Generally, Proverbs is the rule of thumb, but these are not set in stone as promises.

Side note: When reading the bible, don't try to re-invent the wheel. There are lots and lots of books and study guides to help you read the bible the way it was written and meant to be read.

3. Once saved, are you always saved?

Short answer: YES!

Once you have truly repented and accepted Christ as your savior, nothing can take away your salvation or prevent you from entering heaven. There are numerous verses in the bible regarding this.

For example:

- Romans 11: 29 "for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable"
- 2 Timothy 1:12 God is strong enough to guard what we have entrusted to him, i.e. our salvation.
- 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 Why did God call us? To share in Christ's glory, not fall away. In verse 16, how can we have eternal encouragement and good hope if I need to worry about losing my salvation. That wouldn't be much of a hope or encouragement.

(For more examples, refer to the Dave's handout titled "Quick Guide to Eternal Security" also located on the iFit website under the devotionals section.)

What about Christians who convert to other religions or lose faith altogether as an atheist? We then have to question was that person truly saved in the first place. The bible teaches that at the moment of our salvation we are changed into something new with a desire for God. Hebrews 6 talks of people whose heart was not in their salvation and therefore they lost faith. This person was not a Christian. Christianity is the desire of your heart and as a true Christian you long for God.

This question actually stems from the 5 heresies which have been debated by theologians for centuries.

- 1) Total Depravity vs. man learns to sin
Whether or not man is born a sinner. The bible teaches that from the time of conception that we are sinful. Do you have to teach a child to be sinful?
- 2) Unconditional Election vs. Conditional Election
The heresy is that salvation is earned. This is totally not true, salvation is a gift from God.
- 3) Limited Atonement vs. Universal Atonement
The heresy is that everyone is saved. The bible teaches limited atonement where only those who have accept Christ are saved.

4) Irresistible Grace

God is sovereign, He does what he wants.

5) Permanence of Salvation vs. losing your Salvation

The heresy is that you can lose your salvation. God's grace is irrevocable.

As a side note:

Justification = The instance of salvation

Sanctification = The process from justification till death. The bible teaches that we are perfect while being made perfect. Even though we are sinners on a daily basis, we are still perfect as we strive to live our lives like Christ because the end result of our salvation is perfection.

10. How is a child expendable (used to punish David)? 2 Samuel 1-25

This is more along the lines of a consequence and not a punishment. Which brings up a related topic about the multiple levels of consequence. How for a small crime is there a huge punishment and a large crime get off with a small punishment? Why do the wicked prosper? Actually, the rain falls on both the just and the unjust. No sin is different than any other.

Can your sin affect other people? Absolutely! Your sin can have consequence on other people.

12. Do pets go to heaven?

Not specifically addressed in the bible, however we know that heaven is a place of bliss and joy. One can make the assumption that if we are sad without our pets then clearly they'll be in heaven.

13. Is suicide a sin and can you go to heaven if you commit suicide?

Suicide is a sin, it is the murder of yourself. Can you still go to heaven? Yes, no sin is different than any other. If you're truly saved and have accepted Christ as your savior, you will still go to heaven even if you fall prey to your human nature to sin.

15. How does the bible address Reincarnation, specifically John 9:1-2? How can a man sin before he is born?

This verse is not speaking of Reincarnation. It is talking about original sin. Psalm 51:5 says surely I was sinful from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. "Total Depravity" - from the moment we are conceived we are sinners, which means we are sinners before birth.

19. When bad things happen (i.e. Hurricane Katrina, 9/11, Tsunami, etc) how do we know if it is God or just circumstance unfolding?

God is sovereign, He is in control of everything, He has complete and total power over the universe. With that said, God either directly causes things to happen or He lets things happen.

Another example regarding this question was Pharaoh's heart being hardened during Moses' confrontation. Did God harden Pharaoh's heart? It's more likely that God gave Pharaoh over to his sinful nature. When a person continues in sin and disbelief, the Bible tells us that God "gives them over" to even more wicked and depraved sin in order to show them the futility and hopelessness of life apart from God. Pharaoh's heart was as hard as it ever needed to be, God simply stopped restraining the evil that was already there.

20. How do we reconcile the God of Wrath from the old testament and the God of Love from the new testament?

Actually, if you look back to the old testament, the Israelites repeatedly, time and again, sinned and fail. So really we can say that the God in the old testament was not full of wrath but instead a God of Great Patience.

23. How do you reconcile scientific evidence of the Earth and its age with biblical events?

Genesis in some ways is not really meant to be taken literally, there is a lot of prophecy and other forms of writing. Instead Genesis is meant to display the character and creative nature of God. With that being said, we technically don't know the length of time it took God to create the earth. One possible scenario is when it says "day" it is referring to a general period of time, not a day as in 24 hours. People who get caught up in this argument are missing the point in favor of debating whether this is a "how to create the world cookbook." The point is to see the character and creative nature of God.

24. How do dinosaurs fit into the creation of the Earth told in Genesis?

Clearly there is evidence of dinosaurs. We can not deny they existed. In Genesis it does say that the animals were created before man. Looking at the previous question regarding the age of the earth, if a "day" was a general period of time, the dinosaurs could very well have lived on earth millions of years before Adam.

26. When we go to heaven our ties are broken, like we're no longer married and we're no longer related to family, how does this work?

There will be no marriage in heaven: Matthew 22:23-33. However, there is no pain, no tears or suffering. Just pure joy. It's not clear how God accomplishes this.