

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD - NUMBER SIX - 2
CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD - NUMBER SIX
EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE

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Number Six: "**Evaluating The Evidence**"--another look at understanding the Bible--in the larger setting of the great controversy over God's character and government.

The Bible is no mere collection of theological statements. Nor is it a code book of deeds to be done and sins to be shunned. It is rather an inspired record of God's handling of the crisis of distrust in His universe. To be confident that we see the real meaning, we must view the Bible as a whole, relating all its parts to the one central theme--the truth about God Himself. Of every story, teaching and event the same question must be raised: What does this say about God? Another question naturally follows: Can we trust the God that we see?

Welcome to the sixth of our conversations about God--another look at our Heavenly Father in the larger setting of the universe-wide great controversy over His character and government. The topic for our conversation tonight is "**Evaluating the Evidence**". That is, weighing and understanding the evidence that is the basis for our decision about God in this great controversy.

Now, we know that all God asks of us is trust. That is all He asked before the war began. That is all He asks now, even of us who have been so damaged and caught up in this war. For if only we trusted in Him enough, He could readily heal the damage done. All He will ever ask of us in the future is this trust. To say it one more time: where there is mutual trust and trustworthiness, and no cheating, there is perfect security, perfect freedom, perfect peace. This is what God desires the most. But He has been accused of being unworthy of our trust, specifically He has been accused of being arbitrary, exacting, vengeful, unforgiving and severe. If He is that kind of a person, He is not safe to trust. What is so sad is that many of His followers conceive of Him this way. There are many who seek to represent God in this way and to win people to this kind of a God.

We have considered how God has answered these charges, not with claims or denials; anybody could do that, but with the evidence of demonstration. For when a person has been falsely accused of being untrustworthy, it does no good to deny it or claim to be trustworthy. Only by the demonstration of trustworthiness over a sufficiently long period of time and under a great variety of circumstances, especially difficult ones, can trust be re-established and confirmed. As we have been considering, the Bible is a record of just such a demonstration.

We would do well to pick up our Bibles and read the evidence, all of it. But when one picks up one's Bible there are questions that naturally arise. We considered three of them in our last conversation. How do we know we have the right books--Sixty-six in most of our Bibles? How do we know we have the words accurately preserved through all the centuries? How do we know they have been accurately translated from the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek?

I believe there is more than enough evidence for answering those questions. We can confidently say that for all practical purposes, we have the books of the Bible as originally

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written. Now this evening, there is another question that deserves to be considered. So if we have the right books, and we have the right words, and we have them adequately translated, what about the meaning? Since the Bible was written in other languages, for other peoples, in other cultures, how can we, living in this part of the world, this far down through the centuries, feel confident that we really have found the correct meaning?

The only way, I believe, is to pick up the Bible and see if it is possible to feel confident that we understand what was intended. That is why I am so grateful for the more than 100 times I have gone through all 66 books in company with others--to see. Each time we do it there are certain questions that arise. Some of them are simple ones that are quite readily resolved. I thought we might look at some of those first.

Let's say we are sitting in a group. The best loved version--in English--in all history has been the *King James Version*. Hopefully there is one member in the group who is still using that 1611 translation, though not in that 20 pound original form, but in a lighter model. As that person reads along he may come to such a passage as Habakkuk 2:17, "Thou shalt be for booties unto them." What does that mean? Can you see booties hanging from the rear view mirror in a car? Is that what that is? Turn to Job 41:18, "By his neesings a light doth shine." Have you seen any neesings lately? Now booties means loot, or plunder. Neesings means sneezings. Then you drop down to Exodus 28:11. "Ouches of gold". It would seem like something of concern to the School of Dentistry, wouldn't it? Yet it actually means settings in jewelry. Then Luke 17:9, "I trow not." Have you trowed lately? Is that something a mason does with mortar? No, that means, "I think not". These are not errors in the *King James*, not at all. It is just that, with the passage of time, about 1000 words have changed their meaning. Sometimes the meaning is completely reversed. But there are easy remedies for this. There are even books on words that have become archaic in the *King James Version*. Or you can use a Bible dictionary or a commentary. If you still love the *King James* above all other versions, there is a new revision called the *New King James*. I gave you the meanings that are actually in that modernized version of the *King James*. Any other version would make it clear also.

Now a slightly more significant change in the meaning of a word is in Romans 1:13 (KJV). "Often times I purposed to come unto you, but was let hitherto." Well, if he was "let", why didn't he go? Well, "let" in those days did not mean to permit, it meant to prevent, and prevent in those days did not mean prevent, it meant to precede, if you follow what I mean. You have to look up these words. This is the word you should use when you are playing tennis, if you are at all sophisticated. If you have served and your ball has hit the net and dropped into the square on the other side, don't be so vulgar as to say "net ball" (with an "n"). It is supposed to be "let ball". Always at Wimbledon it is "let ball"--spelled L-E-T--which means a hindered, prevented ball.

But a more significant illustration is in 1 Thessalonians 4:15. "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep." You surely don't have the picture of the Lord coming and the resurrection taking place and then because we who are alive don't want the dead to go up first we're preventing them--holding them back. That wouldn't suggest that we are very safe to save, doing that to those saints from former generations as they rise. It has no such meaning. It means "to precede", or "to go before". Now it has a significant meaning. The early Christians were grieving that their loved ones were dying before the Lord returned. They were under the impression that they would live to see Him come. What would you tell a Christian who was dying disappointed, saying, "I had hoped to live to see

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the Lord come?" There is a beautiful message here. Paul says, "Look, you will be at no disadvantage. We who are alive and remain shall not precede you have fallen asleep." Who will rise first? The dead in Christ will arise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air. I would miss this paragraph at funerals. But it has to be translated right. Not that it is an error. It's just that words have changed in meaning through the years. That is a great message of comfort when it is properly translated into modern speech.

Then there is another one in John 27:17 (KJV). This sometimes give rise to strange theology. Do you remember when Mary saw Jesus on resurrection Sunday and she fell at His feet to worship Him, and Jesus said, "Touch me not." Now, why couldn't she touch Him? Well, He said, "I have not yet ascended to my Father." Does that mean that if Mary had touched Jesus, He would not have been able to go up to heaven and the whole plan of salvation would have come to nothing? Therefore, her restraint that morning is as important as the crucifixion? That is impossible. That would really violate common sense. One needs to look more carefully. Did Jesus say, "Don't touch me, don't touch me, Mary. If you do, I can't go"? No! In the original language, there are two ways of saying don't do something. One is--don't begin to do it. The other is--don't go on doing it. That is the form found in this verse. Jesus said, "Don't go on holding me. Don't cling to me." The modern versions all have this correctly. Then it is a perfectly gracious message and there is nothing arbitrary about it at all.

Another one that might have a greater effect is John 2:4. You remember at Cana of Galilee, when they ran out of wine and Mary said to Jesus, "they need some wine". Did He turn to his mother and say, "Woman, what have I to do with thee." Let's say in your home that you have a son who is not responding too politely when his mother asks for help doing the dishes. So you decide together that at worship you'll read about how polite Jesus always was to His mother. "Why don't we read the gospel of John for worship." John 1 is all right. Now we come to John 2 and Cana. You are reading, hoping that your son will listen and see how polite Jesus always was. "Jesus saith unto her, `Woman, what have I to do with thee?'"(KJV) And your son says to you, "That is what I will do next time Mother asks me to dry the dishes. I'll say, `Woman, what have I to do with thee?'" . Then you wish you had started reading some other gospel. You know that can't be the case.

God is love and love is never rude. Jesus was never rude. Once again we need to get back into the language, the culture, and the idiom of the day. Woman can mean wife or mother or whatever the circumstances called for. What Jesus said was the equivalent of, "Mother, how is it you bring that problem to Me? I have never performed a miracle before. My hour has not yet come." I once heard a Jewish scholar of that period say (although he is not a Christian) "one thing for sure, Jesus spoke politely to His mother, in the idiom of the day." In Phillip's version, it says, "Mother, why do you bring that problem to Me?"

But there are other questions that arise. So far the questions have been easy to handle. There is no problem if the members of the group have modern versions distributed among them. But another more serious question may arise. Why do there seem to be so few theological statements in the Bible? You can go pages without a statement about God. Why doesn't the Bible read: "God is love; God can be trusted; God never changes?" But would we be willing to believe it? After all, those are just claims. The Bible itself warns against accepting mere claims. We need evidence. We need demonstration.

That leads to the next question that often arises. Why is there so much historical detail in

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the Bible? So much of it seems of such little importance. But if God's way is demonstration--involving Himself in human affairs and saying, "Watch the way I handle situations,"--then that is the way to find out what God is like. If we did not have the historical details, we would not be in a position to recreate those settings and understand why God would thunder one time and speak so softly another time.

Think of Sinai, for example. God comes down to speak to His people on that mountain, and He thunders. There is lightning. There is earthquake. The people are terrified. God said to Moses "build a fence around the mountain. Don't let those people come too close. If anyone comes near the fence he is to be stoned or shot. (see Ex. 19:12,13) If anyone breaks through the fence, I will burst forth upon him and consume him." (vss.21,24) The people stood there so terrified, they said to Moses, "Don't let God speak to us, lest we die." Now we sing "Nearer, Still Nearer"--but **not** at the foot of Mt. Sinai! Was that some other God or was that the Son of God--speaking to the people in such a manner on Mt. Sinai?

Well, we have to recreate the historical setting. How were they behaving at the foot of the mountain?--grumbling, and complaining, and irreverent. The only way God could get their attention and hold it long enough to say some more of the truth about Himself, was to run the risk of terrifying them. You know that 40 days later, after the thunder died away, they were dancing drunk and irreverent around the golden calf. Evidently God had to raise His voice that loud because of the circumstances prevailing at the time.

Now an illustration of God's preferred way of persuading us,- not with denials, not with claims,- but with evidence is provided by the story of John the Baptist. You remember how John really risked his life to present his cousin, Jesus, to the people. How gracious John had been, saying,--"He must increase, but I must decrease." Now John was in prison. He heard that Jesus was preaching that you really ought to visit people in prison, but Jesus never came to see His cousin. Eventually John sent emissaries to Christ. "Are you really the one or not? Should we be looking for another?" (see Matt. 11:3) That is a sad inquiry. Did Jesus say, "I am indeed the One and I expect you to believe it." It could have been the devil masquerading as Christ. Instead He invited the two to spend the day with Him. When the day was over the two men went back to prison to see John, and I can imagine the conversation:

"Did He answer my question?"

"No!"

"But what did you see? What did you hear?"

In the text it is recorded (Matthew 11:4-6), "Jesus gave them this reply. `Go and tell John what you hear and see--that blind men are recovering their sight, cripples are walking, lepers being healed, the deaf hearing, the dead being raised to life and the good news is being given to those in need. And happy is the man who never loses his faith in me.'" (Phillips) When the men arrived back at the prison and told this to John, John (who knew Isaiah 35 and 61) said, "He is the One." You see, not a claim but evidence. This is God's way, and the only dependable way.

So we go back to Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The questions inevitably arise, "Why so much? Why so many details? Why so many varied pictures

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of God?" Then we remember Hebrews 1:1-3 (NIV) "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times (indeed, many times) and in various ways (very various ways), but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son. . . . (Hebrews goes on to add that) the Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." (parentheses supplied)

Well, if we have the Son, why should we spend so much time in the Old Testament? Why not read the gospels? How clear the picture is there! The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7)--"Blessed are the poor". Pray for your enemies. How gracious that whole message. Then you see the way Jesus treated sinners. How forgiving! Anything arbitrary in the record? Anything exacting? Anything severe? Look how Jesus treated Judas? He washed the feet of His betrayer the night before He died. Look at the way He seemed to cover people's sins as much as He possibly could--even the men who brought that woman taken in adultery--after they had arranged the whole thing. (see Jn 8:3-11) He didn't expose them to the whole crowd. Then when Jairus' daughter was raised, and they all rushed out of the room to celebrate, who called after them, "This little girl is hungry. Get her something to eat." (Luke 8:40-56)

The Bible even says that the Son of God attended the funeral of one of His friends and He cried. That doesn't sound like the Devil's picture of God. Obviously, in the Gospels, Jesus is not the kind of person Satan has made God out to be. Then why don't we just settle for the magnificent record in the Gospels? However, as one reads on through the gospels, one cannot help noticing Jesus' own use of the Old Testament. For example, John 5:39,40 (NIV) "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life." (That would be almost a form of Bibliolatry--worshiping the Bible--as if there were some power in the book itself. No! What He said was,) "These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." (parentheses supplied) Note how He speaks of the Old Testament scriptures as bearing witness to the truth about Him. Would we want to waste them?

Note again in Luke 24:27 how He used the Old Testament. "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, (that really covers the whole Old Testament), he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." (NIV) (parentheses supplied) Then to really follow Christ's example, is to use the Old Testament. Where do you think He found His picture of God? How did he know God so well? He grew up with the 39 books of the Old Testament. We would be very wasteful not to use them, too.

Back again we go to the Old Testament, meanwhile remembering that 2 Timothy 3:16 does say "all scripture inspired of God is profitable". Let us see how profitable it can be this next time. The lovely picture in Eden. But then at the end of the week, God says to our first parents, "in the day you eat thereof, you will die." Did He mean, if you disobey Me, I will kill you? That does sound arbitrary and severe. Moreover they were cast out of the garden on their first offense. What if all children were thrown out of their homes the first time they disobeyed? We would have a lot of homeless children in the world. Are we more forgiving than our God?

Then the flood, when God drowned not just sinful men, but women and children and babies and their pets. Then we go on to Sodom and Gomorrah, that awful burning of human beings. Then Lot's wife. How many of you ladies if you were leaving the home where you had reared your children all those years would want to take at least one little peek over your shoulder to see? Wouldn't you want to? Look what happened to Lot's wife.

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And then look at all the fighting. And God says, "when you fight, don't just kill the soldiers. Go into the villages afterwards. Break into the homes. Kill the women. Kill the children. Kill the babies. Kill the pets. Leave alive nothing that breathes." (Deut. 20:16-18; cf. Joshua 10:40) One day King Saul came back and hadn't killed everybody. Samuel took a sword and hewed King Agag in pieces before the Lord. (1 Sam. 15:2,3)

We don't think this sounds like the New Testament. How could Jesus get the picture He had of His Father from these stories? Then look at the stoning of Achan. The worst part is not so much that Achan and his family deserved to be stoned, but that God asked His own people to do the stoning. (see Joshua 7) And "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," (see Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21) and "the gluttonous child is to be stoned." (see Deut. 21:20,21) "The illegitimate child is to be banished from the camp for ten generations." (see Deut. 23:2,3) No wonder many people don't know what to do with the Old Testament. No wonder one of the disciples didn't. "And Philip said to Jesus, 'Jesus tell us about the Father and we will be satisfied.'" (see Jn. 14:8,9)

Jesus replied, "Have I been with you so long Philip, and you don't know me?"

Philip replied, as it were, "We aren't asking about you. We worship You as the Son of God. To our great surprise we are not afraid of You. What we want to know about is the Father. We want to know about the One who drowned all but eight (Gen. 6&7) and said, if you disobey Me, I will kill you. (Gen. 2:17) We want to know about the God who killed the firstborn in Egypt (Ex. 11:4) and the 185,000 Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35) and killed Uzza when he touched the ark (2 Sam. 6:7) and turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26) and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, (Num. 16) and burned up Nadab and Abihu, (Num. 3:4) and sent the she-bears, (2 Kings 2:23,24). You remember." And so on down the list. "Jesus, could the Father be like you?" That conversation is recorded in John 14:8,9 (NIV) "Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.' Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.'" "And Philip, as for those difficult stories in the Old Testament, don't misunderstand them to mean that the Father is less gracious and less approachable than you have found Me to be. It so happens that I am the One who led Israel in the wilderness. The command to stone Achan was Mine. Philip, why don't you ask Me why? I would love to tell you. I would almost put off the crucifixion if you disciples would only ask Me." And they never asked Him. Later, Paul recognized that Jesus was the One who had led them in the wilderness. See 1 Corinthians 10:4 (NEB) "They all drank from the supernatural Rock that accompanied their travels--and the Rock was Christ.") What a shame they didn't ask Him what He meant by those words. Instead they wanted to argue about the positions they would hold in the kingdom.

He even went on further to say something extraordinary to them. In John 16:25,26 we read words which most Christians have not yet incorporated into the good news. Jesus said, "Let me tell you plainly about my Father. . . I do not promise to intercede with the Father for you, for the Father loves you himself." (Goodspeed). The most astonishing words in the Bible. We will spend much time on them later.

Since they didn't ask, then it is really left with us to ask. "Jesus, why did You order the stoning of Achan? How could You, the gentle Jesus, do that? And Jesus, why did You set up the whole priestly system of intercession and mediatorial work, when You have just said, "there is no need for Me to intercede the Father for you for the Father loves you Himself?" I wish they

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would have asked Him because the record would hold the most incredible information from the Lord Himself.

Well, we better ask now. If we ask, what important answers may come as we ask of every story, teaching, and event in the Bible, "what does this tell us about God?" Fortunately, some Pharisees asked Jesus a difficult question which gives us some idea of what He might have said on those other occasions. They asked Jesus about divorce. They said, "Jesus, you know the text that says we may divorce our wives. Moses, gave us permission. (see Deut. 24:1-4) What is your view on the subject?" And Jesus explained why He had given Moses directions as to how the people could, if they wished, divorce their wives. Look in Matthew 19:7,8 (GNB) "The Pharisees asked him, 'Why, then, did Moses give the law for a man to hand his wife a divorce notice and send her away?' Jesus answered, 'Moses gave you permission to divorce your wives because you are so hard to teach: (stiffness of your necks and hardness of your hearts KJV). But it was not like that at the time of creation.'" (parentheses supplied)

You see, in Moses day, when a man was tired of his wife, he simply sent her home. He didn't even have to give her camel's fare to get there. He just said, "Out! I have a new one moving in this afternoon." So God through Moses told them to do it in a more humane manner. But God's real feelings are found in Malachi, "I hate divorce." (Mal. 2:16) Most people do. And that is the key to so many other problems in the Bible where God seems to recommend something. No, He was not recommending those things, He was just meeting them where they were.

Now that brings up the fundamental principle of interpretation which we must use during the rest of our conversations--The principle of context. It was the context, the setting, that determined the meaning of a passage when it was originally written. To the extent that we can recreate and recover that original setting we are in a position to recover the original meaning. When Paul says, it is all right to marry if you must, but I wish you could be as I am. (see 1 Cor. 7:7), does that mean that all of us who are married are second class saints? No, put it in its context. Why did he say, "I would not allow a woman to speak in church?" (1 Cor. 14:34) Why does the Old Testament say, "You cannot boil a kid in its mother's milk?" (see Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 14:21)

Then turn to Judges. That is a stirring time every trip through the Bible. Read about Samson, filled with the Spirit, killing a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass. (15:15-17) Read about that fat king and the dagger that was thrust into him. (3:15-23) Read the dreadful story of the Levite and his Concubine. (chaps. 19-21)

I brought with me the worst illustration I have ever seen of reading the Bible the wrong way. It is called *The Bible Unmasked*. A man whose avowed purpose was to destroy confidence in the Bible and in God, collected every unpleasant story of immorality and cruelty in the Bible and laid them end to end with the preface, "Would you mothers let your children read this sort of thing?" I brought my more modest printing. I have a later edition that has line drawings in it. I mentioned this in class up at Pacific Union College more than 30 years ago and a student, his name was Wynn Paulie, came back with the best answer I have ever heard in all these years. "If you took the medical counselor book and cut out all the pictures of disease, cancer of the lip and tongue, etc., and all the symptoms of disease, and printed them all by themselves, it would be a useless, repulsive publication. The only justification for printing those things is that they are always presented in the setting of the remedy."

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The Bible is very candid in its description and picture of sin. But it always presents sin in the setting of the remedy. Otherwise the Bible would not be fit to read. But that is why we must read it as a whole. Do you know that there are two books in the Bible that don't even mention God? Not once. But if you take the whole Bible and put them in the larger setting, those two books--Esther and Song of Solomon--say wonderful things about our God. To be fair with the evidence we must read it as a whole.

After going through the Bible 108 times, this is my firmest conviction about the Bible:

The great purpose of the Bible is to reveal the truth about our heavenly Father that we may be won back to Him in love and trust. This truth, this everlasting good news, is to be found in every one of the sixty-six books. But to discover this truth we must learn more than just what happened to Samson and Delilah, to David and Bathsheba, to Gideon and his fleece. The all-important question is, What do these stories tell us about God?

If one does not ask this question, much of the content of Scripture may seem unrelated to the plan of salvation, even perplexing, sometimes even contradictory. But when one learns to view the Bible as a whole, there emerges a consistent picture of an all-wise and gracious God who seems willing to go to any length to keep in touch with His people, to stoop and reach them where they are, to speak a language they can understand. And the further one reads on book by book, the more one is moved with love and admiration for a God who would be willing to run such risk, to pay such a price, in order to keep open the lines of communication between Himself and His wayward children.

God will save all who trust Him. But He has not asked us to trust Him as a stranger. The Bible--all of it--is a record of God's revelation and a demonstration of infinite trustworthiness.

For the rest of our twenty conversations, we want to look at all of the evidence in this way.

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Venden: To start us off, Graham, here's a question that came in a couple of weeks ago. But I think it's apropos to what you were leading us in tonight: "I don't know how to explain it. Either texts have gotten into the Bible that shouldn't be there, or something has been put in that doesn't belong." Now, that sounds like the same thing said two ways.

"How do you explain 1 Peter 3:18-21? In the Greek, it implies even stronger the idea of life after death. How do you know that the teaching of any particular church - say, the Adventist Church's stand - on life after death is right, when you have a text like 1 Peter 3:18-21?"

Maybe that's a good illustration of what you were trying to get at tonight.

Maxwell: Yes, it is. Now, to give a simple answer, or to give you all the evidence?

Number One: The thought that texts have crept into the Bible. Well, the idea that an angel stirred the water did creep in. That's true. And I was so relieved to get rid of that, because of the implications. You know, God would send an angel down to stir up the water; and here that whole crowd would rush to get in. And here's this poor man who couldn't make it for 38 years. And they all watched: "I wonder if he'll make it this time. Well, bad luck," you know. And the years go by.

There's no way that could be true, I decided, before I learned to read Greek and then to look in the manuscripts. And no early manuscript says an angel stirred the water. It was thought that an angel stirred the water, and that the first one in was healed. It was a legend.

But now, you think, "Well, maybe there are thousands of verses that got in." No, this is very rare. You can make a list of them. You can look at them. There's nothing to worry about at all.

Now, if you look in all the manuscripts, you'll see all kinds of things that might have got in. Like in the Codex Bezae, it's called. It tells how Jesus was walking by a farm on the Sabbath, and He saw a man plowing. And He said, "If you know what you're doing, it's all right. If you don't, you're accursed."

Now, that didn't get in. And many, many, many others like it. For scholars who know how to weigh the evidence of thousands of manuscripts - not just in Greek and Hebrew and Aramaic, but into the other languages into which the Bible was translated; thousands of Latin ones, and so on - they compare these. And it's a very highly disciplined science, called Textual Criticism. And these are the men who will say, "For practical purposes, we have the books of the Bible as originally written."

But then we turn to something like this thing in Peter, which says that God, by His Spirit, preached to the spirits in prison. Do you have a version in front of you? They're going to vary a little, so maybe we should look. Those are amazing words there. He's talking about before the Flood, you remember.

"For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, in which He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey," and so on.

Well, what shall we do with that? You ought to see all the things that are done with it. Well, the most interesting thing you can do to this, is to have read one of those pseudepigraphical books I mentioned last time. More than one book in the Pseudepigrapha — of Pseudepigraphical books — are all apocryphal; but they're also falsely entitled. "Pseud" is false, and "epigraphy" is title. "Epi" is upon; "graph" is write. They are falsely written upon. They are falsely entitled.

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There is a Book of Enoch. And in the Book of Enoch it says, that Enoch went up to the third of the seven heavens and preached to the fallen angels, who were held prisoner in chains of darkness." You ought to read it all! I mean, at first, you may go into a state of shock as to how this could be; until you have looked at many other places where there are similarities between the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, and some things in the New Testament.

Well, this is only a beginning of some of the interesting things that have been done. You see, it says, "in which also (that is, in the Spirit) — in which also he went and preached." If I had a blackboard here, I'd write up in Greek, "in which also", which is pronounced "en-ho-kai." You know what "Enoch" is? "En-och."

Now, if you put those side by side, or end to end, in the capital letters that they used, it would read "EN O KAI EN OK." Now, say that over and over: "EN O KAI EN O KAI EN O KAI ENOCH", and you might slip one "ENOCH"; and there goes "Enoch".

And that's why some scholars believe this is originally read with a reference to the Pseudepigrapha, "In which also Enoch went and preached to the spirits in prison." Very attractive. In fact, I think Goodspeed's New Testament has Enoch in it.

Now, that's called a conjectural emendation. That is, no manuscript has it, but it is, to translates sort of, a scholarly guess change. It makes such good sense, probably that was the original reading. I can give you others like it.

When Jesus was thirsty, and the soldier took a piece of hyssop and put a sponge on it and held it up; why would he go and hunt for a piece of hyssop when he had a spear? You see, a spear is "HUSSO," and the hyssop is "HUSSOPO."

How easy for "PO" to be missed. Especially when, you see, someone stood up and read the master copy of that book in the Bible, and many scribes copied it down. "EN O KAI EN O KAI EN OCH" - how easy for an "OKE" to be missing, you see. Or how easy for the "PO" to be missing.

Or besides, if it really was a spear; in view of the symbolic meaning, what a temptation to think, "Wouldn't hyssop be more significant?" I mean, there are all kinds of reasons for these. There are one or two hundred of them that have been suggested. Very few have gotten into the English New Testament.

But if you have a version in front of you that has something really quite stunning in it, there may be a perfectly good reason. I mean, check it out and see. Now, this doesn't mean that it was "Enoch". But that's why "Enoch" gets into some versions. And that's why some versions have "spear" instead of "hyssop." And I could give you many, many more of them that are available.

This is only answering the question: Why do English translations have very striking readings at times? And you may find it isn't in a single manuscript. But that a scholar has thought - many scholars - that maybe this is a good idea, and it makes good sense.

Now, what should we do with this? "In which also he went and preached to the spirits." That's the next problem. Spirits? We all know what spirits are. They're souls, aren't they? Yes, but what are souls?

Well, we have to be Biblical about this. A soul, to so many people, is some ethereal essence that dwells within us, which at time of death is separated from the body, and wafted off to enjoy celestial bliss - without any brains to enjoy it with, and so on. I don't know how that can be explained.

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And this poor soul up there, has to come back some day to pick up the body. Because of that wonderful verse in Thessalonians, that "the dead in Christ shall rise first." How can they rise if they've been up there all this time? Strange things have to be done with verses in the Bible, to have the soul separated and wafted off to Heaven before the Resurrection.

But now, let's cite some real authorities on that. Rabbi Olinski, who was chairman of the group of Jewish scholars who produced the Torah first - an English translation of the first five books - later have expanded it to the rest of the Old Testament. I think I mentioned this to you. When he had finished the first five - there are not that many Jewish English translations - reporters from Time and Newsweek came and asked if there was anything stunning about the new version.

He said, "There's one that will surprise you. We've dropped the word `soul'." Because you all think "soul" is this thing I just described a moment ago. You see, in the Bible there's no word for that. The Hebrew word is "NEPHESH." He said, "'NEPHESH` means the whole person, even the blood in his veins."

"So," he said, "if you look in our new translation, Genesis 2:7 will read, `God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living being.'" You see. Or, "man became a living creature." Or, "man began to live."

Now, all the modern versions are agreeing - even that Protestant/Catholic/Jewish one, the Anchor Bible - "man became a living being."

The Revised Standard. You check any modern version. "Soul" is gone out of there. Because it is admitted that the Bible writers did not conceive of a soul that could be wafted away. Now, that's significant to remember that.

Then "spirits", if you look in the Lexicon, for "spirit" you will find "spirit" also can mean "person." Like in Romans 13, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." It's "Let every person be subject." And likewise, "spirit" can refer to people.

Now our problem is, if it does refer to people - I mean, there's no such thing as spirits that can be wafted off anyway, you see; so it has to be people - was there any preaching done to the people before the Flood? "Made alive in the spirit in which he went" — That is, the Spirit inspired somebody to go, and Christ was motivating this, to preach to the people in prison who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah."

This is when this was, during the building of the ark; "in which a few - that is, eight persons - were saved through water." This sounds like the preaching of Noah. Of course, you know, Methuselah preached to them, and Enoch did too. But not to the angels up in the third heaven. The saints preached to these people as the Flood was coming on, the Good News; and the Spirit inspired them to do it.

So in the light of the rest of scripture, we don't have to have recourse to too complicated an explanation, I believe. If you can see that "spirits" can mean people. And one, I believe, can do that.

Now, I wish the person who asked the question were here, and we could . . .

Venden: Maybe they are. Are you here? Apparently you aren't. But you don't know that.

Maxwell: Well, if you have Goodspeed's New Testament and that's your favorite, and it says "Enoch," now you know why "Enoch" is in there. He's not in the manuscripts.

Venden: Just looking in the New International, Graham. . .

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Maxwell: Oh, how does it read in there?

Venden: It reads very, very well.

Maxwell: Oh, good, do it.

Venden: Along the line of what you described.

Comment: Was Jesus tempted in "all"? or in "all points"?

Maxwell: Tell me first what the difference would be between "all" and "all points," to you.

Comment: Well, you know, in every single aspect that I would be tempted, that would be points.

Maxwell: Well, was He tempted to go faster than 55?

Comment: For "points", I think the original does not have it; I'm asking a question.

Maxwell: Well, I think that a meaning, rather than the words there, is the all-important thing. He was tempted in the ways in which we are tempted. And where we have collapsed, He did not collapse. But there's a real difference.

Comment: Why was that word put in there — "points"?

Maxwell: Well, that's in one version. How does it read in all the others?

Venden: I don't have all the others right here, but. . .

Maxwell: Well, come home with me, and I'll check 150. It takes a little time to do it. Let's look it up here in Hebrews and see what the Revised Standard Version does with that.

Now, in 2:18 it says, "For because He Himself has suffered and been tempted, He is able to help." And again in 4 it says, "One who in every respect has been tempted as we are." You know, the verse is almost repeated in 2 and 4, isn't it?

Yes, I believe so, though He wasn't tempted to be unfaithful to His wife. But in the fundamentals He was tempted. But He was tempted — well He was tempted to do things I've never been tempted to do. For example, the devil said, "If You will worship me, I'll give you the whole world." I don't want the world myself, you know, but Jesus did. This is where His people were.

That had to be something significant to the Lord, or it was sheer folly. I think the devil doesn't want this world either. He doesn't care about you and me. That's why he's out to destroy us. He doesn't care a thing. He only cares about himself.

And he might have been making an offer there: "Look, if You'll give me what I've wanted all along, I'll never bother You again. You can win all those people - I don't care. Just give me what I want. Worship me." Now, that's not a temptation to me. He was tempted on a higher level than I am. I've never been tempted to turn stones into bread. I know I can't do it, you know. But he said, "If You are the Son of God - you know — wouldn't You like to know whether You are or not?"

And you see, this depended on this theological view that if you're obviously not being blessed, you must be a sinner. He says, "Look at Yourself. You think you're the Son of God in this predicament?" You see, that was the common theology of the day. "You must be that fallen angel."

You know, he tempted Jesus to believe it. "Wouldn't You like to resolve that?"

And Jesus said, "A miracle wouldn't resolve it anyway. Give Me better evidence than that," you see.

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So he took the Bible. He says, "I'll add up all that evidence as to who I am." And hence the response. And then, throw yourself off the parapet? I wouldn't want to be up there at all. I'd climb down the back stairs. "Throw Yourself off." These were temptations especially directed to Him under those particular circumstances.

But there are some ways in which He wasn't tempted as you and I are. He never fought a bad habit in His life. Because He never had a bad habit. The only way you can get a bad habit, is to do bad things. And nobody says Jesus did bad things.

Therefore, I don't want to make Him too much like me. If He's going to be a model as to how I can break my bad habits, then I've got to have Him sinning and getting some bad habits. I don't want Him to be like me. I want to be like Him. And He came to show: "You shouldn't have any bad habits. So you've got some bad habits. Well, let Me tell you how to get rid of them. I'm your Physician. But I'm not going to be a model of everything you've done."

We like to bring Him down to our level as our example. And we don't mind, because we feel we're reasonably decent. But what about the drunk on Skid Row? He says, "I want Him in the gutter, lying in His vomit here. That's what I want." Well, how much lower do we want Him to sink? Again, we want Him to come down. No, we want to go up where He was.

The thing is, does He say enough to make it clear? Does He answer the questions? Can we trust Him?

Comment: So Jesus should be not only our example, but our Savior.

Maxwell: Ah, that's the big thing. He's our God and our Savior; sure, absolutely. He showed there's no excuse for sinning. He didn't show how to get out of it if you're in it - by following His example. That's a nice little point to be touched on. Did he write that question about the divinity of Christ?

Comment: No, I didn't.

Maxwell: Oh, there was one, a good one, coming in, which we should touch on later. And maybe we can do more justice to it then.

Comment: Last week we had a gentleman ask about the problem of eating meat - clean and unclean. What about Peter? Why was the sheet given to Peter, and then he was told to eat all these bugs and worms and so forth? And then another place we have the statement that it isn't what goes into the mouth, but it's what comes out of the mouth, that defiles a man. In other words, I can eat anything?

Maxwell: Arsenic?

Comment: Anything.

Maxwell: If you want to, sure you can. And you'll reap what you've sown. Don't blame God. That's why in the verses where it says, "Nothing is unclean in itself, except to the one who thinks it's unclean," you say, "Good, I can eat anything."

The Peter and the Sheet Story though, put in the larger context, is so significant. "God has said it, I believe it; that's all there is to it." And here comes the sheet with all these forbidden things in it. And a Voice from Heaven says, "Rise, eat."

And Peter says, "Boy, that is a contradiction. But if You've said it, I believe it; that's all there is to it." Why didn't Peter call for a knife and fork, and go to it, and eat the things in the sheet?

You see, on the basis of the bumper sticker, he should have eaten what was in the sheet,

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because he was told to. And Peter said, "No. No, God. What You said is unclean before, I think it's still unclean, and I won't do it."

Now, he might have been strengthened in this by Moses speaking to God. And he knew what a friend Moses was. God said to Moses, "Step aside. I'm sick and tired of these people. Let Me destroy them, and I'll make a great nation of you."

And Moses should have said, "Well if You've said it, I believe it; that's all there is to it. So I'll step aside. Go ahead and destroy them." He didn't! He said, "God, You couldn't do it. You'd ruin Your reputation." You remember the whole discussion.

And later in our evening, There Is No Need To Be Afraid of God, I want to enlarge on that magnificent story of Moses.

Abraham did the same. God said, "I'm on My way down to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah." And Abraham should have said, "Well, if You've said it, I believe it; that's all there is to it." He said, "God, no! Not if there are fifty saints, or forty, or thirty. I mean, God, shouldn't the Judge of all the earth do what is right?"

Now, strengthened by that kind of conversation, and those two men God calls His friends, Peter says to a Voice [that says,] "Arise and eat," "No!" But three times? You can imagine his blood pressure and his pulse when the third time he said, "No, I won't do it!"

And then there was a knock on the door. And here were some fellow human beings created in the image of God. And Peter was just as afraid to associate with them, as he was to eat the things in the sheet. And I think it dawned on him when he got to the door, what the whole message was: "You're right about the creeping things in the sheet, but you're wrong treating your fellow human beings in the same way." And he got the message. I think he was right: "No, no, no!"

And God was saying, "Look how you recoil from the thought of associating, and eating and touching these forbidden things. And you would treat Cornelius and his family precisely in the same way?"

Jesus talks about them coming in from the market place. And they wouldn't eat unless they washed their hands in some peculiar way. Because, you know, you might have been too closely associated with a Gentile there. And you'd be contaminated, and you could not be saved. They treated fellow human beings like those creeping things in the sheet.

So I believe Peter was right about the sheets, wrong about Cornelius. And he got the message, and he went with them. So I would put it, rather, in that light.

On the other, "It's not that which goes into the mouth that defiles," it has nothing to do with health, as you know, at all. He isn't saying, "This is digestible and this isn't." He talking about something done to your soul, to your mind, to you as a person. And it's not what you eat that affects that, so much as the expressions of your own thoughts. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." And we give expression to this. So it's what comes out of the mouth that defiles a person. And that's very reasonable.

The next line is, "This Jesus said, declaring all foods clean." Whoopee! I can eat salamanders! No. He's not discussing diet and what's appropriate there at all. No, that's another subject somewhere else, on what's good to eat. He's talking about these ceremonial, arbitrary, ritualistic restrictions, that never did come from Him. He was trying to relieve them of this sort of thing.

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Life was such a burden those days.

Oh, can I dare illustrate? I remember a student here going through school. She was a Jewish girl, and a very, very pleasant, friendly one. I just enjoyed talking to her. She said, "My brother recently visited me, and he is taking rabbinical studies. And I fixed the nicest roast I could find. And I was so careful that everything be Kosher. But when we sat down to eat, my brother said, 'What is this gravy you have over this roast?'"

"Oh," she said, "there's no problem. I've checked it all out." And I think she'd used some mushroom soup in it.

"Well," he said, "let me have the can." And she went to the garbage can, and brought it back. And he read in the small print. And there was a dairy by-product in there.

And as you know, you may not mix dairy foods with meat. You know, that all comes from, "You may not boil a kid in it's mother's milk."

Do any of you use Mocha Mix or those things? Have you seen a little sign on there, "Kosher"? A little word, "Pareve." Little signs on there? This is so our devout Jewish friends, whose devotion we honor greatly - they want to do what's right, and they will not mix dairy products with meat.

So this girl said, "I picked up the container, and the roast, and everything. And I took it out and dropped it in the garbage can. And we just ate the rest of the food."

Now, number one, check that up for real devotion. But number two, is it necessary?

Look, when Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel came to Loma Linda to speak - do you remember when he came? - he first spoke in Claremont, and then he spoke here. He was - well, he's dead now - he was one of the leading Jewish theologians. He's an ethician; Dr. Provonsha has wonderful relationships with him.

When we knew he was coming, we phoned to New York and said, "Does he practice Kosher? If so, what kind of dishes shall we use?" We could not use ceramic; we had to use glass. We were very, very careful as to what to do.

Now, what do you think of people who are that careful. I mean, that's tremendous that they're that careful. But must one be that careful? is the next question.

"This Jesus said, declaring all foods clean." But it's one of the reasons why Jesus got into so much trouble. Jesus seemed to be doing away with rules and regulations that they had followed for years, obedience to which marked them as God's real, true people. Like Sabbath-keeping. And you know what that means to us. And when He healed a man on the Sabbath day, I mean, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle. He might as well have used a cement mixer. He had violated the Sabbath, you see. And you remember how Jesus discussed that?

You see, in all sincerity, they had picked up the idea that God was — arbitrary? But He had a right to be! Now, don't say our Jewish friends are the only ones. We do exactly the same thing. We have a lot of rules that call for investigation: Is this really what God wants us to do?

But if I wanted to lean one way or the other, I'd like to lean in the direction of the conscientiousness and devotion of those Jews who really wanted to do what was right. You see, some say, "Well we don't have any rules anymore," and throw the whole thing over; "now I'm free."

Oh, that ditch is much deeper than the other one. And so that's why Paul dealt with it at such great length - in Corinthians, and Romans, and Timothy. It's a very delicate thing. How do you

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lead a person who is absolutely committed to doing what's right because God has said it, to perceive perhaps, that God wants something even better? To destroy someone's devotion in the process - that's really bad, it seems to me. So I hope we talked about it in the right way.

Comment: This concerns about Bible — examining the evidence.

Maxwell: Yes.

Comment: I was reading Genesis several years ago, when I came to a part in Genesis - I think Genesis 17 and 21. And it tells us that when at the time when Isaac was born, Ishmael was about 14 years old. And judging from what he says in 17 and in Genesis 21.

Maxwell: Say that again. . . when Isaac was born. . .

Comment: Ishmael was about 14 years old.

Maxwell: Oh, I see. Yes.

Comment: OK. Now, the story that follows, is that during the weaning celebration, Hagar and Ishmael were driven out. And I heard from some scholars that - I don't know if this is true or not - that weaning celebrations occur at the age around 5. So that would make Ishmael, if that's true, it would make Ishmael around 18 or 19.

And then here's this story, incredible story, which says, you know, [s]he cast the child under the bush. And then the angel talked to Hagar, "Lift up your child," like [unintelligible], you know.

I cannot imagine; how would you explain that? A nineteen, even fifteen years old. How could a mother, probably forty years old, do that? And if they go to the wilderness, I would think that the child would outlast the mother. How do you explain that?

Maxwell: Yes. OK. Now. Two elements of the question: One is, what does that whole story tell us about God? which is our greatest concern. But then, if the evidence is not accurately reported, how can we trust it? Have you looked in many commentaries to see how that's dealt with?

Comment: No.

Maxwell: Well, commentaries do deal with this. And there are probabilities in there about age; many assumptions there from the chronology - maybe he's not as old as was thought. Although sometimes a child is described in the Bible, like when Isaac went with his father to be sacrificed, he was not a little toddler. He was big enough to push his father to the side and run away, you see. So you're right; we need to watch that.

But if we made him a little older there - parents would be well able to respond to this. I don't know whether my daughters would mind my saying this, but you know, we still call them our "babies." My oldest is forty. The next is thirty-six, and the next is th... Oh, no, she's thirty-nine; she'll be forty. Ladies are much more, I learned after the service today — more careful about this.

Anyway, she was born in 1944. They're still our babies.

And you know, the mother put him under the bush, and maybe she cradled his head in her arms. You know, he was still her little boy. I don't know how your folks feel about you. I think mine - I'm sure they felt that way about me when I came home. Here I had my own children, and when we came home, we were still just their little ones.

So I think one could resolve that. The boy could be older than just a little infant. What's so

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marvelous though, is God told them that Hagar and Ishmael should go. Now, He's not heartless. And yet, after they had been cast out, who came to look after Ishmael? God sent an angel to look after him.

So that's what I like. Like later, the illegitimate child is to be cast out for ten generations. And you say, "God is heartless to do that." But how does He feel about people who are cast out? More than that, in His foreknowledge, He knew that Ishmael would be the ancestor of the PLO. Which raises some other interesting things in there.

Abraham is the father of Jews and Arabs together. And those cousins have been having at it ever since. And I wonder what Abraham's going to say in the hereafter, when he realizes what he's done.

So I think all the saints have some great surprises in the hereafter — his mistake there.

Well, and then Lot and his two daughters. What a mess that was. And he was related to Abraham. And the children of those incestuous relations were the Moabites who hounded the Jews from then on. That's an amazing beginning of the history of the people in the Bible, to be sure.

But going back to your technical point, lest it lead one to feel, "I can't trust the evidence anyway," I would suggest looking. I did on this point just recently, by the way. Look in the Commentaries and see how they will wrestle with the possibilities there, with a minimum of documentary data made available. And you will find some very reasonable explanations there. Do you have any Commentaries?

Comment: I've always thought that, you know, a Jewish person by twelve is considered to be a man.

Maxwell: Well, that's Bar Mitzvah, then, not a man. Jesus didn't preach until He was thirty. We start earlier, but a man under thirty didn't have that much clout in the community. So He waited. No, just a boy. Yes? Take a look in Commentary, and see what you find. And maybe next week, if you're back, tell me what you've found.

Comment: Which commentary?

Maxwell: Well, the last one I looked in was the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, which I have on my shelf along with many others. I looked up several on this, to see what I could find. Some of these matters of resolving apparent contradictions - they have produced some very interesting studies. One of the biggest ones was this:

The dates for the kings of the ten tribes to the north, and the dates for the kings in the two tribes to the south, quoting each other, and reporting on each other, did not mesh, and led scholars to assume that there was a serious error in the Old Testament. And a friend that many of us know - Dr. Thiele - chose that problem for his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Chicago. He was working on it when I arrived there in the forties. And he came up with a solution that hadn't occurred to anybody else: that the ten tribes to the north measured dates one way, and the two tribes to the south measured them another way. And if you recognize this, they fit perfectly. And so, that was his Ph.D. dissertation. It was so good, they said, "Print it, but not under your thesis title." You know, you can't sell books with those scholarly titles. So he thought up the name, The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings, which has just been reprinted. It is still regarded as a classic solution to the problem.

Now there's, you see, what appears to be a problem resolved as a result of very careful study. And your question deserves study. And it should be exhaustively done. And I'm happy with the

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solutions that I've read.

Venden: Graham, I'd like to hear you comment on the "using tithe to buy strong drink." You've referred to that several times. Now give us the answer to that, would you?

Maxwell: He's the one who asked me to preach on the Levite and his concubine after I'd mentioned it too many times. Well, the procedure is almost more important than the solution. So we can feel we've been consistent with this. Here we read something that seems absolutely stunning: "Take the tithe, buy strong drink with it, and rejoice before the Lord." You do notice, first of all, it's not the first tithe; it's the second tithe. That's very clearly delineated. This doesn't help in and of itself, but this is the tithe they could use for attendance at religious services, and they'd share with the Levites. But why buy such things?

Well, when they wanted a king, He said, "You don't want a king. He'll raise your taxes, and conscript your youths, and he'll take one-tenth of everything you have." It's quite a description there.

They wanted one anyway. And God says, "All right, if you don't want Me for your king, I'll pick one out for you." He picked a magnificent specimen.

They wanted to do their own fighting. He said, "Let Me do it for you. Let Me send the angel ahead." As He did when the 175,000 Assyrians besieged Jerusalem - or was it 185? 195?

Comment: Oh, no, 8.

Maxwell: 185,000? Who put them to sleep that night? An angel did. There's evidence that God would have done this for them.

When they didn't like the manna and said, "We cannot stand this worthless stuff; give us the food of Egypt," He didn't say, "No, you can't have it." He said, "All right, I'll help you have it. I'll even give a rule so you won't get too sick when you eat it." And He gave them the list of clean and unclean meats.

You have a God here, who if you insist on having your own way, will almost help you, and will even protect you while you have your own way, lest you hurt yourself too much.

Like they insisted on divorce, as we've mentioned tonight. God was not able to force them to love their wives and keep them. So he said, "If you must divorce them, then do it in a humane manner. Let Me give you the rules for divorce."

And so some have read all of this and said, "Isn't that great? God approves of divorces. He approves the monarchy. He approves fighting. And He approves clean meat. And He approves taking the tithe and buying strong drink with it, and rejoicing before the Lord."

So I would want to put all those together, and you a God saying, "Come and meet from time to time. And you know the rule. The second tithe; bring your produce with you, and share it with the needy, and share it with the Levites; and have a terrific campmeeting together. But of course, if the way be too far for you," - and there He goes again saying it, see - "if it's too far to come, well you can turn your produce into money, and you can spend your money for anything you like - meat, wine, strong drink. Only do come and rejoice before Me."

And that's the way God is. He says, "Look, you can have your own way if you want, but do keep in touch. Please keep in touch. Rejoice before Me."

Now, I have read many, many other solutions. To be procedurally consistent, I would want to treat this as I treat all the others. I see a God there saying, "If you want to do this, you may."

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See, I believe God would say to adults, "Look, if you want to drink, you can. But don't. You know, if you want to eat this, that or the other; you want to waste your time; you want to waste your life; you want to be lost; that's your privilege. But can't I interest you in some better way? I hate divorce. And let Me do the fighting for you. And you don't want a king. Let Me be your King."

The ideal is always in there. And the best place, I think, to handle the matter of the ideal, is in Proverbs, where He says, "Give wine to the poor, that they may forget their misery. Give strong drink to those who are in dismay."

But if you read the verse in front of that it says, "Don't give wine to kings, or people in positions of responsibility, lest they forget, and justice be trampled underfoot. Of course, if you've given up. . ."

And that's why I think that to tell people that they should practice temperance in all these other matters of healthful discipline, without giving them a motivation for doing it, is just adding another burden, you see. Maybe — "you've got to do this too! What else are you hiding from me I've got to do in order to be saved?"

The thing is, if you've told a person, created in the image of God, with power to think and to do, with this marvelous capacity for weighing evidence and making decisions - if you have that, would you want to hurt it in any way? Whether it be drinking, or well, have you heard intemperance in study as a species of intoxication? You know, you can go without sleep and without exercise, and have the same dullness of mind as if you had indulged in other ways.

God says, "Look, I wish you'd prize within yourself, this God-like ability to think clearly." And this far from the Tree of Life, it's hard enough, without beclouding our intellects in these other ways.

So God says, "If you have important decisions to make, you want to look after yourself. Don't drink, or anything else that would hurt. Of course, if life means nothing to you, then that's something else."

So I think have to go to people first and tell them the Good News of what they're worth to God. Tell them what they're worth, and kind of re-inspire them to think. You mean I could live forever in that kind of society, with that kind of a God? Then I want to think clearly. And I will stop doing these things that hurt me. And I will start doing things that are good for me.

The Bible tries to give a motivation for these things, or else they will seem like arbitrary requirements given just to test our obedience. Then we become very hard on each other. And really, it's a negative result, if you lay requirements on people without a reason behind them. And that's what I see coming through in all those places.

Now, "Take the tithe and buy strong drink?" In the light of this, are you going to do it anyway? I mean, is it confusing anybody? Are you going to paint the town red tomorrow night with the tithe? I mean, it's pretty clear, isn't it, that that's not the intention of the passage?

And so you end with Timothy: "No longer be a total abstainer, but a little wine for your stomach's sake, and your frequent attacks of illness." What about the drink there? We say, "Well, that's wine, not strong drink."

Well, the Greek word can mean either fermented or not. So you can't work with that. What do you do there in that passage? Well, if you can get an inspired apostle, in consultation with an inspired physician, the two of whom have written almost the entire New Testament, to prescribe for you and your frequent attacks of illness, living in a part of the world where the water was very bad - which was true of Timothy — I think I'd accept the prescription.

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But that's not an invitation to indulgence, when you read it. So, you see, there isn't a verse in the Bible that says, "Whoopee! Let's go out and carouse, and pay for it all with the tithe." You see, really it is not that confusing when you read it. But it just seems, in Deuteronomy 14, that God is doing the usual thing: "if the way be too far for you."

So what I see in the Bible is, the ideal comes through magnificently — but such a gracious, gentle God. And in the end He says, "You know, I can't even force you to join Me in the Kingdom to come. If you'd rather go your own way, I will respect your decision and let you go." That doesn't tempt one to be rebellious or to be indulgent, it seems to me.

You raised the question. You've probably preached on this, Lou.

Venden: No, I was thinking of asking you to preach on it. Thank you very much.

Comment: Kind of along that thought, there. What do you do when Christ changed the water to wine? [Maxwell: Yes.] Because the of the boss there; he said, "Well, You saved the good wine till last." In other words, "When I get a little bit stoned, usually you give the. . .

Maxwell: Yes. Well, this is an interesting indication there. They had been drinking fermented OINOS — By the way, there are different words for wine; there is GLEUKOS which is sweet, Welch's grape juice. One time that's referred to, is at Pentecost, when they said, "These men are drunk with sweet wine," that really was an insult. "These men, they've even got drunk on Welch's grape juice." You know, [laughter] it was not complimentary there.

And then the next layer down is OINOS, which can be even grape jam, grape jelly. There are various ways of making it. And it could be sweet - even out of season. You see, they could take the raisins and crush them, and pour hot water on them, and filter it. I don't know how good that would taste, but they had ways of keeping it sweet. However, OINOS can also mean "fermented," mildly so.

Then there are some stronger ones - METHEW, and SIKERA in the Greek; SHIKAR in the Hebrew. That's the word for taking the tithe. Buy SIKERA, SHIKAR, with it. Don't try to say that was sweet. It wasn't.

But at Cana, He made OINOS, which leaves it neutral. I wish it had said GLEUKOS. No, it says, OINOS. Now, the question is: This reception had been going on so long, they had run out. Now, had they been drinking the fermented, and Christ had come along with Welch's grape juice - I haven't had experience here, and I can't ask any of you to volunteer the information. How can you answer this? I guess nobody can tonight.

Would the master of ceremonies say, "You've kept the best till last"? I understand it would seem rather flat. So I'd rather work back the other way. Christ made a hundred and twenty gallons. How much do we use for our refreshment here?

Venden: I think we got ten gallons one night; and we had two left over. That's eight.

Maxwell: All right, how about a hundred and twenty gallons? I mean, this is a lot of fluid! Now, do you think the One who said, "If you prize the image of God within in you, and you want to think clearly, you won't touch the stuff,"— do you think at a wedding, with this young couple starting out, and wanting them to think clearly and lay great plans for themselves, He soused them with a hundred and twenty gallons of fermented liquor? Not a chance!

And I think one can reason from the rest of scripture, that it had to be sweet. And probably what they had before, well, possibly, not knowing exactly the time; it may have been this other kind. He comes along with the best grape juice they'd ever tasted in their lives!

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Now, have you drunk some types of, I mean, sweet grape juice; and then drunk some really first-quality stuff, and it's all sweet? I mean, some is better than others, is it not? I'd vote for it all to be sweet. Because, you know, the Infinite One, the Creator, the One who has inspired the scriptures - He isn't going to violate it all. Of all times, at a wedding! I mean, He wouldn't do it. We could assume that.

Which, by the way, brings up this matter of trust. When we say we trust God, I think we need to be more specific. It's not general trust. It means, I trust Him to act in this way under these circumstances. That is, I trust Him always to value nothing higher than my freedom. And I think you could trust God not to get them mildly drunk at a reception. It would make no sense that He should. So I think we can be more specific about this matter of trust.

But the word doesn't do it. That's the point that you raised. The word doesn't do it. You can't say, "Well, it's wine, and that's what we use at communion." Well, some churches have it a little mildly spiritus, don't they? Yes.

Comment: Last week, you discussed the criteria for including books in the Bible. And you based it, as I remember, on the first five books were the original. And then the subsequent ones were compared to those. And I'm wondering, what was the authority of the first five books. And I seem to remember you saying that it was the circumstances surrounding their being given, that gave them their authority.

Maxwell: Yes. Ultimately, one has to have more than that. I was thinking historically that's the way it worked. When Moses - I mean, being the honored leader that he was - talking with God in the mountain; and it says that when Moses went into the tabernacle, where the glory of God was, that every man would stand in the door of his tent and watch with concern to see if Moses would emerge. And when he did, his authority just increased and increased. But particularly when he came down off the mountain carrying the Ten Commandments, you know.

Like Pastor Venden. If he descends to preach tomorrow morning, off San Gorgonio, carrying the Ten Commandments into church; and his face is shining so brightly he has to wear a veil out of consideration of us in the audience; I mean, he always preaches with authority. But it would be something special tomorrow morning - you know, even in this modern age.

So in many ways, they were inclined - though they were so disrespectful to Moses - nevertheless to regard him as a person of great authority.

You say, "Well, doesn't that disrespect, suggest that they didn't treat him as a person of authority?" Well, look how disrespectful they were to God. And yet they were scared stiff of God. So when Moses came and said, "I bring you these records," I think they were off to an authoritarian start. It's not the best start. But at least, this became, then, the criterion as the next books came along. And as they were written, they were compared. But we have to make that comparison for ourselves.

Comment: Isn't the record of those events found in the very books that...?

Maxwell: Oh yeah, is this just reasoning in a circle? Well, it is at first. And that's why one has to eventually break out of the circle, by taking all Sixty-six and comparing them with themselves, and then with experience, even with science and with history.

And it's amazing how through the years - Well, I remember one time; many came to mind right there; but a very fine Old Testament scholar, William A. Irwin by name — you'll find his name attached to Old Testament books. And I took some Hebrew from him at the University of Chicago Oriental Institute. He's a wonderful gentleman.

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And he said, "When I first got my Ph.D." he said, "I and other scholars like me had our greatest delight in showing up all the defects in the Bible." Higher criticism at that time was destructive criticism. It was very iconoclasm, you know. "Anything saints believed in, we would just love to show that it was false."

And I heard his retirement address to the New Testament Club, now at the other end of his life. He said, "I'm just the other way around now." He said, "I'm trying to put all the pieces back together." You see, he just did that because it was the thing to do, and he got a relish out of it. Well, you know, young rebels, young Turks, love to show that the establishment isn't as right as they think. Now, as he looked back over his life, one of the best-trained scholars in the world, he said, "It really deserved more respect than we gave it." And now he is putting it back together.

So eventually, when no longer a little child but as an adult, one would want to test these things in many and various ways. Do the discoveries of archeology - have they shown time after time the Bible really was inaccurate? On the contrary, these discoveries of history, and archeology, and ancient religion, time after time, lead scholars to say, "Say, the Bible was more right than we thought!"

Like the worship of the Canaanites - you know, boiling a kid in its mother's milk, that I mentioned tonight. Scholars thought, "Well, maybe that is a Canaanite fertility cult rite; and God is saying, 'Don't do something that would remind you of what they're doing up in the hills.'"

But there was no written record of Canaanite worship. And then, not too many decades ago, there was a discovery of tablets, that for the first time gave us a written description of the fertility cult worship of the Canaanites. And lo and behold, they boiled a kid in its mother's milk.

So when enough of those things happen, time after time after time, you say, "My, the Bible really does hold up magnificently." And that's only one way. I'd want it to hold up in many, many ways.

And the ultimate test is a very personal one, and somewhat subjective: When you try to live the life described in scripture, does it work?

You know. I'd want more than this, but if this didn't work, that would cancel out all the rest. I mean, the test of experience is a right one. But then if I'm finding that it works for me, and I find friends around and it works for them, and we get together and we say, "Say, this is working for all of us," we begin to enjoy this unity that is inherent in our faith.

And that's why I love it when I see, you know, really well-qualified scholars, who have the ability to dismember the scriptures if they want to. Actually, they're the most thoroughly convinced believers in all of this. It's a very wonderful place to be - among scholars who say, "This really adds up, and this we really believe."

And they're not doing this as a statement of faith. They have all the critical abilities. You wouldn't be satisfied - you shouldn't be - without going into every one of those areas eventually and seeing how they add up. It adds up in every one of those areas. It's the way all the difference kinds of evidence fit together into a mosaic. And that, then, becomes a firm, an adequate basis for confidence.

But if it was just one line, it wouldn't be enough. It has to be many lines that fit together. I mean, even predictive prophecy; which is one part of it. And they do work out, too. That would also need to be true.

So if there were time, I would share all the things with you that have convinced me. I suspect you have you have your own list, too. But you're right. If somebody says, "Aren't you reasoning in a circle," I would want to say immediately, "You're absolutely right; *circulus improbando*, if

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you'd rather have the Latin. Let's discuss that."

We can't have a book proving itself. That's why II Timothy 3:16 cannot be used to prove the inspiration of scripture. And I'm weighing for next Friday night, on the question of authority, what to bring in. Because I always want to be polite toward our believers who disagree with us and belong to other communions. I have genuine respect for sincere believers in all kinds of religions. Absolutely, you know. And they may go straight from there to the Kingdom. This has to be genuine.

But then I also have to be able - and I have them on my shelf - to take the sacred writings of this and that religious group, and see where it says, "This is the inspired word of God," and it disagrees with the Bible; and say, "You can't claim that." Well then, neither can we. We can not use a claim in a book to prove that it's inspired.

Some student's going to catch on to this some time, and write a paper for a class; and at the end say, "And all this paper is inspired of God, and you dare not give me less than an A." You know, that's obviously ridiculous.

So, I have many documents at home. I will bring one next time, that I am sure, represents a movement that nobody here belongs to. It's the Bible of Spiritism. It's a terrible topic! It's the only one that's worse than this awful one I brought tonight. And I brought the mild one. I brought the one without the pictures, in case I forget and leave it behind. And that could ruin a man's reputation! But I will bring the New Testament of the Spirits; and it claims to be inspired by Jesus Christ Himself.

Then if a book can prove its own inspiration as we sometimes do with this, then you've got to accept the Spirits' Bible. So that ought to take care of that.

So your warning against reasoning in a circle, is very legitimate. It would have to be something more. But I do think it started historically like that. As they were growing up, accepting the voice of authority. But then later in maturity, He wants us to go back and check it out. Would you be comfortable with that? Yes. I had to do it for myself. I went and did it. Very much so. People told me I shouldn't go into it, that I'd probably make shipwreck of my faith. Instead, I went and did it; and I came home much more convinced than when I left to go and do it.

Venden: Graham, just in a quick summary here. You've talked about process, and the importance of process. If I'm hearing you correctly, when I read through the Old Testament, there was one that was kind of my favorite: Somebody announces that, "So and so has had two children: Huzz and Buzz." And I've wondered why those names weren't used more for children. We didn't choose to name any of ours that, but. . .

Maxwell: That's because you had girls.

Venden: Yeah, that's true. If we'd have had boys, it might have been different. You know, you come across a little historical statement like that. And if I'm understanding what you've said correctly, you're saying: "All of that, if you have a problem with that point, get the bigger picture; read on. Put the whole thing in its setting." And really, you have to start at Genesis 1 and go to Revelation 22. You have to put all of it into that kind of setting. Is that what you're trying to underline for us?

Maxwell: Very much so. Yeah, and if you run into something that's a problem, don't stop on it too long; read on. It'll probably get worse. [Laughter] But that's the way it works, you know; but stay with it. So in our book-by-book, the watchword always is, "Read on." And many of you know that; it's "read on"; let the Bible speak for itself.

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To show you how real that is: I remember one year in particular - it was 1961 - and we used to then teach junior and senior medical students down at the White; the anatomy amphitheater, wasn't it, down there? Well, I had the book-by-book with the seniors in there. And some of them had never read through the Bible before. And I asked them, please to feel free and safe to describe the picture of God they saw in each book - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers. And even those days, I had these little half-sheets that they could write this on, as some of you know.

And I remember one student on the back row. As he got into Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, he said, "I am simply stunned!" He said, "God is not half as kind as my father, and I thought he was severe!"

And so the only response was, "Well, please read on, read on." This is why if we don't get to Hosea the first quarter, there's a danger some students might not continue. So we always jump to Hosea to finish first quarter. Because that is the most moving picture of God in the whole Bible, short of the cross; where God says, "How can I give you up? How can I let you go? But you're bent on leaving Me!"

And then you add Hosea in with everything else. And I watched to see. I've hardly ever seen anybody pass Hosea, without changing his mind, if need be, on the picture of God.

So one should read on further. And remember, Hosea belongs back in Kings. You see, we get him later on. Hosea was saying these marvelous things about God back in those days of wars and intrigue, in Kings and Chronicles.

So early in the Bible, is this, well, theologically as well as emotionally, it is the most stirring picture. About this man who is asked to marry the woman of dubious reputation. And how when she left him and had two children by other people, God said, "Go find your wife. Take some money with you. See if you can persuade her to come home."

Hosea went off to look for his wife. You imagine doing it! And when he found her, what did he say? "Come home, or I'll beat you up?" Somehow he persuaded her to come home, and she really did.

And God said, "That's how I feel about Israel, but they won't come home. They're bent on leaving Me. I'm going to have to let them go." And God cries over them, "How can I give you up? How can I let you go?"

And that's what taught Paul what God's "wrath" is in Romans 1. It's God giving us up, giving us up, giving us up. And God's "wrath" was poured out on His Son. And when He died, He said, "Why have You - given Me up?" And it consistently runs all the way through the Bible. So to understand the cross, one needs Hosea. So, "read on" is the thought always. That's the watchword, "read on."

Venden: There's your assignment for the next week and the rest of your life.

Maxwell: That's right.

Venden: Why don't you pray for us?

Maxwell: Our Loving Father in Heaven,

Once again, how good it is to meet with friends who already trust Thee, and enjoy speaking together about Thee and Thy wise and gracious ways. And we know Thee well enough, to know that we actually honor Thee with our questions, which we ask in reverence. If we did not care to inquire, this would hardly suggest trust and admiration.

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How grateful we are for the example of Abraham, and Moses, and Job - who were not afraid to inquire, to inquire with feeling and earnestness; so that others around were even worried, how dare they talk to Thee like that? And then comes Thy compliment: "Job, you have said of Me what is right."

And so we are encouraged to meet together like this, and converse about Thee; which is also conversing with Thee, because we welcome Thy Presence with us. Knowing that it is not only safe to do so, but it is worship to do so; that our highest delight is to speak of Thee. And not only to question, but also to state where we have made up our minds.

Thou art indeed a wonderful God, infinite in power, but equally gracious, and inviting us to come and seek to know Thee better - not on the basis of Thy claims, but on the basis of very costly evidence.

So do guide us in the rest of our meetings, that our love and trust and admiration for Thee may increase the more.

We pray in Jesus' name,

Amen.

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CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD No. 6: QUESTIONS

A. Graham Maxwell with Louis Venden

Venden: While I was listening to your presentation this evening, I couldn't help but feel like you are asking so much of us by way of having to think and to study. There's a bumper sticker around that many have seen on the back of cars which says, "God said it. I believe it. That's all there is to it." That sounds refreshingly simple. Why wouldn't that be the appropriate way to go? To say, now here's real faith. "If it's there in the Bible, I'll just read it, and that's it."

Maxwell: Well the difficulty is, that people pick the passages from the Bible that they want to label in that way, and they don't read all the others. For example, you read through where it says, "Take the tithe and buy strong drink with it, and rejoice before the Lord." (Deuteronomy 14:24-27) Or you read another passage, "Give wine to the poor, that they may forget their misery." (Proverbs 31:6,7) "God has said it. I believe it. That's all there is to it."

You really can't do that. On the other hand, it could be an expression of humility and teachableness which would be very commendable. I would just suggest that those who use that bumper sticker live up to it. Because if they really do, they are going to read everything God says. They are going to read all of Scripture which warns us of the hazard of plucking pieces out like that. Instead they will read the Bible as a whole.

Venden: So you are pushing us at the point of meaning. We just cannot simply jump around here and there and say that's what it means. We must take the overall view, as that final statement in your talk so beautifully states it and in context. So there just is not an easy way to get around.

Maxwell: The Bible says, "All Scripture inspired of God." (2 Timothy 3:16) So if that bumper sticker means I'm reading it all, then I'm comfortable--

Venden: Then would you suggest a better bumper sticker for this?

Maxwell: Yes, I've often wondered what would be an appropriate one--that I'd be willing to put on my car.

Venden: Could you offer it to us here?

Maxwell: I've wondered about saying something like this: "Thank You for the evidence. Thank You for making it so clear. And Thank You most of all for what it cost." It would take a big bumper. It would take an old car to have that much room.

Venden: Now we have quite a backlog of questions, Graham, and some very, very good ones. We've been holding some of these for an appropriate time. It seems that tonight when we are talking about meaning and context, that some of these could be very helpful if you would address them. Here's one that our friend signed his name, actually. We haven't asked people to sign their names, but they are free to do so if they would like to, but they don't have to. "Dr. Maxwell, using the model of the larger view,"--so this person has been here before in our meetings--"how does one fit together the apparently violent God of the Old Testament,--the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, which you referred to this evening--the friendly God of the New Testament, and the destructive God of Revelation at the end of this earth?" Put that all together.

Maxwell: Ah, that's very well stated. We should have brought breakfast and lunch so we could stay and consider that. That assumes some things, though, really worth reflection--that God is always severe and violent in the Old Testament. Some of the most gentle, moving things are in

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the Old Testament. The parable of the vineyard. (Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21) "What more can I do for you than I have done?" Some of the tenderest things are in the Old Testament. "The Lord is my Shepherd." (Psalms 23) So the Old Testament is not entirely violent, nor is the New Testament entirely gentle. You remember when Ananias and Sapphira cheated with their offering, they died right on the church floor. (Acts 5:1-11) So I find a consistency running through all the Bible, and the real question would be, why the varied picture running from Genesis to Revelation, culminating in the third angel's message which is so violent?

I wouldn't know how to handle it, except by taking it as a whole and finding the same God dealing with a great variety of people. When we are irreverent, there may be she-bears, there may be thunder and lightning and earthquake. Look what He did to Uzzah. And yet I see the same gentle One behind it all, grieving when those people had to be treated that way. But what else could He do?

But I don't think a quick answer to that would ever satisfy one who has raised the question so thoughtfully. We should sit down together and do all sixty-six books. It takes a little time, but there are no shortcuts to this. But that is a worthy question, and I would recommend somebody having that in his hand as he reads every book in the sixty-six.

Venden: This one ties in with that as well, I think. "Satan held that God was not able to be just and merciful at the same time. Today He offers us mercy, but will He not kill us finally? Are we not to be consumed in His fire? If we are, how then can we call Him a God of love? Why did Jesus have to die? Was not His, that is, God's mercy sufficient?" That's another one of those full message questions.

Maxwell: Yes. These are the really important ones, and these are the questions that had to be answered for the universe to be secure. And that's why we see that theme running all through Scripture but arriving at its culmination when Jesus died. And that's why we have a whole evening on the most costly and convincing evidence. There is no other way to answer those questions, than for God to come in human form and die as He did. So the great controversy view doesn't make light of the death of Christ. It makes it infinitely more significant. Because there is no other way to answer those questions, and we will deal with those at length. No question about it.

Venden: Well, this one comes in the same general area too. We've had quite a number. It says something about where real concerns lie. "If God's character is love (1 John 4:8) and God loves us so much (John 3:16), why was pain and death so prevalent in the Old and New Testament? And is it God who will actually destroy man in the end? Or is it sin and Satan that causes destruction. If God does destroy, then is this contrary to the Word?" So both ways.

Maxwell: Again, and that is so vital, I couldn't live without an answer to those questions, and one should work on them. But I wouldn't want a nice claim in the Bible. These questions you will find answered on page 721, one, two, three, four, five, six. Those are just claims. It has cost a great deal to answer those questions.

Now on the violence and so forth in the Old Testament, we know we are all caught up in the consequences of this war, and we bring a lot of this on ourselves to be sure. And the devil is at work. And there are many even verses in the Bible that say we reap what we have sown, (Galatians 6:7) or maybe God is disciplining those whom He loves. I mean, there are many causes of trouble and difficulty. I would like to look at them all. I don't expect a neat answer to a question like that.

But the big one, "Will God destroy us in the end?" If all God asks of us is love and trust, and if

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we don't give it to Him, He's going to destroy us in the end, then this is God saying, "You either love Me, or I'll destroy you." And if that's the way He is, I cannot trust Him. I do not care to live with Him. I do not believe He is that way, but it cost the death of Christ to prove it. And we have to go and watch Jesus die. Did the Father destroy His Son? So the cross is the central answer to all of this.

Venden: And that's coming up in just a few Friday nights not too long from now.

"On the subject of the Flood," now this shifts gears just a little bit, but still in a similar vein. "On the subject of the Flood, it is apparent that God didn't do things right the first time. So He had to send a Flood and start all over again." What would you do with that? Is that possible?

Maxwell: Especially since it says, "It repented Him..." (Genesis 6:5,6) Or some versions say, "He was sorry that He had made man." And as you go through the sixty-six, you run into this several times where God is pictured as not being too aware of what is going on and certainly not having much foreknowledge and even not being as observant as we think. For example, when He comes to the Garden of Eden, He says, "Where are you? Where are you?"

And Adam say, "We're over here."

"Oh, thank you. I couldn't see." (See Genesis 3:9)

And then when He came to Abraham, before the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, He said, "Abraham, I've come down to check out the reports I've received, to see if they are correct or not." (Genesis 18:21) Now we all live assuming that God is getting very good reporting. Apparently not. He had to come down and say, "I'm checking this out Myself." And there are many places in the Bible like that where God talks in very human language. And we can understand why He does it, I believe. And so in this case with the Flood, "God was sorry." "It grieved him that He had made man."

My understanding would be, He foreknew all of this, and He had now come to the time when there were only eight people left on this planet with whom He could communicate. And the answers to the questions in the great controversy had not yet been given. And God, as it were, turns to the universe and says,

"I'm really going to test your faith in Me. The next thing you see will stun you."

And He drowned all but eight to preserve one little point of contact with the human race that He might go on unfolding His plan. I'm sure the devil cried, "Foul! I told you He's that kind of a God. You either love Him, or if you don't love Him, He'll drown you, or He'll burn you or have you stoned or swallow you up." The risk He ran in bringing the Flood shows just how important it was to do what He did. The risk was that great. Had He not done that, everything would have ended at that time. And the answers had not yet been given.

So again, the Flood has to be put in the total setting here with the angels watching. God ran a great risk of being misunderstood at that time. But I would understand it was all in His plan.

Venden: You say that everything would have ended at that point. Do you mean by that that the whole thing was so evil that it would self destruct?

Maxwell: Well those eight that got on the boat weren't that good, you remember. Ham wasn't too virtuous, (Genesis 9:22) and his father hadn't taken the Temperance Pledge yet. (Genesis 9:21) Those eight, you know, weren't saved because they were good. I believe they were saved because they got on the boat.

Venden: All right. Good point.

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Maxwell: Which can't be compared with the salvation at the end. It's not quite the same. That was an emergency measure.

Venden: Hmm. Was there not enough evidence, though, as we look at the Old Testament, was there not enough evidence in Old Testament times for people to recognize God's true character, or did they have to wait for the New Testament to understand?

Maxwell: Oh, I like that very much. Yes. There was an organization awhile ago in Minneapolis, Minnesota, that taught that the God of the Old Testament was Beelzebub and the God of the New Testament was Christ. And they contrasted the Old with the New. But when you read all the way through, the picture of God in the Old Testament is the same as in the New. It's the same God, the same Spirit communicating, the same Christ leading them in the wilderness. What impresses me in the Old Testament is how well people did know Him. His best friends in the Bible are in the Old Testament. The man whom Paul uses to suggest what God wants most in us was Abraham in the Old Testament. And Moses is called a friend of God. And look at Job, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos and the others.

Apparently the message in the Old Testament is that clear. In fact, Jesus grew up with it and learned the truth about His Father. So I think the Old Testament is magnificently clear but when it is read as a whole. I find no break between the Old and the New, except that now Christ is here in human form to give confirmation to everything that has been described and anticipated in the Old. Even His Sermon on the Mount--It's all in the Old Testament, already there. So the Bible is a unit, the whole thing, all sixty-six books.

Venden: Once again it is that unity that provides the answer to some of these questions that we're talking about.

Maxwell: Yes.

Venden: Now let's take two or three that are slightly different here. You spoke about sanctification. What is this? If we sincerely accept Jesus as our Savior, how can we ever be lost? Once we are saved, aren't we always saved?

Maxwell: Yes, of course "sanctification" is one of those heavy Latin terms. I prefer to use "set right," "keep right" rather than "justify," "sanctify." We can understand those words. One can be set right with God, and one can be kept right for quite a while, but one is still free to leave. And Lucifer proved that by leaving. He was right with God before. There was no rebellion there. And for a million years into eternity, we may have been right with God for a long time, but we are still free to go.

The once saved, always saved idea belongs to a very legal model. I'm paid up, and I'm still paid up, and I have a right to be there. No, I'm only safe to have around if I am willing to listen, to trust God, to accept instruction. And I'll always be free to turn into a rebel. That makes it more wonderful that God's children will choose to remain loyal. Then their loyalty means something. Their expression of love to God means something. They haven't been reprogrammed. You know, they haven't been turned into robots. The price--the cost that God has had to pay to settle the questions indicates how absolutely opposed He is to over-controlling us and programming us and making it impossible for us to go some other way. That's quite a risk, but evidently freedom means that much to God.

Venden: Graham, there are a couple of questions that we have been holding and that really need some answer that tie in with this meaning of some things in the Old Testament. Let's look at these very quickly. "Seeing God is a God of love and acceptance, why then did He demand animal sacrifices? Couldn't the children of Israel just have asked for forgiveness rather than

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going through that sacrificial ceremony?" And let me tie this other one in quickly too. Here's someone who writes about their daughters who are now eighteen and twenty-two who have been vegetarians since they were young because they love animals to have them killed for their benefit, but they run into trouble when they go to the Old Testament, because here you have the sacrifices for God's benefit in the Old Testament. We know it has something to do with the sacrifice of Jesus, but why does God have to be appeased by poor little animals dying?

Maxwell: Mmm. There's a lot implied in there. One thing for sure. Who is the One who sees the little sparrow fall? (Matthew 10:29) I mean, if it upsets these daughters, how do you think it upsets the Lord? And yet He gave that whole system. It must have been important to do it. But we have an evening coming up entitled, "God's Emergency Measures." Those are all serious emergency measures because of a serious emergency. And God says so often through the prophets, "I don't really want your sacrifices apart from the meaning. I hate them." All the blood and all the suffering. God loves the animals. And yet to make a very important point, He asked Adam and Eve to kill that first lamb.

And we need to consider the meaning of every one of those things. Because if we just learn them and don't think of the meaning, then we are as ceremonial as the people in the Old Testament who missed the point. So we must ask all the way through, How could God do something which He must not have liked Himself? And yet it needed to be done. So we will address ourselves to that. But most particularly, I heard the word "appease" in there.

Venden: Yes.

Maxwell: Were these sacrifices to do something to God to appease Him? And unfortunately, the word "propitiation" in Romans 3 suggests appeasement. But that's not the word that's there. That's a regrettable translation. Now, why should anyone take my word for that? We'll have to bring the evidence for that--that when Jesus died it was not to appease the Father and propitiate Him and assuage His wrath. That's a heathen picture. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." (2 Corinthians 5:19) Nobody had to win Him to our side. So the implications of that are well worth some serious study, and the two evenings on "God's Emergency Measures" and on "Why Jesus had to die?" would be an opportunity to deal with those thoroughly.

Venden: All right, we'll look forward to that. There are two here that we just must not pass up any longer, because it speaks so poignantly of where many of us hurt and wonder. "'The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.' (Romans 6:23) I have a cousin, age thirty years, who has a malignant brain tumor, and he is awaiting death. There is nothing medically that can be done for him. Everyone tells him, 'God's will be done.' Now the question is, does God will for one to die?" This person just can't stand that, and they go on to say, "I don't think so. I believe that sin has contaminated the world and as a result we have disease and death. So please elaborate on this concept and what's more, what do you say to such a person? How do you talk about God's will?"

Maxwell: That's too sad to give a snap answer to. I think at times like that we draw from everything we have learned and experienced through the years about God in our study of Scripture, and one needs to fall back on the things we are sure of. What God wants for us. He wants us to be well. He created us perfect. Disorder, disease, these are not of His doing. These are all part of being caught up in the consequences of this revolt. But then we do know that God could heal, that's true. And if He doesn't seem to be doing it at this time, we might wonder why. But if you should say, "God, I wonder why," would He be offended? Not for a moment! On the authority of so many cases in Scripture. But that God would be willing that this person should die? A destructive God?

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An experience like this really tests the kind of person we believe our God to be. But even if one is not too clear on this, if one has learned that prayer is conversation with God as with a Friend, then the one who is wondering would feel perfectly free to kneel down and really talk to God about this, and say, "God, this is not clear. It looks as if You are like this, and that's the devil's picture. Or it looks as if You are like that. You couldn't be, could You? Or are You?" He would not be offended. He honors our questions like that. And there is great peace that comes from realizing we have a God toward whom we can direct such questions, even in agony at the time.

So I think the answer is a long one in a way. Learn the good news about God, and you will be better able to handle these disasters. But one thing sure, if the Lord were here, how sympathetic He would be, but He would want to clear up the thought, "I'm doing this to you."

Venden: One of our congregation went out of her way to type up the question that she has had for a number of years. She says, "Can you give a reason why a loving God would allow a good Christian woman to be murdered? She was a good help in her small Seventh-day Adventist Church. She was the treasurer of her church. The last Sabbath of her life they had a consecration service at the church. She dedicated herself anew to God, and she was murdered that afternoon at her house. She was the treasurer. She had money at her house, and apparently that was the reason that someone broke in and she was killed." And this individual says, "The reason I know about this, was that she was my sister."

Maxwell: Again, happy the person who knows God very well at a time like this. It doesn't mean that we would know the answer. I don't think Job ever found out why those things happened to him that did. But all he knew was that those theologians were wrong. And those theologians came to Job and said, "You cannot be asking God about this." I mean, Job was crying to God with intense feeling, and saying, "God, how can You do this to me? I've been Your good friend all this time, and now You won't even speak to me. You won't explain this."

And the theologians were going on with their very legalistic explanation. Finally he said, "I wish you brethren would be quiet. I appreciate your coming, but you're not helping me at all." None of their explanations were good. He said, "If only I could talk to God, I'm sure I could clear this up." And eventually the boldness of his inquiries of God reached such a level that those three men were worried for their friend that God would surely zap him on the spot for daring to inquire. And God broke in and said, "Job you have said of Me what is right." (Job 42:7,8) So if a person is wrestling with this, we may not find out in this life. I'm sure we won't find out the answer to every such absolutely unfair thing that happens on this planet during this emergency. But some things we know for sure--the kind of person God is, and that He welcomes us to lodge our inquires with feeling, and hopefully, we will trust Him enough to wait for the answer.

Venden: ...acquainted well enough to trust when we don't know how to answer all these things.

Maxwell: And I'd like to think that that sister was such a saint, don't worry about her. She will arise in the resurrection and say, "What am doing here?" She will have no complaints. She will be looking for her sister.

Venden: Just a quick word about what we mentioned last week. We got into this little volume, [You Can Trust the Bible](#). I'd like our television and radio audience to know that the University Church has wanted to make this available. All you need to do is to write to the University Church, Loma Linda. So if you would like a copy of this, drop a note to us please, and we will see that you get a copy. Because it covers what we have talked about tonight and last Friday.

All right. Tell us just a quick word about next Friday night.

Maxwell: We will deal with the whole question of authority which is really the essence of the

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great controversy, but how God speaks to this is just magnificent. Infinite in authority and power, but He wouldn't think of intimidating or overwhelming us.

Venden: All right, well, we'll look forward to seeing each one of you here. And bring a friend. We have a little space and we could accommodate a few more. See you next Friday night.

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