

# CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD - NUMBER EIGHT ***THE MOST COSTLY AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE***

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Number Eight: **"The Most Costly And Convincing Evidence,"**--another look at the cross--in the larger setting of the great controversy over God's character and government.

In the second Conversation we considered again the Bible's description of sin as more than a mere breaking of the rules. Sin involves a breakdown of trust and trustworthiness, a stubborn and suspicious unwillingness to listen. Left untreated, sin makes peace impossible. To set and keep things right, trust must somehow be restored. God sent His Son "to deal with sin." Why was it not enough for Jesus simply to tell us the truth about His Father and to demonstrate by His own gracious treatment of the worst of sinners that God is not the kind of person His enemies have made Him out to be? Why did Jesus also have to die? Why was there no other way?

The way Jesus suffered and died is the greatest revelation of the truth about God the universe will ever see or ever need. Correctly understood it means defeat for the accuser of our Heavenly Father. No wonder Satan has sought to obscure, even pervert, the meaning of the cross--to his own evil advantage and to our great loss! But why **did** Jesus have to die?

Welcome to the eighth of our conversations about God--another look at our heavenly Father in the larger setting of the great controversy over His character and government. The topic for this eighth conversation is **"The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence."** The question for the evening is, **"Why did Jesus have to die?"**

The importance of the subject made it particularly difficult this time, to choose the verses to be included. Fortunately, many of the important verses on this topic have already been mentioned in previous studies. You may notice that in this conversation we won't even use John 3:16 (RSV), probably the best known and best loved verse in the whole Bible--"For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son..." It is just that that great verse doesn't explain why Jesus had to die. It just says that God loved us enough to give His Son.

Now we have called the cross, our subject for the evening, the most costly and convincing evidence, because we believe that the unique and awful way in which Jesus suffered and died reveals something about our God and about His government that absolutely had to be clarified before trust and peace could be restored again. For, as we have considered already, there has been a crisis of distrust in God's universal family--even to the point of war up in heaven as described in Rev. 12.

Our God has been accused of being unworthy of the trust of His created beings--of being arbitrary, vengeful, and severe. Particularly has He been accused of lying to His children--lying about death being the result of sin. Now, it does no good simply to deny such charges. As we have already considered, God does not tempt us to accept mere claims. Even the Devil can make mere claims. Only by the demonstration of trustworthiness over a long period of time and under a great variety of circumstances--particularly difficult ones, can trust be re-established and confirmed.

The Bible records that God sent His Son to deal with this breakdown of trust and trustworthiness in His family. In other words, He sent His Son to deal with sin. You may recall that in our second conversation we considered the fact that as the Bible describes it, sin is much more than a mere breaking of the rules. Sin is a breakdown of trust or trustworthiness. Sin means a stubborn and suspicious unwillingness to listen--not to mention all the damaging consequences of our being

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unwilling to listen to our heavenly Father. Jesus came to set right everything that had gone wrong, and to set it right in such a way that it would stay right for the rest of eternity.

First of all, let us consider again what *has* gone wrong; because I believe the way we understand what went wrong helps us to understand the methods God has used to set things right. It particularly helps us to understand why Jesus had to die. Our God has been accused, specifically, of being arbitrary, exacting, vengeful, unforgiving and severe. God sent His Son to reveal the truth about these matters. Why was it not enough for Jesus to come and live among us as He did and tell us the truth about His Father and then demonstrate by His gracious treatment of the worst of sinners, that God, indeed, is not the kind of Person His enemies have made Him out to be? Of course the way He lived and the way He treated people is vital evidence. We will spend much time on it later, particularly when we discuss **"How God Treats His Erring Children."**

Remember that the most serious charge leveled against our God is that He lied to us when He said that sin results in death. Worse than that, Satan has turned God's gracious warning to our first parents in the garden of Eden into a terrifying threat. He pictures God as saying to Adam and Eve, "Either you obey Me, or I'll kill you!" Think of the baleful effect that perversion of the truth has had on the human race. Think how it has poisoned people's attitude toward God and their practice of religion. Think of picturing our gracious God as saying, "You either love and obey Me, or I'll torture and execute you in My righteous wrath." How could this satanic view of God win such wide acceptance as it has? Why is it still so widely believed?

For thousands of years men have sacrificed--even their own children--to win the favor of their offended gods. Even in the christian world it is suggested and even believed, that if it were not for Christ's appeasement (sometimes called propitiation) of His Father's wrath, we would long before now have been destroyed. And were it not for Christ's constant pleading with the Father, God could not find it in His own heart to forgive and heal His children. Who could have thought up such a perversion? Now as you know the Sixty-six books, does anything need to be done to persuade God to love His children? The testimony of all Sixty-six books is that God has always loved even His most wayward child. That is what is summed up in John 3:16 "God so loved the world..."--not just His good children, but all His children--both good and bad.

Those serious words to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden were no threat. Those words were a gracious warning, because sin actually results in death. Sin so changes the sinner that a natural consequence is death. Cut off by his own rebellious choice from the source of life the sinner will die. Now out of harmony with God by his own rebellious rejection, the sinner is so changed that even the life-giving glory of our God becomes to him a consuming fire. How can this best be clarified? Not by claims, but by evidence and demonstration.

One choice that God had was to allow Adam and Eve to die. He could have said to the universe, "Who is telling the truth? I said sinners would die. It is the Devil who has lied to you."

Or going back even further, God could have left Satan and his followers to reap the natural results of their sin and they would have perished. Surely then there would have been no question about the truthfulness of God's warning. Why didn't God take those apparently easy choices? He could have saved all the painful history since that time. Of course, had the universe watched Satan and his followers die, having never seen death before, there was the hazard that they would assume that God had executed His children who had displeased Him. Then there would be the danger that the angels would serve God from fear. And unfortunately, the obedience that springs from fear produces the character of a rebel. And rebelliousness is the essence of sin.

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But God did not take that easy way out. He did not want the obedience and love that spring from fear. That would be totally unacceptable to so gracious a God as we know Him to be. Instead, God sent His Son in human form and He died the death that is the natural result of sin. The universe watched and saw how God was involved in the death of the wicked.

Of all the Sixty-six books in the Bible, perhaps Paul in Romans gives the clearest explanation of why Jesus died. First of all he recognizes the truth of God's warning in the garden of Eden. Look at Rom. 6:23 (Phillips) where Paul agrees with the record in Genesis, "Sin pays its servants: the wage is death." But we also recall Satan's denial and his charge that God had lied in Gen. 3:4,5 (RSV) "But the serpent said to the woman, `You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.'" Notice that Satan subtly adds the additional charge that God is selfishly withholding something that would be for their best good.

Now who *is* telling us the truth? God, or the great former light-bearer, Lucifer? How do you determine who is telling the truth? Did God gather His family together and say, "I am telling the truth, the Devil is lying!"? Which would only encourage the Devil to say, "No, I am telling the truth and God is lying." Again, as we have emphasized so much, matters like this cannot be settled by claims or denials. God's way was to take His case into court. Look at the marvelous words of Rom. 3:4 (and I wish there were time to read all of Romans) but just taking this little piece out of the beginning of chapter 3 (Rom. 3:4, Goodspeed) "As the scripture says, `That you may be shown to be right in what you say, and win your case when you go into court."

Now the Bible often speaks of such meetings of the heavenly family. Look, for example, in the first two chapters of Job. If you want to know how many attend, look in the book of Daniel (7:9,10) where it says a hundred million beings watch as the court meets. Note how God resolves questions particularly with respect to the charges of Satan that are leveled against Him and against His friends before the heavenly court. In the book of Job, Satan accused God, and he accused Job, of being unworthy of God's trust. Did God say, "That's a lie, Satan; this man is perfect?" God said, "You've raised a serious question. The only way to answer it is to show you."

Now look at the rest of the book of Job. Did Job show himself to be a trustworthy friend of God? Did he trust God because he was being richly rewarded or did he seem to be utterly abandoned and yet he still trusted God? The book ends with God saying, "Thank you, Job, you've said of Me what is right." (Job 42:7,8) Job was God's friend all the way through and God could then turn to the heavenly court and say, "Do you need any more evidence about the falsity of Satan's charges and the trustworthiness of my friend Job?"

This is God's way. God himself has been accused. He does not merely deny the accusation. He says: "Let Me show you. My children, let Me show you the falsity of these accusations and the truth about Myself and then you decide." Imagine the humility of the Infinite One submitting His character and government to the scrutiny and investigation of His mere creatures! That's God's way, and it is the only way to really establish love and trust in the fullest sense of freedom.

We are told that, in the fullness of time "God showed His Son publicly dying as a means of reconciliation (an answer to questions) to be taken advantage of by faith. This (death) was to demonstrate God's own righteousness, for in His divine forbearance He had apparently overlooked men's former sins. This death was to show that God himself is righteous and therefore can set right those who have faith in His Son. (cf. Rom. 3:25,26 - Maxwell) I am sure you recognize Romans 3:25, 26--though perhaps not the words that I used. Would you look at Romans 3:25, 26 (KJV)--"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the

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forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Now there is a difficult word in there--"propitiation." Propitiation means appeasement--this is a most regrettable translation. Propitiation is what you husbands may offer your wives when you promised, on your anniversary, to be home at 6 p.m. to take your wife out to dinner and now it's 11 p.m., and you've just remembered. So on the way home you find an all-night florist shop and you buy some chocolates and whatever else you can lay your hands on. As you approach the front door with some trepidation, you open it and hand the flowers and the chocolates in, trying to propitiate the righteous wrath of your deeply disappointed wife. That's propitiation, or appeasement.

I wish there were time to really analyze that verse. The word translated "propitiation" here is pronounced "hilasterion." Do you know that that is the word used in the Greek Septuagint (Greek Old Testament translated before the time of Christ) for the "mercy seat?" The Bible does not mention "mercy seat" in the Old Testament. Luther made it up. When Luther looked at this word which is used for the cover of the ark--the ark of the covenant--he found that the Hebrew word just means a "covering." But that covering was so important that he translated it "Mercy Seat" or in the old German "Gnadstuhl" now written "Gnadenstuhl."

Tyndale was a friend of Luther (who first translated it this way in 1524) and in 1525 Tyndale brought it over into English and several versions followed him. That's where "mercy seat" came from. The cover of the ark was never called a mercy seat until the early sixteenth century A.D. But think of the meaning of what happened before the mercy seat--it was not a bad choice. It's just a pity that our *King James Version* uses "mercy seat" in Exodus 25:17 and "mercy seat" in Hebrews 9:5, but does not use "mercy seat" in Romans 3:25, 26. It uses "propitiation." I think "mercy seat" would have been much closer. For this Greek word means literally "a place or means of reconciliation"--a place where atonement or unity and **at-one-ment** take place.

So I ventured my own translation of Rom. 3:25,26 (Maxwell). "For God showed him publicly dying as a means of reconciliation to be taken advantage of by faith. This was to demonstrate God's own righteousness, for in His divine forbearance He had apparently overlooked men's former sins." (they hadn't died as he had warned, you see) "It was to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time to show that He Himself is righteous and that He sets right everyone who trusts in Jesus." In other words, Jesus died to answer the questions about His Father and to prove that God was not the kind of person His enemies have made Him out to be. He had not lied about sin leading to death. He sent His Son to answer the questions.

In imagination let's go to the cross and watch Jesus die. Did He **really** die? The soldiers were surprised to find he was already dead. Crucifixion was a slow way of dying. Evidently something else had happened. Is it true that Jesus was dying the death of a sinner--to show us how the sinner really dies? Look at 2 Corinthians 5:21 (RSV) "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin." He did die the death of a sinner. But what **caused** Jesus to die? As you watch Him dying on the cross, is God killing His Son? Is he torturing his Son to death? Is God pouring out His wrath on His Son--something the Bible so often pictures God doing toward sinners for whom there is no further hope?

Well, it all depends on the meaning of wrath. What is God's wrath? One of the clearest explanations in the whole Bible is in Romans 1. I wish we could read at least the whole first chapter. But look at Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28 (RSV). "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth..." and it is the truth about God in that whole section. "Therefore, God gave them up...For

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this reason God gave them up...And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up." Three times it states in Romans 1 that God's wrath is simply His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway, thus leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequence of their own rebellious choice.

Was Jesus given up? Look at Romans 4:25 (RSV)--"Jesus our Lord, who was put to death..." my favorite version says. There is nothing in the Greek that says He was put to death. It says what is in the parentheses there, "Jesus our Lord, who was (given up) for our trespasses..." and it is exactly the same word as in Romans 1:24, 26 & 28. Versions ought to leave them the same to show the point that Jesus died under the wrath of His Father.

But look at the real meaning of God's wrath. This was not new with Paul. It's all through the Old Testament. It is most dramatic in Hosea 11. Again I wish we could read the whole chapter. Hosea 11:7,8 (Phillips). "My people are bent on turning away from me...(but) How, oh how can I give you up, Ephraim! How, oh how, can I hand you over Israel!"

Did Jesus understand that this is the experience He was passing through? Did Jesus know He was being given up as Hosea describes it? (And Paul later in Romans 1 and 4) What did Jesus cry just before He died? "My God, my God, why are You beating Me up? Why are you torturing Me? Why are you killing Me?" No! "Why have you given Me up?" (Matt.27:46) He knew.

We should have come earlier, though--to Gethsemane--where He began this awesome experience of demonstrating the truth about God's gracious but awful warning that the wages of sin is death. We should have come to Gethsemane. There Jesus fell to the ground dying. The angels were watching. Was God killing his Son in the Garden of Gethsemane or did Jesus feel his unity with His Father breaking up? He began to feel the awesome loneliness of being given up. Had Jesus been left in the Garden of Gethsemane to die there, could you say that the Father killed the Son? Now, had He been a mere creature you wouldn't know; but the angels knew who Jesus was. They knew that He was God. They knew the meaning of His words in John 10:18 (RSV) where Jesus said, "No one takes it (My life) from Me." No one can. I lay it down of Myself. "I have the power to lay it down and I have the power to take it again."

The angels knew that was the truth. If Jesus died it was not because His Father had killed Him. The Father was giving Him up. Both of them suffered, and the Father was crying, "How can I give you up?" The Son who had assumed humanity was the One who died.

So two questions were answered in Gethsemane:

1. Is death the result of sin? Indeed it is.
2. Is it because God kills his wayward children?

He did not lay a hand on His Son.

But there was a third question that needed to be answered. Why is it so important that we understand that God does not execute his sinful children? This had to be answered, too. So an angel came to strengthen Jesus to go out to Calvary, and there, once again, He answered the first two questions. But He was also this time tortured and crucified. By whom? By the Father? Or by the most devout group of Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health-reforming, Bible-quoting adventists the world has ever known? They even said He had a devil, before they tortured him to death. You see, they obeyed God from fear. Because as the prophets had said so many times before, they did not really know God. (cf. Hosea 4:1; 5:4)

Look at John 19:31 (GNB). "Then the Jewish authorities asked Pilate to allow them to break the legs of the men who had been crucified, and to take the bodies down from the crosses. They requested this because it was Friday, and they did not want the bodies to stay on the crosses on the Sabbath, since the coming Sabbath was especially holy." You see, they nailed their Savior to the cross and then rushed home to keep that Sabbath especially holy--to prove they were God's true people. That's the awful result of serving God from fear, because you do not know the truth

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about God.

The three questions were answered.

1. Does sin result in death?

Indeed, it does!

2. But is it torture and execution at the hands of our gracious God?

Indeed, it is not!

3. But what's so dangerous about misunderstanding this and serving God from fear?

The service of fear produces the character of a rebel. It can even turn people who are dedicated to obedience into harsh rebels, and God's worst enemies!

Obviously Jesus did not die to win His Father. How clear Paul is on this. Look quickly at the remaining verses. 2 Corinthians 5:19 (RSV), "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." Nowhere ever does the Bible suggest that God had to be reconciled to us. Never once! God paid the price to reconcile us to Himself! Nor did Jesus die to pay some mere legal penalty. He died to reveal the truth about God and the falsity of Satan's charges. Even the angels had to learn this. Look at Colossians 1:20 (RSV). "...and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace," (not war, but peace) "by the blood of his cross." (parentheses supplied)

As Jesus said in the next verse John 12:32 (GNB) "When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw everyone to me." Not all men--**everyone**--in the whole family of the universe. You see, viewed in the larger setting of the Great Controversy, the way in which Jesus suffered and died is the greatest revelation of the truth about God and His government that the universe will ever see or ever need. Correctly understood, the message of the cross is final defeat for the adversary. No wonder Satan has worked so hard to obscure, misrepresent, and even pervert the meaning of the cross.

To some of us the cross is great good news. Yes, it is true that sinners will die, but we have no need to be afraid of God, and He died to prove it. This message has great power to win to repentance and to trust. Paul was so proud of this good news; look at his understanding of it in 1 Corinthians 1:17,18 (RSV), "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel," (What is the Gospel--the good news--about?) "and not with eloquent wisdom lest the cross of Christ," (that's the Gospel) "be emptied of its power." (This good news has great power) "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (parentheses supplied)

Now compare with that Romans 1:16 (RSV) that very famous righteousness by faith verse. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel:" (this good news) "it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith..."(Wherein lies the power?) "for in it" (**something** is revealed) "the righteousness of God is revealed." (parentheses supplied) The good news is that God is not the unrighteous kind of Person His enemies have made Him out to be.

It's so wonderful to see all through the Bible that even before the cross God had good friends who trusted Him, always, to do the right thing, the merciful thing, and they were proud to know Him and proud to speak about Him to others. Look at Jeremiah 9:24 (NIV) "Let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight, declares the Lord." Jeremiah was able to repeat those words with feeling long before the cross. But now such confidence in God has been confirmed by the way Jesus suffered and died. Among God's friends whether angels or men this meaning of the cross will have power to hold God's great family together in loyalty and in peace forever.

## Conversations About God - Tape 8B

Venden: We had a hand over here.

Comment: ...obedience fit into the whole question. Being accepted by God, having a part of our acceptance?

Maxwell: You mean, to what extent does God's regard for me depend upon my behavior? OK. Now, the word "obedience" needs to be analyzed somewhat as you know. We usually think of obedience in terms of performance, doing what we've been told to do. Obedience is understood as obeying the rules.

The word actually in the Bible - it's an interesting one. I'll pronounce it. It's "hupakoe". On "hupo", the first part, we get hypo from that - means under. And "akoe" is as in acoustical. This is acoustical plaster on the ceiling. It has to do with listening. The word means literally, etymologically, a humble willingness to listen.

And the word is used for a doorkeeper, incidentally. What would you think of a doorkeeper who would hear his master knock on the door and say, "I hear you, but I haven't finished the newspaper yet; come back in twenty minutes"?

So the assumption is that you not only listen humbly, but you get up to open the door. Now, it might be that when you lay your hand on the door - you're getting a little old, and the door is stuck a bit, and hard as you pull it, you can't get it open. And the master has to put his shoulder to the door outside and give it a good shove to help you let him come in.

The thing is, that obedience does not stress the perfect performance; it stresses the wholehearted willingness to listen. Now, God can expect of His children who trust Him a totally unreserved willingness to listen. But He knows better than to expect perfect performance.

And so that we might understand that, Jesus came as a Physician, as a Healer. Now, physicians know better than to expect perfect performance after the first visit. I mean, you've just come in with an advanced case of arthritis; and the physician will not say, "And I expect you to run the four-minute mile on the way home." He eases you into your wheelchair maybe, and has somebody push you home. But maybe you sit up a wee bit straighter. And gradually you learn to walk a little bit.

The thing is, though, if you're not willing to listen, He can do nothing for you. It's a pity that we have tended to stress the performance more than the quality of that willingness to listen. You see, I may die needing a great deal of healing. But if I die willing to listen, I will arise willing to listen. And I'll be perfectly safe to have around. So I would say that my willingness to listen does have a great deal to do with my relationship with the Father.

But see, the way you asked the question, there are many implications there. God's willingness to accept me, God's love for me, does not depend upon my willingness to listen. He loves me because I'm His child. Even if I'm one of the worst children He has, He still loves me. He loves all His children. But His love for me cannot be expressed if I don't come and let Him do it.

That's why in Hosea 11, God says of Israel, "I can love them no more." Of course He still loves them, but He can't show it anymore. That's why John is called the beloved disciple. He [Jesus] loved all the disciples. But John was always there; he was always available. So Jesus could express His love more for him.

So God may love me and accept me; but if I'm not willing to listen and if I'm not willing to come, He can't do anything for me. So obedience, meaning a willingness to listen, is very much involved in this relationship that we have.

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Comment: In the Old Testament sacrificial symbolism, it seems so easy to get the impression that death had to take place for the remission of sins, or for the forgiveness of sin. Now, the symbolism of the coming Messiah is also fairly easy to find. But then the symbolism that you draw upon tonight, is further back or deeper down. Why would it be given to us that way, that it's so hard to get to the truth, and so easy to be misled?

Maxwell: Ah, that's an excellent question, and worth a whole evening - which will be entitled, "God's Use of Emergency Measures." I believe the Bible is full of these emergency measures. And because we've been in a state of emergency the whole time, it's ninety-nine per cent emergency measures.

For example, God is usually pictured as raising His voice to His children who are not listening very well. You have a few precious moments, when He's talking to His friends, and He talks softly to them, as to Elijah at the mouth of the cave, and to Mary, Martha and Lazarus, and other people.

So unfortunately, because of our condition, these rare moments of ideal insight are rather scarce. But I would say, since these are the very special moments when God is able to talk to us the way He likes to, these would have enormous significance.

Let me mention one, just to illustrate. The Bible pictures priestly intercession over and over and over again. No question about it. But then Jesus stuns the disciples at the end by saying, "Before I die, let Me tell you something plainly about My Father. I have talked to you in figures and symbols until now — as you were saying, the Bible is full of them - because you needed them. But you know, there really is no need for Me to intercede with the Father for you. For the Father loves you Himself."

And the disciples should have asked your question. If they'd asked your question, we'd have heard Jesus' answer. I think He'd have been willing to put off the crucifixion for a week, to answer their questions, if they had asked fifty-five questions such as you just did. He [could have] said, "Let Me tell you why I gave all those symbols. Let Me tell you why I gave you priestly intercession."

And I believe the explanation, though, is in the Bible. And so one evening we will go into that. Perhaps that should belong in next week, even, because God gave us a kind Person in between, because we were so afraid of Him. And we said, "Don't let God speak to us, lest we die." He says, "All right, I'll give you a friend in between." Of course, if you're not able to come back - who has been the one between God and sinful people? Who has been the one between? It's been Christ. Who's Christ?

Comment: God.

Maxwell: God. Then there's never been anybody in between actually. He has very kindly pictured somebody else in between, but Jesus is God. So God has never had anybody in between. God knelt down and washed His betrayer's dirty feet, without anybody in between.

And we say, "God is too holy to look on evil. That is the Father. You see, the Father wouldn't wash Judas's feet. Only Jesus would." I don't believe it. Besides, the Son is fully God. That's why I can see Him, you know, looking up at the disciples as He washed their feet and saying, "You don't believe My Father would be willing to do this, do you? But He would, just as much as I."

Which by the way, led Ellen White to make that stunning comment: "If the Father had come instead of the Son, history would not have been one whit different." The same; and that's based

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on John 14, John 16 and many other places.

Venden: We have a hand right in here.

Comment: I wonder if we could have a definition of evil.

Maxwell: Evil. How philosophical do you want us to be? Or do it in biblical terms? The Bible doesn't philosophize a lot, doesn't analyze words too much. It gives us illustrations. Evil.

Venden: Are you thinking in terms of the definition of the sin problem which . . . ?

Comment: . . . discussion tonight since we were discussing evil, what were we discussing?

Maxwell: Now, I say again, do you want this discussed in biblical terms? Or in metaphysical and philosophical?

Comment: [not clear]

Maxwell: I think it does. We're sticking pretty much to the biblical approach to this thing. In the Bible, evil is pictured many, many times, so there would be no doubt in the minds of even the humblest people what it means to be in the wrong. And so, what has gone wrong in the universe is rebellious, stubborn, selfish distrust, an unwillingness to listen; with all the damaging consequences thereunto appertaining. And that is evil.

But the source of all evil in the beginning, was the mind of Lucifer, who in the very presence of God, began to lie. Evil is particularly involved in falsification and misrepresentation and suppression of the truth. In fact, in Romans 1, where it says God's wrath is revealed on those who are particularly evil, the most evil people mentioned in Romans 1 are those who pervert and suppress the truth. That is the greatest of all evils, because it produces such enormous damage; not only to the person, but to the others who have accepted these lies as the truth.

And that's the picture that comes through in scripture. And of course, I think that we can't realize how evil evil is, until we look at Christ and see what He was like, and see how others treated Him. And the contrast is very vivid.

The greatest evil, I believe, is pretentiously pious fraud. Because it is so damaging to the individual and to others looking on. And this is what His professed people offered Him when He came. In God's name they said He had a demon, and they tortured Him to death. That is the ultimate evil.

It's interesting that in Romans, it's not getting drunk, and swearing, and cursing, drinking and smoking - and all the other things that we speak of as evil. It is particularly the suppression and the perversion and the rejection of truth.

I don't know, what do you think yourself? I know one can wax very philosophical and metaphysical about evil in essence. But in the Biblical picture, I think it's painted pretty clearly from the rebellion up in Heaven through the lies in the Garden of Eden, to the references to the deceiver in the book of Revelation. I don't know, what do you think there yourself?

Comment: Well, I just thought that since we're talking about evil, we should set down what it is we're talking about. And I think you've done that.

Comment: Since the sinners have died as a result of their sin, that is the result of sin, correct? Why does the sinner then, be resurrected again - including those that were slain by the coming of Christ - why are they resurrected again, in order to die a second time?

Maxwell: Yeah, that seems cruel and inhuman; and the State of California wouldn't permit it.

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Yes. [Laughter] That's true.

Comment: [?]. . . the love of God.

Maxwell: That's right.

Comment: OK.

Maxwell: Yes. I think that the resurrection of the wicked is a real test of one's understanding of the whole thing. Even the Sodomites will be resurrected, in the resurrection of the wicked at the end of the millennium. Is it because they didn't suffer enough the first time, and God's going to give it to them a little longer? If that's true, then our Conversations About God might just as well quit. And we might just as well hunker down and wait for the awful arrival of such a God, and decide whether we want to live with Him for the rest of eternity. It cancels all the good news out.

My understanding would be, that many of the people who die what we call the first death - the death that we all die — is the result of living on this planet. It's the result of being cut off from the tree of life, being descended from Adam and Eve. We die for many and various reasons. Many of these people have even died at God's hand, I believe. The firstborn of Egypt. The 185,000 Assyrians.

This leaves a question in people's minds, and God likes to answer questions. So, I believe they're all resurrected at the end. Of course, many of them, God knows whether they are willing to listen, and there's truth in the inner man. And we'll be surprised to see who are raised in the first resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ; we might be quite amazed.

But then in the second resurrection we might be amazed. Why is Mother out there? Well, I understand that during the millennium we will have opportunity, just as the Heavenly family now is having opportunity to discuss us - I mean, there's nothing arbitrary about what we call the -- well, it's a pity the name Investigative Judgment was ever used, because it's not in scripture, and it implies some things that God would not need to do, the omniscient One.

But for the family to meet and discuss the matters of the government of the universe; it's happened over and over again in the history of scripture, this last meeting of the heavenly court, the heavenly family. It's just the last of many such meetings, as God allows the adversary to accuse us before our God. Revelation 12:10, Zechariah 3, and other places. The enemy of God is our enemy, too. And he has this present opportunity to argue that we are not safe to save. Just as he argued that God could not be trusted, so we cannot be trusted.

Once this has been resolved to the satisfaction of our future neighbors and friends -- why do you think we're welcomed when we arrive at the Pearly Gates? Is it that God says, "I know this worries you, but it's none of your business. I expect you to be out there with the band; and you will smile, and tell them you are happy that they have come. I know you're worried, but that's none of your business."

No. Our future neighbors and friends will have ample opportunity to hear the worst that Satan can level against us. And if God can say, "Nevertheless, there's truth in the inner man; that man is willing to listen," our future neighbors and friends will be willing to welcome us to live next door to them.

Then we spend a thousand years - the millennium. And I look for my mother. And I don't find her. If I don't find my mother, I'll wonder how I ever got there. My mother was extraordinary. I would really be puzzled. There must be something. I'd go to the Lord and say, "I don't find Mother here." He'll say, "That's none of your business." He doesn't run His universe that way! We've been discussing that all these times. He will say, "Come, see." And I would be satisfied.

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But then there's always Uncle Bill, you know, who said, "If only you could prove it to me. You know, I went to all those Conversations, and I wasn't convinced. If you'd just prove it to me, I would believe."

And so in the resurrection at the end, we'll see all these people about whom there might be questions. And there's Uncle Bill. And he arises, and there's the New Jerusalem. And there's Christ still in His human form.

And some of us foresee the panoramic review of the whole Plan of Salvation. If you haven't read the Sixty-six now, you'll get to do it then. You'll see the whole review of the great controversy, and the position you've occupied in it.

And my understanding is, that if Uncle Bill out there were to say, "I never saw it that way. That is beautiful! Please, Lord, let me in." You don't think God would stop everything and say, "How come you're out there, if you have that attitude? You should have been in the first resurrection."

See, God will make no mistakes in His diagnosis. And this will prove it. Because in spite of all that revelation at the end of the millennium, will anybody be changed? Will anybody say, "Now I see it"? No. So all that does is confirm the correctness of God's diagnosis.

And you say, "Does God need to confirm it?" Well, does He need to answer any of our questions? He is a question-answering God. That's the reason for the cross and all these other things. God does not ask us to believe without evidence. He wants us to be fully satisfied that giving more time, and more opportunity, and more truth, would be of no use in winning any of those people.

And so we turn to God and say, "You're right. It would do no good to wait any longer." And then comes that final, awesome event, when He unveils His life-giving glory. And all that are out of harmony, are consumed.

And that I especially want to deal with next time. If that makes us afraid of God, then He still has the seeds of sin and rebellion in His universe. Are we prepared to see that? Or as the wicked are consumed and the very elements melt with fervent heat, do we understand how God is involved in that? Will we be able to go up to God and say, "God, it's all right. There really was no other way. We're with You in this thing."

And when it's all over, can God look at us and see that we have not misunderstood and made afraid? I believe the events of the end of the millennium are very important confirmation; and also they are a demonstration, a final, awesome demonstration that doesn't need to be added, because the cross is enough. See, that's an utter waste of evidence at the end. It only gives confirmation of something we ought to know already, it seems to me.

But maybe that's a little hasty for something you've thought of for so many years. I know you don't look any older than I do, Dr. Couperus, that's what everybody's said. But I think you've had a little longer to think about these things.

Comment: This is a difficult question this particular part, I think, of the message, particularly in Revelation. And a lot of people are worried about that particular place, that a loving God would want to have them die twice. And I think your explanation is a good one. I don't think we'll understand it until we come to that place [unclear]. . .

Maxwell: The main thing would be, if we're convinced of the truth about God, we know that what we see in the end will not violate what He has paid such a price to clarify up to that time. It's like trying to figure out how the wicked are consumed, and some burn longer than others, and so forth. I don't give two thoughts to that. I know it will not violate what we know to be true about God.

You don't think that in the end, we're going to see that all of this was really wrong - He's going to deny it all by acting out of character in the end. There's not a chance He's going to do that. So I'm willing to wait, as you say. And see, I know it's going to work out in a manner that's

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consistent with the picture that's been confirmed at such cost. That would be safe, wouldn't it?

Venden: Alright, we have a gentleman over here.

Comment: We had a Conversation discussing the obedience factor. I remember the statement that "Jesus was obedient unto death." Now I'm wondering, what was the - you know - we discussed the role of His death, as demonstrating God's part in the destruction of sin, and so on. But what was the role of Jesus' life? And I'm particularly thinking of this concept of the obedience. Was it tell us the way to salvation? Or is obedience an integral part of the character of God? And if so, what is He obedient to?

Maxwell: Ah, yes. Now you've raised several things there. And you suggest a good warning, lest one oversimplify due to the shortness of time. His life was enormously significant. I mentioned the way He treated the worst of sinners is a tremendous revelation.

All right, His obedience. Now obedience, say, even to the Law. Now, what does it mean to keep the Law? It means to love. I Corinthians 13 says, To love is to be patient, to be kind, not to be arrogant, not to be rude, not to insist on having your own way -and that marvelous list in there.

All right, did Jesus behave that way? Yes, He did. All His life. Some even despised Him for being so gentle. They confused gentleness with weakness, you know. And so Jesus showed, I believe, that under very difficult circumstances there is no excuse for sin. Because He showed, within the limitations of our humanity - He wasn't any bigger than we are; He got hungry, and He got tired - He showed that it is possible, under the most incredible opposition and cruel adversity, to behave that way.

Like in the end when they made fun of His birth as illegitimate. And they put a dirty rag over His head and hit Him; then pulled it off and said, "Prophecy who hit You." And then one wretch spat in His face. But not for one moment did He get angry or lose His control. He maintained His self-discipline, self-mastery and self-control -- the ultimate gift of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 — right to the very end, not because He was under favorable circumstances, but under the most difficult circumstances.

I believe He came to show the ideal, and to show -- well, who wants an excuse for sin? I mean, anybody want an alibi for sinning? Won't do you any good. God doesn't want to hear alibi's. Is there any use going to your doctor with excuses. All the doctor wants, is to make you well. It's only when we're caught up in this legal thing, that we say, "I need some excuse; I need some alibi for this thing." No, just come and say, "I'm sick; what must I do to be well?"

And so Jesus showed what it would mean to live a perfectly obedient life. And it's a great inspiration to us. And there are some who want to bring Christ down, down to our level. When I look at His life, I say, "I'd like to be like You. You don't have to be like me. I want to be like You." That's the main thing I get out of it.

So the devil, we understand, has suggested that God's law demands too much; there's no way you can live like that. You know, he didn't find it in his heart to be so reverent and respectful, and not insist on his own way. He was selfish. He was arrogant. So the devil was suggesting that even in the very presence of God, you can't live as described by the Ten Commandments.

Jesus came and showed that under the most forbidding circumstances, you can live that way. The contrast is tremendous there. So in many ways His life speaks very eloquently also. And none of it should be left out.

But I don't see this being done as a legal thing. He took His obedience and offered it as some legal. . . It depends whether you want to think of this in the legal model. And the Bible has a legal model, it's true. I believe it's part of the emergency measure that He's given us. There are hazards to the legal model. I believe, that to be honest with all Sixty-six books, one must build one's model of the Plan of Salvation on everything in the Bible. And if I have too many passages I can't fit in, then there's something wrong with my model; or there's something wrong with the

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way I'm reading them.

Like this: there are many references to legal relationship. If I can't fit that in; if I can't understand in a consistent way, why God chose to deal with His people like that, then my model needs some work.

The beauty of this is, that if you espouse this great controversy view, you don't argue with other people who prefer a more legal model. I mean, it's in there; and only God knows whether their tents should be pitched at the foot of Sinai, rather than somewhere else. That's entirely between them and Him.

Whereas those who prefer the legal model, are very much disturbed about this great controversy over the character of God, and all that He asks of us is trust, and that the Good News is primarily the truth about Him.

Whereas that larger emphasis has very respectful regard for those who may prefer a much more legal understanding of things. God ran the risk of so describing it, when He dealt with His people through the years. Yes, it's part of the emergency measures that He has used, I think.

So it's one blessing in the great controversy view. You don't find yourself arguing with people too much, or fighting with them. "No," He said, "look. That's your privilege. And as a matter of fact, what you're saying sounds very biblical to Me."

You don't say, "Why don't you go home and study all Sixty-six and get the Larger View." Because one thing about the Larger View, is it isn't rude.

Comment: I understand what your explanation is of the manifestation of God's love at the cross, and how Christ - He is trustworthy. But I would like to ask you in today's terms — you know, Francis Schaefer suggests that God there and not silent. However, I think for myself and my husband - I'm married; I have a piece of paper that tells me I'm married — what if it was two thousand years old, that told me that I was married, and he never manifested himself to me; I mean, would it be much fun, or maybe I shouldn't say that, to have a relationship with someone, to want to know someone so badly, and never have them say anything back? Why do you think God is so silent to us today? Is it part of the great controversy?

Maxwell: Oh, I like what you say, and all the implications thereof. Many things come to mind. There are reasons why God is not visibly among us at the present time. As God said to Moses, "No man can see My face and live." He didn't mean, "If I catch you peeking, I'll kill you." It's that, you know, in our present condition, we could not live in the life-giving glory of God. We will sometime soon. This is why we need to be healed, and prepared for that day.

Has He left us, though, without any means of communication? I believe that we especially communicate with God and commune with Him, through the study of the scriptures, if one takes it as a whole. But on the basis of here a little and there a little, it's not too rewarding. But if you take all Sixty-six, you see God dealing with His universe, dealing with His family all through these years. And He becomes very real to one. You find yourself talking to Him. It's a very real experience.

Comment: But does He talk back?

Maxwell: I don't hear voices in the night.

Comment: That's what I want to know: Do you feel that that's part of -- is God constrained, in other words, at this point in history to not actually — I'm not asking for a face-to-face confrontation, because I believe very much we're not prepared for that. But you think of the Voice. You know, some people run across occasionally, say, "I have— God told me this," or "God spoke to me." Again, if only all my husband did was send me letters, what kind of a relationship would you have? All I have to liken to, is the marriage or my mother and father, the parents. You communicate, may I say, verbally; that's what I mean to say, that's what I'm wondering. Why do you. . . ?

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Maxwell: Yes. In a way though, I'm glad I don't hear voices in the night. They'd worry me. And saints have at times. But the thing is, if I heard a voice in the night, I would investigate it very thoroughly. I'd check what I'd had for supper. And having made sure that it was coming as a voice, I would measure it by scripture anyway.

So, I believe that even the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart must be judged by the Scriptures, anyway. And that's why we had our previous discussions on authority, and so forth. I think that God is communicating with us in the most effective way at the present time, under this emergency.

However, one does need that rewarding feeling; and that's where people come in. I think that's one of the functions of the church. During this emergency, we need the church more than at any other time. Hopefully, a friendly church. I think that - well, as Ephesians says - the unity that is inherent in our faith, and our knowledge of the Son of God, has great comfort and encouragement in it. And it's not good for us to try to do this alone.

So in a way, we sort of stand in for God at the present time. And we can greatly help each other, knowing there will be even something better in the future. But as you say, it's due to the emergency, that it's the way it is. And it's very kind of God not to appear prematurely in His glory; we'd be consumed. So I'm glad He does it this way.

Venden: All right, this man here has waited patiently.

Comment: Since God answered the question that's Satan raised at the cross, why didn't He come then; or did Satan raise other questions?

Maxwell: Yes. Like, earlier the question arose: If God won the great controversy then - and I believe when He said, "It is finished," He had won; and He went up to Heaven on Resurrection Sunday; and apparently from the book of Revelation, the angels have never tired of tell Him He's won His case - well then why wait for another two thousand years? Well, there are people on this planet who are not settled into this truth that the loyal angels are settled into.

I believe God has been saving people from every generation all through the years. But if we accept the biblical picture of how things are going to end -- I mean, all Hell is going to break loose on this planet. Particularly when God removes His restraining hand and we experience the "seven last plagues" of the wrath of God.

Now, God's wrath? That's not His being angry and giving wicked people what they deserve. God is going to remove restraint, and hand people over, and give them up to what they want to do. And it means the devil will also have a much freer hand than ever before on this planet.

The last generation of people to live on this earth; the last generation of His saints, His friends, will pass through an unspeakable time of trouble. That Satan will even come, bringing miracles and fire down from Heaven to deceive. There will be a little group on this earth who will succeed, where the brilliant angels failed. They will hear Satan's misrepresentations and his deceptions with all his miracles and power, under also very difficult physical circumstances, it would appear, in the last events of human history; and yet they will not be deceived, and they will not let God down.

I believe in mercy, God is waiting for a generation of Job's. Job was so settled into the truth, that God could say to the devil, "You can do anything you like to this man. And I'll even let the theologians come." His greatest agony was at the hands of well-meaning theologians who didn't know God. I believe they will cause the same damage in the end. Especially when they come and weep over you, and are so sympathetic they don't talk for seven days and seven nights. They were well-meaning theologians. They were just very wrong. And they caused him such agony, he finally said, "You three, please be quiet. You're confusing me. Let me talk to God."

They said, "You can't talk to Him that way!"

He says, "I can."

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And God says, "You're right; you can! You speak well of Me by talking to Me the way you have. I know they don't think it's all right to do this. But you really are My friend, Job." And Job did not let God down.

I believe the last generation of saints will be so settled into the truth as Job was, that God can say to the adversary: "No restraints now; you can do anything you like, short of taking their lives. And they will not let Me down." He's never had a group like that.

And that's why the Gospel must go to all the world, and others will all hear this. And we'll be amazed at the maturity of people coming in from elsewhere. As Ellen White said, "The majority of God's true people are in the other communions," you know. Don't you meet them all the time? And when they all come together into this unity that's inherent in their faith, and their knowledge of the Son of God; and grow up, and no longer behave like little children easily swayed to and fro by every wind of doctrine Ephesians 4— you'll have this group. And then He will allow the closing events to occur. He is too merciful, to allow those closing events to occur until His people are so settled into the truth.

And by the way, to me, that's the only kind of perfection I worry about. That's the perfection of maturity. There is another view that I think is so out of touch with reality, that it puts such a burden on people, I think it's even a hazard to their health. But this idea that we should grow up and become mature, and behave like grown-ups, and be settled into the truth about our God so even Satan can't confuse us -- that's the perfection in the Bible. The Greek word is always "maturity." It's being grown up.

Venden: Your question here.

Comment: In Isaiah, it's picturing what life will be like in the Kingdom of Heaven there, but there's a passage that I don't know the answer to. And it speaks about one will die a hundred years old. Do you recall it?

Maxwell: Oh yes! Now, what we need to do, is really open up the Bible and read. There are two chapters like that. There are two places near the end of Isaiah, where it describes how wonderful everything will be. And then the last two verses of Isaiah say, "And then we will go and look out over the walls, and we'll see the dead bodies of the people in the fire; and their worm shall not die, nor the fire be quenched." You have that picture. That's an equal problem. Might as well do them both at once.

And then just a little before that it says that when everything has been made new, and all that's wrong has been set right, the child will die a hundred years old; and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed. And you say, "Well, will there be sinners up there? And will babies be dying at a hundred??

Now, I don't think there's any quick answer to that. You have to read all of Isaiah; and then be aware of how God represents things in all Sixty-six. See, which of those two shall we take first? The worm and the fire, or the child dying a hundred years old?

Comment: The child dying. . .

Maxwell: Since you mentioned that first. There are many pictures in Isaiah that describe the life to come as in an absolutely ideal environment. The lions there will eat straw like an ox. Right? It says so twice in Isaiah. It also says once, there will be no lions there. Now, which is right? Does it make any difference? If the lions eat straw like an ox, or there aren't any lions there, does it make any difference? The point is, there will be no vicious beasts there. It will be perfectly safe.

Now, I don't care whether there are lions there or not, and whether they eat straw like an ox. I've never been scared by a lion. I've been scared by drunk drivers. I'd like to know if there will be any drunk drivers there. And some who have been hi-jacked on a plane, want to know if there are any hi-jackers there when we're flying around; any terrorists there, and so forth. I mean, whatever has been bothering you, will not be there.

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It also says each one of us will sit under his own vine and his own fig tree. What if you don't like figs? I don't. I prefer peach trees, or banana tree - or something like that. But not figs. What does it matter? And we'll all be playing harps. What if you prefer a trombone or a piano? The thing is, the pictures in the Bible are all tailored to the people for whom they're being written.

Zechariah has a wonderful picture of life in the City to come. It says that, "In those days, the elderly will sit with staff in hand for very age, while the boys and girls play safely in the streets."

And you say, Well, there won't be any old people there who'll need staff. And there won't be any children; because they'll all grow up.

Don't spoil it! The thing is, to a Jew who loves the family, that's Utopia, isn't it? Grandma and Grandpa sitting there with staff in hand for very age. And the streets are full of boys and girls playing in the streets. That's just marvelous!

What would you like? Well, my Dad had little private ambition that maybe he could have just a wee boat on the River of Life. You know, wouldn't it be fun? Probably have to be a sailboat, so as not to make too much noise. But, I mean, let your imagination go. It will be absolutely marvelous up there.

Now, one of the saddest things those days, was babies dying. And if you read the whole section around there near the end, it says, "There will be no crying; there will be no sadness. Why, babies will die a hundred years old!" I think it's a dramatic way of saying babies won't die.

And it says, "And you will not build, and another inhabit. You will not plant, and another reap and harvest." It just goes right on down the line. You really have to read the whole thing through there.

The most difficult line, though is the one, "And the sinner being a hundred years old, shall be accursed." And I've seen many ways of trying to handle that.

I remember when they found the Isaiah manuscripts, you know, in the Dead Sea caves. And I wondered, since it was a thousand years older than any manuscript of Isaiah up to this time in the Hebrew, if it could solve that problem. And so I was up at PUC at the time, and I sent away for a photostatic copy of these particular parts. And you know what? The Hebrew reads exactly the same.

So the solution is not in the Hebrew. I would rather take all the rest of the passage, which is to say: Look, there will be nothing there to cause sadness. There will be no disappointment. There will be no death there." And this apparently dramatically fits in: "The sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed." There will be no sinners there anyway. So Rod, have you ever figured that line out? There are many and various interpretations. I've never felt one really nails it down.

But on the authority of the rest of the whole context, I know God is saying, "There will be no sorrow, no dying, no crying, no disappointment, no destruction. Everything will be perfect in the hereafter." And I'm willing to go with that, wondering about that one line. Lou, you've worked on that in Seminary.

Venden: I was waiting for you to give the answer here. Never really did get much beyond what. . . That's as good an answer as I've heard.

Maxwell: By the way, on this last, to handle that— "Their worm shall not die, nor the fire be quenched," and so forth - that follows the most beautiful description of life in the hereafter. And if you take it out of its total context, it means that sometime in the hereafter, if your children are not behaving, just take them for a Sabbath afternoon walk out on the walls of the New Jerusalem, and point them down there. And there'll be Uncle Bill. The worms will still be working on him, and the fire will still be burning. And you can say to your boys and girls, "Now, do you want to be out there?"

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Now, you know that isn't true. So what is that picture? Well, to the Jew, that was gehenna, the garbage dump. You see. And they were familiar with this. It means that everything that is out of harmony will be destroyed.

You say, "But their worm doesn't die. They're living out there!" Read more carefully. It says, "You will look upon the corpses - the dead." It's not Hell out there. These are the corpses. This is final. And the worm and the fire will do their job; and there'll be nothing left.

It's just another very dramatic way of saying to the Jew, who knew all about gehenna, the garbage dump, that all that is out of harmony will be totally consumed and be gone. But again, one has to take more sections of the Bible together, rather than just take a verse here and wrestle with it. It's not too rewarding.

Comment: The model that Paul uses in Romans 5. It seems to imply there that something intrinsic happens in the relationship between God and man at the cross. Not necessarily, you know, a demonstration. In other words, when Christ died -- by Adam's sin there was separation for the whole human race. And by Christ's sacrifice, there is reconciliation for the whole human race.

And I wonder how that fits into the model of the idea of being convinced about something. It seems to me like that was intrinsic.

Maxwell: Yes, now, what you say has many implications, and I should really ask you more about it. See, there are some who take the point of view that when Christ died, the whole human race was reconciled. But they weren't. They were still rebellious. So I don't know what that would mean.

Comment: I would say that the whole human race without the death of Christ, had no hope of reconciliation. But when He — it is available to. . .

Maxwell: Is that for legal reasons?

Comment: No. It can be determined on what this gentleman mentioned earlier. The obedience of Christ was out of a relationship with His Father. And because of sin, that relationship with the Father was impossible. But now because of Christ's death, that relationship with the Father. . .

Maxwell: OK now. Would that mean then, if Jesus had not died, Enoch would have to come back from Heaven; and Moses would have had to come back down?

Comment: Well, I would say that that is because they - the faith chapter in Hebrews - implies that they had looked forward to the fulfillment of God's promise in the Messiah, in Christ.

Maxwell: Well, that belongs in a more legal model. In a trust model, I would take it this way: God will save all who trust Him. But there would not be basis for trust without answers to those questions. And that's why He had to die - to clear up those questions.

But you mentioned Romans 5 particularly. I think one of the greatest hazards in reading through Romans, is stopping - anywhere. I think one should never stop from 5:1 to the end of chapter 8. For example, when it contrasts the effects of Adam's sin with the effects of Christ's death. One dare not stop anywhere in there. I think all he's doing is drawing a comparison between the two.

You know, when Romans was originally written, there were no chapters and there were no verses. There was no temptation to stop at all. As a matter of fact, you didn't even have copy in your hand to read. You went somewhere, and somebody read it out loud. So you got the full impact of chapters 1 through 8.

And I think on that basis, I personally do not interpret some of the verses in that way. When I read Romans, I read it in the light of the great controversy. And I find it much more helpful, myself: 1) to read it in the Greek; and 2) to read it nonstop, especially 5 through 8.

We just got through with our class in Romans here. And I find the most useful way for me, is not

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to stop and analyze those verses. It gets very complicated. And I don't think it was his intention.

The biggest message in there is, Abraham trusted God, and "it was reckoned unto him as righteousness." And the cash registers begin to ring. Abraham trusted God, and God said, "That's good. That's all I'm looking for. You are My friend."

Comment: What is the meaning of the term you use, "safe to save"?

Maxwell: Safe to save?

Comment: Yes.

Maxwell: Well, it means you'd be safe to have around. In a free universe, without police on every corner, no prisons, no penitentiaries -- freedom. And the only person who is safe to save, is the person who could be entrusted with such freedom.

Now, it doesn't mean you're a theologically enormously well-informed person. Because the thief on the cross was pronounced by the Lord as safe to save. And all you could say of the thief on the cross was, he really admired the One in the middle and was willing to listen. He died willing to listen, he will arise willing to listen. And when the Lord says, "You have a great deal to learn," He'll say, "I know it. Please get started. I'm a good pupil. I'm willing to listen."

"Go into all the world and make disciples" is the meaning of that commission, you know. To teach people to be willing to listen.

Why should they listen? You present Somebody who's worth listening to. And you may die the next day. That's the new heart and the right spirit. It means walking humbly before your God. And anybody who has that, regardless of what has brought it about, would be safe to have in the Kingdom.

And that's why Ellen White can say, "Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly; those to whom the message is never brought by human instrumentality. But they've heard the voice of God speaking to them in nature. They've done the things the law requires; that is, they've loved. And they will be recognized as God's children."

And we didn't need to quote her. That's Romans 2: Gentiles who have never heard the law, show that the law is written on their hearts, and they do by nature what the law requires.

So Paul said the very same thing in Romans 2. Now how could that be? They haven't heard the Gospel, and all these other provisions. They will learn in the hereafter, because they're good pupils, willing to accept instruction. Even willing to accept correction -which might be the hardest thing for us who have been theologians, you know.

I've often thought of how fun it would be to meet a certain friend of mine I've argued with for forty years over the meaning of justification, you know. It will be such fun in the hereafter. We hope our debate will not keep either one of us out of the Kingdom. So we debate in kindness.

But when we get to the hereafter, and we both go to God and say, "Which one of us was right," we must be prepared to hear Him say, "Well actually, neither one of you. The truth is like this," you know. So we have to be ready for that in the hereafter. Then you would be safe to have around, is the whole idea. Safe to save.

Comment: You're not talking about anything innately good in the person that's saved.

Maxwell: Well, you've been born again. Yes. You have a new heart and a right spirit. And God did it. And what God does is good.

Comment: It's not salvation by good works.

Maxwell: No, I can't be so good and say, "God I think I deserve admission now." He'll say, "A crook like you?" See, Heaven will not be peopled even with pardoned crooks. I don't want to live next door to Idi Amin if I know he's just been forgiven. I want to know if he has a new heart and

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a right spirit.

That's why Jesus said to Nicodemus what He did. This emphasis on forgiveness often overlooks the necessity for this change. And I find all the Bible writers agree on that change. And I don't see this preoccupation with our legal problems with our God. The adjustment of our legal standing, does not make us safe to save. Adjusting Hitler's legal standing, does not make him safe to live next door to. But if somehow near the end he got a new heart and a right spirit, he'd be safe. So those words to Nicodemus are pretty fundamental, I believe.

Comment: What answer can I give to my Christian friends who believe in an immortality of the soul and eternal Hell, when they use as their reference Christ's own words regarding the rich man and Lazarus? It seems like my explanation is making -- I'm trying to explain away something that Christ said, when of course, He wouldn't lie.

Maxwell: Well, now. This is Billy Graham's key text, you know, for the immortality of the soul. In his book on angels, he says, "I know that when I die, God's good angels will come and take my soul to the bosom of Abraham."

Now there are some other parts of the illustration that he can't fit in too well. I mean, you don't sit in Heaven and view Hell, and talk about swapping cool drinks, and so forth. But he uses as much of the illustration as he finds fits into his convictions which are the result of years of study and conditioning, and so on. We all are somewhere in our growth in understanding.

I don't think Billy would like some other illustrations in the Bible to be used that way. I think it's very hazardous to base a belief on one item in the Scripture. We need the totality of Scripture.

I'd rather start with Genesis now, and see if there's any evidence that man possesses an immortal soul. And so you come to Genesis 2:7 "God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul." And You say, "Ha! See, now, he has a soul."

Do you know, this means so much. I listened to a program the other night, where a lady was saying, "You people who have had abortions, pray that the souls of those aborted babies will forgive you for what you did to them." That was on TV the other night. That's what this can lead to. I mean. . .

Well, when you come to Genesis 2:7, "God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul," you want to look up the word "soul." If you're using a modern version, you won't even find it and be faced with this problem. See, "soul" suggests to us some essence that can be separated from the body and wafted off to the bosom of Abraham, there to enjoy the music without any ears, and the food without any stomach. And having had a wonderful time for hundreds of years, has to come back and pick up his body in the resurrection -- which never did make too much sense to me. Why would you want to come back to get your body, as Thessalonians says.

In modern versions it will never say "soul." One of the first versions to translate, "Man became a living being," was a Jewish translation. A Jewish translation of the Torah. And Rabbi Olinski was the chairman. And reporters from Newsweek and Time magazine came to him and asked him if there was anything unusual about this new translation of the first five books.

He said, "Yes, you'll be surprised with one. We've dropped the word `soul'."

"Why did you do that?"

He said, "Because `soul' suggests this essence that can be wafted off." He said, "The Bible knows of no such thing." He said, "The Hebrew word, pronounced nephesh, means the whole person; even the blood in his veins." And that's in Newsweek and Time. That's Rabbi Olinski. Now, other versions are all doing it. The new Anchor Bible, which is jointly produced by Protestants, Catholics and Jews: "Man became a living being." All the modern versions now will say, "Man became a living person." Or "Man became a living creature." Or "Man began to live."

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And so we have lived to see a very remarkable book that's just come out by an Evangelical by the name of Dr. Fudge. And he's written a book entitled, The Fire That Consumes. He was a believer in the eternally believing fires of Hell.

And he said, "I realize I've inherited this, and I've never really gone through the Bible for myself." You ought to see that book! He said, "I have convinced myself there is absolutely no basis for the immortality of the soul in the Bible." He said, "Where did this thing come from? And particularly, where did the doctrine of eternal torment come from near the end?" He says, "I lay the blame especially on Calvin."

Now, this is an Evangelical talking - not an Adventist. Some of you know the book? The Fire That Consumes by Dr. Fudge. A most interesting book to read.

Well, I remember another time, my most esteemed friend at the University of Chicago - Robert V. Moss was his name; never met a nicer Christian - he was Evangelical and Reform. And when he got his Ph.D. in New Testament, same as I did, he became president of their seminary, then president of their denomination, then when he joined the Disciples of Christ, he was the leader of that church. Became an official of the World Council of Churches. A marvelous man! Never met a better saint. And he was so humble, and gentle, and knew his Bible so well. But he believed in the immortality of the soul very firmly.

Well, years later I picked him up in San Francisco at a Theological Deans' Meeting, to take him up to visit PUC. And on the way I said, "Any new theological ideas?"

"Yes," he said. "I've just written a book on Paul. And I have to admit to you, there is absolutely no basis for the immortality of the soul in the writings of Paul. Now," he said, "I still believe it; because, I mean, it just seems to valuable a thing to be wasted."

Why, he's absolutely right! But it doesn't make it immortal. Oh, I expect to see Bob in the Kingdom. Now, he never believed there was one. He called it "pie in the sky." But I think he almost wistfully wished I was right. And when he gets there and shares the pie, he'll find me and say, "Am I glad I was wrong and you were right!" He's that kind of a man. Very teachable. It makes him safe to save, though we disagreed.

When we left, we shook hands. He said, "You go home a Seventh-day Adventist." He said, "I go home a First-Day Realized Eschatologist." Well, we're friends, you know.

He knew Adventism so well, in one day he explained Adventism to his Evangelical and Reformed associates, and worried his wife to death. She was sure he'd become an Adventist! Afterwards, he said, "What do you expect me to do? Do a bad job?" No, he did a beautiful job of explaining Adventism. So he knows the picture. He couldn't see some points. But he corrected this one, you know. He thought Paul taught the immortality of the soul. He says, "He did not."

So you see, we could have different views but be safe to save. I am convinced from the Sixty-six books, the evidence is not there. But I wouldn't want to argue too much with a person. I'd rather concentrate on the picture of God, and let that other fall into place.

Has he ever reckoned with the thought that God has said, "You either love Me - because that's all I want, or I will torture you in sulphurous flames for eternity. Do I make Myself clear? Now do you love Me?" And see what he'll do with that. And then you'll say, "You know, the Bible does offer an alternative. Would you like to talk about it?" Seems to me.

Venden: Well, I'm going to be a legalist here and stay by our contract.

Maxwell: The person who obeys the law is not a legalist; I'm sure you've preached on that many times.

Venden: Oh, I see, all right. I'm sorry, there are several others of you who have waited very patiently; and I missed a couple over here that I forgot about. But it is closing time. Some may want to just talk informally afterward. Again, we'll ask Dr. Maxwell to lead us in a closing prayer.

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Maxwell: Our Loving Father in Heaven,

As we leave on this Sabbath evening that reminds us of so long a history, how perfect everything was in the beginning, and then how things went wrong. And all that Thou hast done to set things right. We think of the Sabbath that followed the crucifixion when Jesus died. And on this, yet another seventh day, we remember what it cost to bring us such evidence and set things right, and answer the questions and meet the charges, so there will be peace and freedom for all eternity.

May we keep this Sabbath as a celebration of this truth, and an expression of our gratitude for what it cost. May it make it a great day for us. Fill us with greater trust and admiration for Thee, our infinitely gracious and trustworthy Heavenly Father,

We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

# **CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD, No. 8: QUESTIONS**

A. Graham Maxwell and Louis Venden

Venden: You were saying, if I hear you correctly Graham, that Jesus died primarily to say something about God, to make the truth about God clear to us. But what about the appeal that I can remember from early childhood, a very moving appeal, that Jesus died for you?

Maxwell: Yes.

Venden: Jesus died for me. And the songs that we sing. And that wonderful thought that if I had been the only one who had responded, Jesus would have come all the way and gone through it all just for me! How do you bring that together?

Maxwell: I believe in that, and I think God would want us to rejoice in that. And I think it's understandable that as beginners, perhaps, we tend to be preoccupied with our own salvation and what God has done for me, and you and others, but as one learns to read the Bible as a whole and get this larger view of the whole great controversy, one realizes that the all important thing is the settling of these issues in the great controversy. It's the establishing of the truth that would confirm the peace of the universe for all eternity. So as one. . .

Venden: Are you saying then that I ought to kind of get over this? Is it childish for me to feel so moved about Jesus Christ and me?

Maxwell: Fortunately, what God says about Himself is what makes it worthwhile being saved. Until God has established the fact that He is not the kind of person His enemies have made Him out to be, there would be no security. We would be saved in a universe of conflict. So first this must be settled. But fortunately, it includes you and me.

Venden: It's not one or the other.

Maxwell: It isn't one of the other. That's exactly right.

Venden: It's that the good news about what Jesus has done for me is in this larger setting.

Maxwell: In fact, the way He has sought to win you and me is the way in which He has won the war. So we can't leave one or the other out. It's the same \*, the same mission.

Venden: I think that's helpful, but now listen: There are many words and terms associated with the cross that I didn't hear in your presentation this evening.

Maxwell: A few score, at least eight.

Venden: For instance, and I was just reading a book on this recently, the substitutionary atonement, the vicarious sacrifice, that idea of that He died in my place. Another one that I have heard as far back as I can remember: Jesus died to satisfy the demands of the law, that He died to satisfy justice. There's almost this idea that God would like to have forgiven me, but justice needed to be satisfied. You don't use that kind of language. And what about paying the price of sin? And of course there's this emphasis upon the blood. So much emphasis upon that, right in Scripture. What about that kind of language which, my guess, is from \* figurative? for all of us. What do you do with that?

Maxwell: The Bible is full of it. Joshua \* first.

Venden: How do we use it?

Maxwell: Shall we go from the back to the front?

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Venden: Well, alright.

Maxwell: The word "blood." Sometimes we, with all reverence, almost act as if the blood has some magical power. We do sing, "There's power in the blood." We even sing, "There's power in the Word" and almost treat the Bible as if it had magical power. I remember Jesus' words, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life." There's no life in the Book. The Book has power because it witnesses to the truth about the One who has the power. Only God saves. The Bible doesn't save. And I would very reverently want to say the same thing about the blood. Blood simply represents the death of Christ. It represents His life given in death, but apart from the meaning of His death, the blood has no power. Now, if we think the Bible has power, we call it bibliolotry. If we think the blood has power, that's almost hematolotry. The blood has great power in its meaning. When we come to understand why Jesus had to die, that's going to secure the universe against apostasy and defection for eternity. So then I can sing, "There's power in the blood," but in my mind I'm saying, "It means the following."

Venden: All right. You can still use the words.

Maxwell: Indeed.

Venden: But very biblically the word that is a shorthand way of saying, "There is power in the death of Christ, in the meaning of His death to make a change in my life."

Maxwell: Yes.

Venden: Not just being some washing by blood.

Maxwell: That's right. I remember when I was baptized up at PUC, the a capella choir stood out there and sang, "There is a fountain filled with blood," and you could probably tell me the rest of it.

Venden: "Drawn from Emanuel's wounded side."

Maxwell: I love that song. I like it. I've sung it many times myself. But the older I get, the more I think of the meaning of it. Just to repeat the words, there's no power in that. But to think of the meaning, why Jesus had to die, the most costly and convincing evidence without which there would be no security in the future. Ah, I'm not going to make light of the blood. It is a symbol, just a symbol of something. And we have to ask what is the meaning behind that. Same way with "paying the price." That can be interpreted in various ways. That maybe God paid a price to the devil to buy us back and so on. No, I think it's just a way of saying, "This is what it cost to do away with sin. This is what it cost to handle the breakdown of trust and trustworthiness." This is when Roger \* the book The Four Minute Mile. I'll never forget when that medical student did it over there in England, wasn't it? He paid some price. It cost. He used to fall unconscious as he crossed the line. He calculated it closely. He didn't pay that price to anybody. It cost all that effort to break the four-minute mile. So Jesus did die to pay the price of sin, but let's be careful what we read into that also. As always, it's the meaning that we read into it, and we need all the rest of Scripture to guide us in what meaning we read into those words and those terms.

Venden: So some of the illustrations that we may have used of a payment of a \* give the wrong impression.

Maxwell: Ah, they're hazardous. All illustrations are hazardous, so we need several which is the Bible way. There are many, many. They sort of cover each other's little vulnerable parts.

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Venden: But what about some of these others though? The satisfying of the law.

Maxwell: Ah, those are the strongest ones. He died to satisfy the demands of the law. Now, what does the law demand? Well, the law seems to demand our love, which can't be demanded anyway. There's no way you can command love. And yet as Paul says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Jesus said the same. Moses said the same. So does the law say, "You either love God and love each other, or you will be executed in the most painful way known to our Heavenly Father?" Some of our good Christian friends live under the awful weight of believing that God has said, "You either love and obey Me, or you will be tortured in sulphurous flames for eternity." That such good folk can still love God is a real tribute to them, not to God. I mean this is an awesome burden to live under. And yet because they love Jesus, they still love and are still faithful. And they will be in the Kingdom. And I think Jesus will love to introduce such people to the Father. He'll say, "Would you like to meet the Father?" And they'll say, "Well, if You will go with us." He says, "Well, there's no need, but I'll go with you." And what a marvelous surprise to millions of these people to meet the Father in the Kingdom and discover that He is just as loving and gracious as the Son. This is what we want to deal with next week, "There Is No Need To Be Afraid of God." But under the demands of law, that belongs to a very legal conception of what has gone wrong in the universe that we discussed in our second conversation. That what has gone wrong is that we have broken the rules, and the law demands that God execute us for breaking the rules. And Jesus died so that somehow God could justly forgive us even though we have broken the rules. I don't think we have been able to make too much sense out of that. But it goes along with the other one, "satisfy justice." Whose justice? I have friends who say, "If God does not give Idi Amin several days in the fire, I will not regard Him as a just God." They have that feeling about the satisfaction of justice. And I think they really mean it, and I would respect them for that. I would love to relieve them of that burden. If I want to know why Jesus died, I should go right to the cross and watch Him die and hear His cry and see how the Father is involved, and then put that back into Scripture. I don't see Him fulfilling the requirements of a legal model.

Venden: It's part of a problem, then, that we are taking models from our legal system here and trying to apply them to God.

Maxwell: That's a very good point. Very much so.

Venden: The substitutionary, \* say more about that. The vicarious.

Maxwell: Ah. He died in our stead. He died as the substitution. In a way, it's very true. I mean, either He die or we die. However, that's where the comparison ends, because if God has let you and me and all other sinners die, all it would have done is prove the truthfulness of His warning, "If you sin, you will die." And God could say to the universe, "Was I right? I said sinners would die, and look, they're dead." But the universe would not have had answers to questions two and three that I just mentioned. When Jesus died, there was no doubt in the minds of the universe that God was not killing His Son. They were clear about that. And the death of Christ answers all those three questions. So it's not either us or Him. His death was infinitely more significant than ours. But had He not died, then what else could God do but leave us to reap the consequences and we all would have died. So in a sense, yes. He died in our stead, but beyond that there's no comparison.

Venden: But not an appeal. It's not one or the other.

Maxwell: It's not His death is equal to ours. His death is infinitely more significant than the

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death of every sinful man or angel who has ever lived. The death of angels and men would not have answered the questions.

Venden: What you're saying then, is that just a simple satisfaction idea doesn't accomplish what is involved at all, does it?

Maxwell: Oh, it makes it much too small. I think it puts God in a very bad light, and it doesn't answer the questions of the great controversy.

Venden: Well, what should probably be mentioned?

Maxwell: Many folk who preferred those understandings of the plan of salvation do not understand there has been a universe-wide great controversy over the character and government of God. And do you remember at our first meeting, I brought along the evidence that even Luther, hero of the Christian world that he is, could not conceive of these larger issues because he couldn't include the book of Revelation. Let alone Hebrews, James and Jude. And this has been the pattern through the years. Not many assume the sixty-six book picture of a universe-wide controversy over the character and government of God. And so they have seen the death of Christ as primarily a plan just to save you and me, for which we are very grateful. It's just that the larger view makes the cross much more significant.

Venden: That takes us back to the introduction in our Bible Reference sheet that you prepared for this evening which I think is so important. The nature of the issue, what you understand the problem to be, has everything to do then with what the answer to that problem is. Let's move on to another question that has come up. Are you suggesting that how Jesus died is the way the wicked will die at the end of the thousand years, that God will give them up as He gave up His Son?

Maxwell: As far as the giving up is concerned, I believe that's the meaning of the third angel's message. He will "pour out His wrath without mixture." This is the last time, and the wicked will die.

Venden: Is that God becoming furious then?

Maxwell: My understanding would be that if we should look up and see Christ there in His human form, He would be crying, "Why will you die? How can I give you up? How can I let you go?" But we still would die.

Venden: Do you share the view then, Graham, that God doesn't kill anyone? Is that what you are saying, that God never has and never will?

Maxwell: Well I know some, and I honor anybody who wants to put God in a good light, but I think some have gone too far, and it almost raises more problems. It seems clear to me that in the Scriptures many, many times God has put His children to sleep.

Venden: He's acted.

Maxwell: He's done it. Take the firstborn in Egypt. They didn't die because they were bad. They died because they were the firstborn. And some have suggested maybe the devil does God's killing for Him. That's an old, old picture, you know, that it's the devil who wields the pronged fork in Hell, you know, that the devil does God's unpleasant work for Him. The devil is not that cooperative, you can be sure. No, the firstborn in Egypt died because the angel of the Lord put them to sleep. And you know some of them may arise in the resurrection of the righteous. Who is to say they were bad boys? In the Flood, in the one hundred eighty-five Assyrians, and on all those occasions, I see God Himself putting His own children to sleep. But

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as Jesus said, it's only sleep. He resurrects them. Those boys in Egypt that went to bed that night? They awake the next morning (as far as they are aware) without any consciousness of the time between.

Venden: But now you are making a distinction that seems Biblical—the distinction between first and second death.

Maxwell: That's right.

Venden: But what about the death of Jesus that we have been talking about this evening now? Which death did He die? Did He die the first or the second death?

Maxwell: The first death is the death we all die if we live long enough and from which there is a resurrection whether righteous or unrighteous.

Venden: Isn't that a consequence of sin or of living in a world of sin?

Maxwell: Well, of living in a world of sin, but one might be a saint. Look at Elisha and others, and Isaiah. People like that, they died. The second death is the one the Bible warns us of as being so serious and Jesus personally did. The death from which there is no resurrection. Now which death did Jesus die? Had He died of crucifixion alone, He would have died the first death. But He died to demonstrate the awful second death. But He rose on Sunday. I thought the awfulness of the second death is that one does not rise again. I don't think Jesus came to show you die and stay died forever. How could you demonstrate that? We'd have to live forever to see it. There's no way you could answer that. He came to demonstrate how His Father is involved in that death. And even before He was dead, He said, "It is finished, it is finished." And on Resurrection Sunday He went up to Heaven to see if the heavenly council, the heavenly court agreed. And He heard them say, "Yes, it's finished. You've cleared up all our questions." So I think He answered all the questions that needed to be answered in the only way that they could be answered, and we don't need to ask more of the cross.

Venden: All right. But now that leads to a question we have had in our folder for some time that I hope is here who wrote this particular one out. If death is not the penalty for sin, how can we understand the text that says, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin?" And then also, Why does Jesus say to His Father, "My Blood, My Blood," when our name comes up for review, especially \* Son of Mary?

Maxwell: In Hebrews, "Without the shedding of blood is no remission of sin," is a reference to the Old Testament so among the system where blood was constantly shed and appropriately applied. But one has to read on in Hebrews. And the Book says, "You see, the purpose was to be a constant reminder of sin." Because all that blood did not lead to forgiveness of sin. It didn't handle the problem of distrust. It was all pointing forward to the day when Christ would come to do it.

Venden: Again serving as a symbol, then.

Maxwell: Yes, certainly as a symbol, again serving as a symbol. Without His death there would be no answer. What is the use of being forgiven if you are going to live in a chaotic universe of continual war and distrust?

Venden: The words of Jesus or this reference here, "My blood, My blood."

Maxwell: Again it would mean, "Remember why I died. Remember the meaning. Remember the answers that I gave. Remember how I made it possible and safe to forgive sinners and heal them and let them into the Kingdom."

Venden: But the implication here, if I heard you correctly before, is not that Jesus was now trying to talk the Father into feeling differently. Please don't be angry.

Maxwell: No, so we will really look at that next week. He says, "There is no need for me to plead with the Father, for the Father Himself loves you." By the way, speaking of the second

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death, if Jesus died to pay the legal penalty, and the legal penalty is the second death, and the serious thing about the second death is that you never rise again; and again, He died to pay the legal penalty, then He should still be in the grave.

Venden: If He were operating on a strict, legal \*

Maxwell: If He were on a strictly legal system,

Venden: There could be no resurrection.

Maxwell: Because He went up to Heaven on Sunday, none of us is paid up and we are in serious legal trouble.

Venden: So the resurrection is one of the most significant reasons why the strictly legal model would not be adequate.

Maxwell: How many went to Heaven and asked the angels whether to not. They didn't say, "Wait a minute. You are supposed to stay dead for eternity to pay the price for sin. Hurry back, we won't tell anybody we saw you out of the grave." No, they said, "It's more than enough. You could have come up on Friday!"

Venden: Well, we must hurry on to three or four other kind of composite questions here. The Bible, though, does speak about, well, references like, "Vengeance is Mine,"

Maxwell: Oh yes.

Venden: Words about the wrath of God, typical references to the destruction of the wicked. What about those kinds of ways of speaking of our Lord?

Maxwell: Those will fit very well into next week, "There Is No Need To Be Afraid of God," but let's take "vengeance" there. "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay." Before that, Paul says, "Leave room for the wrath of God. Don't avenge yourself. Let Him do it." And God says, "Look, let Me take vengeance on My children because I love them all. Now, if I take vengeance on this enemy of yours, it might wound him. Would you mind?" And you say, "Wait a minute. I'm not going to let You take vengeance, if vengeance means You are going to win my enemy." You see, the beauty of that is God says, "Let Me discipline My own children. I might win some of them." Well I wonder how many of us really want God to do the avenging? Because there's the hazard that I might turn up in the Kingdom and meet my worst enemy because God has won him through the discipline. "Let Me."

Venden: That means that the word "vengeance" here is, God is using it in a quite different way than we might be capable of doing on our own.

Maxwell: "Let Me give your enemy what I think he needs," you know, and that wins it. Yes, and anybody \* there?

Venden: Anybody belabors \*

Maxwell: Of letting God take vengeance is very hazardous. He might win your enemy.

Venden: "It is wonderful to know about God," one of our friends writes, "and He's a merciful, kind, loving, fair and just God. John 17:3 says, 'This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the Father, Jesus Christ Whom Thou has sent.' Now here's my question: How can a person really know Him and be sure that he knows Him."

Maxwell: Mmm. That's beautiful. First, you have to know about Him. Or, how do you know who you are knowing? But then the Biblical meaning of the word "know," as we have discussed before. It's even used for the relationship between a husband and his wife. Adam knew Eve his wife, and they didn't become acquainted. They had a baby. God says, "Thee only have I known," meaning "know" means to love even, to be friends. Oh, it's illustrated when He said, "Go away; I never knew you." He means, "We never were friends." So I would say, to claim that one knows God, meaning that one really loves and admires God for His wise and gracious

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ways, and one really like to be regarded as God's friend and act like a friend and speak of God as a friend would. Jeremiah says, "I know God, and I'm proud of Him." Paul says, "I know God, and I'm proud of Him." If that's what it means to know God, I think it will show. It will show in the friendly feelings we have in our relationship with God, and it will show what in the jealousy we have for God's reputation. We insist He be seen as He really is. I mean, it's a privilege to that view.

Venden: Here's another one that we've been wanting to get in. "I have always been concerned about people who wake up in the second resurrection and be truly surprised to find themselves there because they had worked in God's name or Jesus' name, done many wonderful works. How would I know which resurrection I would come up in if I were to die tonight?"

Maxwell: Ah, that's really that same question, isn't it?

Venden: Really?

Maxwell: Where God says, "I know you have worked very hard." Somewhere along in there we've to talk about the meaning of legalism and serving God for the wrong reason. It will fit somewhat maybe next time. But these are individuals who are surprised to find they are lost because of think of all the tithe they have paid and all the happy Sabbaths they had given up when they could have gone to the ball game. But they have never been God's friends. He says, "Go away; I never knew you." Friendship is the very essence of the relationship God desires to have with His children.

Venden: So the question has to do with how well acquainted we are or how good friends we are.

Maxwell: Well one thing sure, if we are friends, friends don't cheat with each other.

Venden: What about next week, quickly.

Maxwell: Friends are not afraid of each other, so next week, "There Is No Need To Be Afraid of God."

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