

Are You There God, Part 5

Art: Welcome to MC3 today, we are so glad that you are here. We started a new sermon series this month, where many of you submitted some really deep and thought provoking theological questions last month. Today we are going to tackle some questions pertaining to salvation and the existence of hell. But before we jump in, we wanted to remind you of the goals of this series: **1. We want to lead you to the Truth. 2. We want to lead you to seek God. 3. We want you to be satisfied with Jesus.** Remember the only question we really need to have nailed down in this life, is the question of what to do with Jesus. So our hope is that at the end of the day, you will be satisfied with Him.

And it is great to have Terence Johnson up here today. Terence is one of our elders, he is an incredible leader. Terence currently works for UGA in the Fanning Institute for Leadership Development, and so you travel around the state and beyond, teaching leadership skills to community leaders, ministers, coaches, etc. And personally, I love the leadership exercises that he will bring into an elders meeting from time to time, very challenging and thought-provoking. And so, we are blessed to have Terence as an elder here at MC3, and Terence, I appreciate you being willing to come up on stage today and help lead and preach today.

In the weeks past, we tried to put “like” questions together so that there might be a flow to the answers. But this week’s questions are more of a potpourri of questions, that may or may not flow as well as the weeks past. And so with that here’s our first question . . .

My proposed question is based upon: “Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. Then Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, and backed into the tent to cover their father. As they did this, they looked the other way so they would not see him naked. When Noah woke up from his stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham: “May Canaan be cursed! May he be the lowest of servants to his relatives.” Genesis 9:22-25 “Why do some supposed christian preachers teach that the descendants of Ham’s son Canaan are the Black races of mankind and that they are still under the curse of God to serve the descendants of Noah’s other two sons?”

This is an interesting question. I have never heard this teaching before, so this was totally new to me. So let’s look at the text, and then we will answer this question. This event between

Noah and Ham takes place after the flood. Genesis 9:20 says, “Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. **21** When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. **22** Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. **23** But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father’s naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked.

24 When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, **25** he said, “Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.” We aren’t told completely what Ham does here. The text doesn’t explicitly state what happened. We know Ham looks at his father’s nakedness and humiliates and dishonors his father. **And** he tries to make his brothers a party to this humiliation. But his brothers do not join in Ham’s sin, and treat their father with the utmost of respect. But the interesting thing about this is that Ham isn’t the one who is cursed by Noah, Ham’s son Canaan is the one that is cursed (that’s curious to me). And the curse was that Canaan would be a servant to his brothers, or that his descendants would be lower than his brother’s descendants . . . which leads us to our question and some really poor hermeneutics and exegesis on the part of some Bible teachers.

(Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation; Exegesis, the application of this science to the word of God.)

This passage was used by slave traders who tried to justify their evil work, enslaving people who were living in North Africa. So they twisted this passage of scripture in order to either legitimize their trade, or placate their conscience, or both. And so that teaching is wrong, and is an example of really poor Biblical interpretations.

And I think we spend way too much time looking on the outside, as opposed as looking on the inside of a person. First we have to understand that the pigmentation that we have in our skin is a gift of God. We see all throughout scripture and even in just looking at nature, we can see that God loves diversity. And so for us to look down on someone (no matter the color of their skin pigmentation is wrong. In fact Paul writes in Galatians 3:26-28, “**So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28** There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” We are one, we are brothers and sisters in Christ, and we need to be aware of Satan’s tactic to divide us, even in something so sacred as our body color.

What does true discipleship look like and what is the leadership's view on implementing?

Terence: In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus commissions us to make disciples. **“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,** (then He gives us a picture of what discipleship looks like) **baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** (we are to lead them to accept Christ) **20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** (And then, we lead them, guide them, teach them how to follow Christ). Discipleship is more than just conversion; discipleship is sharing our lives with someone, inviting them to live as we live. Discipleship is not easy, nor is it done in a short span of time.

First we have to look at HOW Jesus disciplined others. In Matthew 4, Jesus see the Peter and Andrew casting their net (this is not the first time they have seen Jesus), and Jesus says in verse 19, **“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” 20 At once they left their nets and followed him.”** Discipleship is sharing your life with someone so that they will know how to follow Jesus. These men, literally followed Jesus around, and He taught them verbally how to follow God, and He taught them by His actions. This is discipleship.

And so the big question is how do we emulate this in our culture, so that we can make disciples? As a church, one of the ways that we want to begin this process is with our C-Groups. In our C-groups (which are still young in their existence) we hope to identify 1 or 2 people from the group who could potentially take over the group, in order for the leader to launch another group. So I can envision a time where the C-group leader and 1 or 2 potential apprentice (gender appropriate of course), would get together to form a D-group or a Discipleship group.

Art: The other way is for each of us individually seek the opportunities where we can disciple someone else. I have done with One of the dads here at Parkview and with a young man here at MC3. And we would get together, share life and share in God’s Word.

In the Bible, it's said that only 144,000 people will get into Heaven. What is the real meaning of this Scripture?

Great question. And I think this is another case of poor exegesis and hermeneutics. So let’s read this passage in Revelation 7:1-4, **“After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having**

the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: **3** “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” **4** Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.” First, the 144K are not set aside for heaven, exclusively. They are set aside and marked, sealed by God showing divine ownership. So the premise that some teach, that only 144K will go to heaven is not found here. Secondly, this 144K are clearly Jewish, and their tribes are listed. But also, if we read just a little further in the very next verse, after John lists the tribes, we are told in verse 9, “After this I looked, and there before me was a **great multitude that no one could count**, (where are they from) **from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.**” There was a great multitude that no one could count, and where were they? They were standing before the throne, and where is the throne? It’s in heaven. So some people take this passage and manipulate it for their purposes.

Terence to speak briefly on Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Should women be allowed to have a leadership role in church? I think so, but does that square up with the Bible?

Terence: Obviously, women (and men) alike play an integral part in the leadership, the work and the mission of the church. We could not do what we do without the women here at MC3. Many of you play vital roles in key areas of ministry. But what does the scripture teach us about church leadership?

First we have to be very careful about how we approach this idea of “leadership” in the church. If we approach leadership in the church as an office to be had or a title to be owned, then we are stepping into leadership with an unbiblical mindset. When James and John wanted to hold the titles of #2 and #3 in the kingdom, Jesus said in Matthew 20:25-28, “Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. **26** Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, **27** and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—**28** just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus shuts down this idea that leadership in the kingdom is a position to be had, or an office to occupy, because Pride closely follows that line of thinking. Jesus defines leadership, in this

passage, as being the lead follower or the first servant. So I think **the key to our thinking in Biblical/Christian leadership is to Seek the service, not the title.**

Art: So what about women's roles in leadership. We read in scripture, that there were women prophets [prophetesses]. This not only included those that could look into the future, but those that could look into the present. And so today we would call them preachers. And indeed, ladies such as Beth Moore, Priscilla Shire, and others play that role today.

We also see that in certain places in the NT, that there were women deacons (deaconesses). Diakonos in the Greek denotes one that serves . . . but not just any service . . . a deacon is one that serves freely or willingly. In Acts 6, even though the word is not used, this is the first place that we see this role in the church as 7 Grecian Jews are handpicked to take over the food ministry of the early church. In Romans 16:1, Paul writes, "**I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae.**" But there weren't women deacons in every Church. In fact in his qualifications of deacons, Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:12 NLT, "**A deacon must be faithful to his wife, and he must manage his children and household well.**" And so while Paul commends Phoebe, he encourages Timothy to choose men for this service particularly in the church in Ephesus.

But the one area that scripture does not give room for women leadership is in Eldership. In 1 Timothy 3:2-4 Paul says, "**Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect.**"

And Paul even goes so far to say in 1 Timothy 2:12, "**I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.**" Susan Foh in her book, Women and the Word of God, writes, "**the teaching forbidden to women [in 1 Timothy 2:12] is habitual teaching as suggested by the infinitive present tense of the Greek word meaning to continue to teach. Teaching and exercising authority over men may describe one function, that as an elder.**"

I know that **Galatians 3:28** makes it clear men and women are equal. But nowhere in scripture does it say men and women are identical. Nor is there any suggestion men and women have identical God-given roles or responsibilities (**Ephesians 5:21-6:4**).

So as we interpret scripture here at MC3, eldership is the role of qualified men (1 Timothy 3/Titus 1). This includes the role of Sr. Minister. And traditionally, we follow along with Paul in the role of deacons as well. But we recognize that many women in this church play that role

without the title or official office. Willingly, serving Christ and His church in key roles. And for those in leadership, it is not our goal to “Lord it over anyone,” but we recognize that we will be judged more harshly as leaders and want to follow the Lord as best as we know how, which is becoming tougher and tougher in the climate in which we live.

Why don't we follow the Old Testament law, except for the 10 Commandments?

Terence: We have to understand that there are 3 kinds of laws in: There is the Ceremonial Law, there is the Civic Law that was specific to Israel at that time, and then there is the Moral Law. The Ceremonial Laws of the OT, many of them we couldn't do if we wanted to, because the temple does not exist. And as we mentioned a few weeks ago, Jesus fulfilled the Ceremonial law when He died and rose again. But what we find in the 10 commandments are the Moral Laws. These laws are not bound by time or space; they are to be followed by everyone, everywhere, at every time.

And so, if someone comes to you and says, “Why do you pick and choose which commands to follow?” You can say, “Because I understand proper exegesis and hermeneutics. And so, in Leviticus 19 for instance, I understand that there is a Civic, Ceremonial, and Moral laws intermingled in this passage: Leviticus 19:4 is Moral Law, Leviticus 19:5-8 is Ceremonial Law, and Leviticus 19:9-10 is Civic Law. So there is a reason that I pick and choose.”

Art: And then we can actually lead this conversation into a Gospel opportunity by saying, “I couldn't follow the ceremonial law if I wanted too, because I realize that Jesus fulfilled that part of the law when He went to the cross for my sin and your sin. As Hebrews 10:11-14 says, ‘Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **12** But when this priest [Jesus] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, **13** and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. **14** For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.’”

And so for me to go back to that would actually be an abomination, because it means that I would have rejected Christ's sacrifice for me.” And so, we could actually use this conversation as a platform for the Gospel message. But this is why we follow the Big 10, because the Moral Law never changes. In fact Jesus summed up the Moral Law in Matthew 22:37-39, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

So as we prepare for communion, we recognize that Christ has totally paid our debt. There is no need for worthless animal sacrifices or complicated hoops to jump through. Jesus has paved the way for us to come to Him. And communion is a reminder of His sacrifice, once for all. So today let's remember and take confidence in Christ's work at the cross and at the tomb.