

Question Time with Thomas and Derek

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, so we're going to just split it into different sections and sing in between. And the first question that was sent in was, does the Bible sometimes exaggerate to make a point?

So that was one of the first questions we got. There you go. Does the Bible sometimes exaggerate to make a point? And Thomas is going to answer this. It's great having us as the minister.

All the difficult questions I just gave to Thomas. Okay, so the person who asked this question sent in a verse as an example. So they asked, does the Bible exaggerate to make a point?

And they put in this verse, verse nine of Second Chronicles. So this was to give an example of what they mean. So, but I'll read the first few verses so we know the context. Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the Lord, which was at the tent of meeting and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

And that night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, ask what I shall give you. And Solomon said to God, you've shown great and said fast love. To David, my father, and have made me king in his place.

[1 : 0 2] And this is the key verse. Oh Lord God, let your word to David, my father, be now fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. And it was that final phrase that came in as the example, basically to say, is that kind of language an exaggeration?

This kind of thing is quite common in the Bible. It's per fish in the Old Testament. Another big example is Genesis 15, where Abraham kind of has this moment of doubt or uncertainty and God comes to him and he takes him outside.

As you can see at the bottom in verse five and he says, look towards heaven, number the stars if you're able to number them. Then he said to them, so shall your offspring be. And he believed the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness.

So when that kind of language as many as the stars in heaven or as many as the sand on the shore. How are we to understand that? Is that exaggeration? What's been used? Well, this brings us to the wonderful world of what we call hermeneutics.

It's a cool word to know. By hermeneutics what we mean is like the way in which we interpret the Bible.

[2 : 1 3] So you might look at a passage and you have to think, how am I going to interpret that? So a great example is Jesus says, I am the door. So does that mean that he's made of wood and has hinges attached to him?

It doesn't. So we have to think, well, how do we interpret what Jesus is saying or what the Bible is saying? The whole point is that all of this is imagery and we have to think about how imagery is to be understood.

We do this all the time. So right now with the coronavirus, we would say that the whole country is up in the air. So do we mean that it's kind of elevated to 4,000 feet?

Do we mean that we don't mean that we mean that things are kind of all out of normal? And then we say the whole country is up in the air. It's like, well, do we mean everything? So has our water supply stopped?

Has our electricity supply stopped? Have traffic lights stopped working? Are roads crumbling? We don't mean anything like that. So when we say the whole country is up in the air, we know exactly what we mean, but we don't take these things literally because we're just using a phrase to make an effect.

[3 : 19] And the Bible does that as well. All literature does that. And the key point is we're talking about imagery. So in that image there, you've made me king over people as numerous as the dust of the earth.

And this is an example of figures of speech that you'll all remember from high school English. The two main ones we have in the Bible are simile and metaphor. Like is what we have in this verse where you say something is like something or as something.

Metaphor is when you don't bother with a word like or as. It's incredibly powerful. Here's Psalm 22.

Be not far from me, for trouble is near, there's none to help me. So it's an expression of distress. And then you have this incredibly vivid imagery. Many bulls encompass me.

Strong bulls of patients around me. They open wide their mouths at me like a ravaging and roaring lion. Now that's referring to people, to people who are opposing him. And poured out like water.

[4 : 21] All my bones are out of joint. Now there's another example. In your ear you have three tiny bones, the hammer, anvil and stirrup. I don't think that they were dislocated in the Samus experience.

So it's not every single bone of the body being out of joint. It's an expression of extensive pain and discomfort. And I only have five minutes, so I better not go through it all.

But incredibly vivid language presented in the Psalms. Sometimes that kind of imagery can express things in a way that's extraordinarily powerful.

So if we go back to chronicles, you go to the very end of chronicles. This is the last chapter which describes the fall of Jerusalem. And this is what we have it described in just narrative.

Nebuchadnezzar comes, killed the young men with the sword in the house of the sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them into his hand all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king and his princes, all these he brought to Babylon.

[5 : 26] They burned the house of the Lord and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed its precious vessels. And that's just narrative describing it. In laments, you have exactly the same event described, but with imagery.

And just listen to how it describes it and just think about the effect this language has. How the gold has grown dim, how the pure gold has changed, the holy stones slice scattered at the head of every street, the precious sons of Zion, worth their weight in fine gold, how they are regarded as earthen pots, the work of a potter's hands.

Even jackals offer the breast, they nourish their young, but the daughter of my people has become cruel like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the nourishing infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst.

The children beg for food, but no one gives to them. Those who once feasted on delicacies perished in the street, those who were brought up in purple embrace ash heaps, for the chastisement of the daughter of my people has been great than the punishment of Sodom, who was overthrown in their moment, and no hands were wrung for her.

Her princes were purer than snow, whiter than milk, their bodies were more ruddy than coral, the beauty of their form like sapphire. Now their face is blacker than suit. They're not recognized in the streets, their skin has shriveled on their bones, it's become as dry as wood.

[6 : 51] Happier were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger, who wasted away, pierced by lack of the fruits of the field. It's incredibly powerful the imagery that's used, and it says a whole lot more than just the city was burnt down.

And that's why the Bible uses that kind of imagery. So it's important for us to remember that when we're reading the Bible, that when we see things it's not actually exaggeration, it's imagery.

And that applies in lots of ways. Psalm 23 is a much more positive example. We lie down in green pastures. It doesn't mean that as a Christian you have to go and find a field and lie down. It's a picture of peace and tranquility.

Three things I want you to remember about that. First is that you have to let Scripture speak in its own terms. So if Scripture is poetry, let it be poetry. Don't take poetry literally, don't take images literally.

Let it speak in its own terms. Just look at the context so that'll help you understand what's been said. And always remember that Scripture interprets Scripture. So if you find one but you don't really understand, another part of the Bible will help.

[8 : 01] I've got one last thing to say about exaggeration, which I think is the most important thing of all. If you look at a passage like this describing the new heavens and the new earth, speaking about the promises that God has for His people, the fact that the dwelling place of God will be with man, that He'll wipe away every tear from their eyes, death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning or crying or pain anymore.

The former things have passed away. You hear all that and you think it's too good to be true. But the incredible thing is that there is not a word of exaggeration in that passage.

All there is is understatement. And that's part of why God's word is so amazing. There we go. Great, thanks Thomas.

I was exaggerating when I said that Thomas would only be five minutes. But that's fine, because he's much better prepared than I will be for the next question, worryingly.

Okay, question two is, is the coronavirus a judgment from God? Okay, so I can either say yes and move on or no and move on I guess.

[9 : 22] But I think it's maybe slightly more complex than that. I think definitely no, in the sense that it's not a specific judgment from God and a specific people or nation, in the same way when the people ask Jesus about the tower of Siloam, who sinned that caused that?

Jesus said, don't worry about that, but just you get yourselves right with God. I think at a wider level we need to recognise that it's no more a judgment than God in any condition of the flu or any illness.

It's not a direct judgment for a particular sin, we recognise that. But what we do recognise is that coronavirus is symptomatic of a broken world, of a world that is actually soaked in illness and death, from the very beginning.

That is part of God's judgment, it's part of what happens when you turn your back on the author of life.

And that's what humanity has done from the very beginning, humanity turns its back on the author of life and decides that they want to be sovereign over their own lives without God in the picture, right, from the beginning, from Adam and Eve.

[11 : 01] And part of that judgment of God was that you shall surely die. It wasn't immediate in God's grace, but physical death entered the world then and the physical death reflects the spiritual death that happened at that time when we were separated from God, our Father and God of life.

So we live in a world under, at that level, under God's judgment, under God's curse. And everything that happens that reflects that is meant to make us think about who we are and why we are and why we're here.

And what Thomas finished with is a great reminder that it's not the way it's always going to be. And within that, what we recognize and what is quite remarkable is that God, the author of life and the complexity of His person sends God the Son to death.

And that's the astonishing and amazing truth of the gospel is that God, the author of life, and the person of His Son is nailed to a tree and dies and dies because it's the only hope we have of ourselves receiving life because in death He takes the wrath, He takes the curse and He offers us His life in return.

So corona judgment isn't a, corona virus, sorry, isn't a judgment from God at a specific level in terms of being sent specifically to a nation or nations.

[12 : 56] It's a natural outworking, as it were, of everything being wrong, of people being wrong, of society being wrong, of nature being wrong, of everything being wrong.

And therefore it comes under the whole umbrella of a world separated from God and from life. But the answer to all of these things is to look to Jesus Christ for a deeper healing from the physical virus and the physical illness to see that there's always a deeper healing we need to remember.

Because a lot of people might say, well, as Christians are we going to be protected from corona virus? Well, probably not.

And there's probably lots of Christians who have already got it because we're part of this world. It's under judgment, but nonetheless, and because we all still die, of course.

But the sting of death is being removed for us. We still get ill, we still grow old, we still break our bones, we still get knocked down by cars. All these things still happen, but there's a bigger, there's a much more important bigger picture for us that reminds us that all of these things have had the sting removed from them and we've got a great future of life in Christ.

[14 : 21] So the answer is guarded no, but also yes. Excellent. Should have been a politician.

I actually agree though. That is good. Very good. Thomas, will you pray? I will pray, yeah, let's pray together. Father, we're so thankful that we can have the opportunity to talk together, to ask questions, and to see how amazingly you answer these questions through your word.

We thank you so much for all that you teach us and we pray that we would grow in wisdom and that our understanding of the world around us and of ourselves would be shaped by the truth that you reveal in your word.

Forgive us for all the times that we think that we know better, for the times we're overconfident in our own judgment. Help us instead to always just seek you and for your word to shape the way we think and behave.

Thank you so much for everyone here tonight and it's such a blessing to be together, even though numbers are smaller than usual. And we pray that your blessing will be upon everyone here and the people who are watching online and the people who are just unable to be here due to all that's going on.

[15 : 49] And I just want to pray for everyone with the uncertainty that lies ahead in the next few weeks, especially pray for the elderly and those who may be just a little bit more physically vulnerable to the effects of the virus.

We pray that you would indeed protect them and we pray that the rest of us would be just ready to provide help and support and care in every way that we can.

Pray for everyone whose weekly routine is now uncertain with work patterns changing and with things uncertain from day to day.

We pray for people for whom this might have a difficult financial effect, for people who rely on the tourist industry and others, which will be struggling over the next few weeks.

We pray for everyone affected by that. And we just ask that in all that across our nation that you would give us all a spirit of grace and generosity and kindness towards one another.

[16 : 58] And please forgive us as a nation when we show such selfishness in many ways at times like this.

And in all of these things we're reminded of the amazing example of your son, our Savior Jesus, who willingly gave his own life for our salvation.

Also, I just want to pray for the work of the gospel across our country asking that you would bless just all those who are seeking to serve you in their local communities.

We especially want to pray for the church in Ascent and pray that you just help the ongoing work and witness of that small congregation there. And we pray to you for the high free and storm away and ask that you will bless that congregation, build them up and guide them and help them especially as they seek to minister to the young people there with all the challenges that they face in following you in today's world.

And what we pray for them, we pray for all our congregations that we would raise our young ones well both in how we teach them and in the example that we set them and that you would raise up a generation who will love you and serve you and bring the gospel message to our people yet unborn.

[18 : 20] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Just before I ask a question, Thomas, I was going to say there is a sense that we have a bit of an apocalyptic sense just now.

I'm not sure if that's just interpreting the times or if it's just the way we think. But we do recognise that we believe we live in the last times anyway from Christ's first coming to Christ's second.

That's all the last times. But there is a sense in which there's last, last times as well. No one knows the day or the hour. But we do, certainly, I sense, I feel it a little bit, I wonder, with the environmental issues and the plague of locusts, which is devastating crops in Africa.

And now this virus, which can be a portent of many other worldwide viruses that we don't have control over, and we're reminded that this world isn't going on forever.

And it wouldn't carry on just indefinitely that God is a purpose and a plan and it's coming to His conclusion in His time, His way. And I'm sure Christians, and I know Christians all through the centuries have said, well, this is the time and this is, we're coming near the apocalypse now.

[19 : 44] And I recognise that. I'm sure people must have thought that in the middle of World War I or World War II. But nonetheless, I think it's just very wise to be prayerful and remind ourselves who's we are and who we serve and that this world is only at its best the first couple of lines of the opening page of the first chapter of the rest of our lives.

And we need to focus on eternity as Christians. So the next question, slightly different altogether, is why do we believe in infant baptism?

I was desperate to do this question, but Thomas said that he wanted to answer it. Well, actually, I don't mind answering this question because I do believe in infant baptism, but I also want to say that it's kind of one of the, I suppose, I don't know if ironic is the right word.

I suppose it's maybe sad that baptism is really something that's intended to be a great unifying thing in the Christian church.

And yet it's one that keeps us separate because there's different views on it. I think it's really important to recognise first of all that for those who believe in infant baptism and for those who believe in believers baptism, we actually are very, very close to each other in 90% of what we believe.

[21 : 27] And I think I want to emphasise that very much. We're actually far closer than we realise. And yeah, and I think it's really important to remember that.

And I would always want to urge people not to make baptism something that divides because it should be something that unites. And I'm very conscious that there are people here who would not share my view.

And in explaining why we believe in infant baptism, I hope that I just give, what I hope is just a helpful explanation as to why we believe what we believe.

I'm not really wanting to go on the offensive towards those who don't believe in infant baptism. I have the utmost respect for your position.

And I understand why you come to your position. But I'm personally very, very convinced of the infant baptism position.

[22 : 32] So that's not... So I don't want to be sounding cruel. So let's start off with what we agree, right?

And the top bit there is what we agree, right? So whatever, whether you're a Baptist, Presbyterian or whatever, we believe that people outside the church are to be baptised as believers.

So somebody who has not heard the Gospel hears about Jesus, they put their faith in Jesus, they should be baptised. And we in the free church long for the day when we are baptising hundreds of adults, we long to see that.

Because we're living in a country that's just full of unbaptised, unchurched people, and we long to see them coming in. And so we're all on total agreement with that.

We long to see people from outside the church, coming into the church, and really as quickly as possible, they should be baptised when they come to faith.

[23 : 37] Question is, what do we do with people who are born into the church? And this is where the difference lies. So we 90% agree on the top part, it's the lower part that the disagreement comes.

And our position would be people born into the church are to be baptised as infants. The baptised position would be people born into the church are to wait until they come to faith and are to be baptised as believers.

So yeah, that's the two major differences. Okay, so what does the Bible say? Well, the top thing there are tons of examples of.

People outside the church come into faith and they're baptised. In the Bible, in the New Testament, people born into the church baptised as infants, biblical examples are zero.

Okay, far as we know in terms of like direct specific examples, zero. People born into the church to be baptised as believers once they've grown up and come to faith, biblical examples, zero.

[24 : 53] So you baptists who thought you had the Bible on your side.

And that's the challenge. So in our church, we would have, if I have a child, we baptised them as an infant. If I was in a Baptist church, I had a child, they wouldn't be baptised.

We would wait until they made a profession of faith and then they would be baptised. There's no biblical examples for either of these scenarios at all.

All we have in the Bible is the top one, the one that we agree on. So that leaves us all in a sticky position. What do we actually, what do we do?

Who is right? Well, to answer that, we have to sort of step back a bit more widely and think, you have to think about the bigger picture. If you don't have specific examples to go by, you really need to go by the more, the broader biblical teaching.

[25 : 58] So I suppose the first thing we have to ask is what is baptism? And the simple answer to that is that baptism is a sign and seal of God's covenant promise. That's the purpose of baptism. It's an outward sign and seal like the Lord's supper, something that you can see outwardly that's pointing us towards the blessing that's Irish through God's covenant promise.

So it's the sign and seal of God's covenant promise. So next question is, when does that covenant begin?

The answer is it begins way, way, way, way, way back with Abraham. And Abraham is given a sign in which is to symbolize God's covenant promise.

And that of course was the sign of circumcision. Abraham is the definitive model of an Old Testament believer, the one in whom this covenant of grace begins.

So he's like the model. That's why the New Testament always refers back to Abraham again and again and again. He's a model. And so if we want to see the model of faith and sign, we look at Abraham, we would say.

[27 : 19] Abraham is an adult circumcision. So he comes to faith and he is given God's covenant promise and he comes into the church from the outside and he is circumcised as an adult.

He's an adult circumcision. So he's the top category. So we would say, okay, right, in that case Abraham would kind of push towards the adult Baptist position.

He's the model. He was an adult, came to faith, circumcised. After he came to faith, that would be the model. Yes. Yes.

But what's the next thing that God tells Abraham to do? He says, put that sign on your child.

And from then on, the model in the Old Testament is somebody who comes in from the outside will be circumcised as an adult. They'll put the sign on as an adult.

[28 : 35] But somebody who's born in that community, the sign is put on them at birth.

The infant baptism argument would say that there is a continuation in this pattern because circumcision is replaced by baptism in the same way that the Passover is replaced by the Lord's Supper.

And there is an explicit biblical text to give us that in Colossians 2, Paul links circumcision with baptism, as you can see in the verse there.

So to kind of sum it all up like this, you've got to have a diagram. There's no way of avoiding it. So Old Testament, New Testament. Sign in the Old Testament is circumcision.

Sign in the New Testament is baptism. We say, put the sign on adults. Abraham gets the sign. Adults get the sign in the New Testament.

[29 : 34] Then though in the Old Testament, Abraham is told, put the sign on your children. New Testament? What are we told to do? And this I think is fundamentally where the decision comes down to.

The Baptist position would be, we're not told to carry on, so we're going to stop. Our position would be, we are not told to stop, so we are going to carry on.

And that's what it comes down to. That's absolutely what it comes down to. And we would argue that there's a continuation that the sign should be put onto your children.

If you think about it, you've got this great kind of promise fulfillment being fulfilled. Old Testament and New Testament. God's covenant with Abraham being worked out across the generations to being fulfilled and the new covenant with Jesus.

It's all kind of pointing forward. The climax is with Jesus coming, Jesus dying, Jesus rising from the dead, Jesus ascending. Everything's complete. And then you have this moment where it's like, right, here is the new covenant moment where it's like, let's go with this message to the world.

[30 : 55] That takes place on the day of Pentecost when you have the promise back with Abraham for all the nations being transmitted to the nations who come to Jerusalem and from there they spread out.

So it's like, if anything, it's like, if you think about, you know, what's the big summary moment of the whole thing that's been building up in terms of God's covenant plan?

Pentecost is really that moment when God's covenant plan is just, it's like finally kicking into gear. Everything is about to go. But Peter gives this magnificent speech talking all about God's accomplishment plan and you think, okay, right, this is it.

The promise is fulfilled. It's ready to go. And if you wish, you just wish you could ask Peter the question, right, who's this covenant for? Who is this actually for? Is it for adults?

Who's it for? Who's it for? Who's it for? I wish that he'd ask that question. When they heard this, they were cut to the heart and Peter said to the rest of the apostles, you'd rather, what shall we do, he says to them, repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promises for you and for your children, for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.

[32 : 14] And for us, that's just a very strong, for me, a confirmation that that promise, that application of the sign to the children in the Old Testament continues into the new.

For me, that makes it absolutely explicit when Peter says the promise is for you and for your children. What I think is important to remember, and I've never read this in a book, Phil, I'm always nervous saying it, but when you go from Old Testament to New Testament, there's a shadow reality pointing towards the promise fulfillment, and in the New Testament, everything always gets bigger, better, more inclusive.

And so, if you think about it, the Old Testament promises was focused on the Jewish nation, it then expands to the world. To go with the position that baptism is not for children is to do the opposite and to kind of narrow it rather than expand it.

For me, I think there's an amazing expansion from the Old to the New in baptism, because in the Old Testament, the sign only went on boys, whereas in the New, it goes on everyone.

And it's like it's just broader, bigger, better, and for everyone. So for me, I think when you think of that big picture, you see it all just, to me, it fits together incredibly well.

[33 : 51] Now other people have different interpretations, other people like to put more of a discontinuity between the Old and New Testament, and I respect that. This is just why we believe what we believe.

What I would want to kind of add to that though is that behind this, I think, lies the fact that family and children has always been just at the centre of God's purposes.

And it's at the heart of the church, it's at the heart of what the church is meant to be, and that whole idea of one generation serving the next, one generation leading on to the next.

Our children are not to be raised as outsiders who need to come into the church, they're to be raised in the fear of the Lord as members of the covenant community.

And I think that should always remind us that the next generation is something that we should be so excited about, because if you think about all the incredible ways in which God has used people over the years.

[34 : 58] So you think of people that God has used, people who've gone to bring the gospel to new nations, people who've planted churches, people who've passed it incredibly well, people who've written amazing books, the great theologians, think of all the big, big, big names we have in the history of the church, who God has used in amazing ways.

They all have one thing in common. They were once wee babies. And who knows what the wee babies in our congregation might be?

Who knows what the generation unborn will do? God has amazing purposes for each generation. So infant baptism, very cool.

Thanks, Thomas. Did well there, really. It was only 12 minutes. It was a metaphor. I thought five minutes was a metaphor. It was definitely an exaggeration.

So well done. It's impossible to answer a question on baptism too briefly anyway. So we've got time for one more quick question.

[36 : 07] I have a question in my back pocket, but I'm happy not to use it if anybody here has a question. So if you have a question you would like to ask Derek, now is your chance.

I'll give you a 15 second window to put your hand up, and if not, I'll ask my question. So go for it. That is... Okay, if everyone didn't hear that, it's why in the light of what we were saying earlier, why is hell not a metaphor or an exaggeration of being separated from God?

You're right. That is not a good question to ask. Last... I've done mine. Infant baptism. Yeah, I think in the same way that Jesus says, or the New Testament says, that no eye has seen and no mind has conceived what God has in store for those who love Him.

So it's impossible to imagine what heaven is going to be like. And I think we kind of blow our brains about when we try to imagine what heaven is like. The whole idea of trying to imagine what it's like to live eternally without getting bored, or without...

Yeah, just... It seems impossible because the last four Sunday nights at 25 past 6, that's happened.

[37 : 36] Yeah. It's to get me to stop myself. It's just a figure of darkness when you're speaking about hell. I think in this... it's impossible to imagine heaven, and I think it's in some ways unhelpful other than anticipating that it's going to be remarkably better than we can ever imagine.

And in the same way, I find it very, very difficult to conceptualise what hell is.

I can't begin to understand. I think the cross of Jesus is where He experienced hell, separation from the Father, forsakenness.

I can't begin to understand what that looks like eternally. I don't know what the Bible means by that, ultimately. But the idea of... we need to remember, we talk about hellish experiences here.

I don't think we've begun to comprehend that, but the reality is much, much worse than that.

[38 : 57] And the very worst experiences here should drive us always towards Jesus, whether they be physical experiences or mental experiences of being in this world, which is under, as we said earlier, under God's judgment.

Yeah. The Bible does use a lot of imagery about hell. You know, Gehenna being the place of... just a word that was used to describe the rubbish dump outside Jerusalem, which was constantly burning and no one wanted to go there.

And it talks about it being a place of fire, but also a place of internal darkness, and it can't be both. Because if there's fire there, it would be... it wouldn't be in darkness if you see what I mean.

So I think there's a lot of imagery in the pictures of hell, which are there to drive us towards the light and drive us towards Jesus. So I can't comprehend... I can't begin to comprehend what ultimately is like.

I think the only place that I can begin to understand it is... or we don't really begin to understand it. Okay, Martin Luther went to study the idea of God forsaking of God.

[40 : 16] When Jesus says, you know, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Which is really just the whole concept of hell that Jesus experienced. And Martin Luther locked himself in a room for three days and three nights to fast and pray to try and get an understanding of that.

And at the end of it he came out and said, God forsaken of God, who can understand that? And it was beyond comprehension, I think. And I think I find myself in that place with hell and heaven, to be honest.

I believe in them both, very powerfully, because of Jesus. But... and I think if we had any concept of what hell was like, it would be impossible to live.

I think God and His grace has allowed us the ability to live without the concept of understanding it properly, because if we would, we would never move from our knees and it would be impossible to live.

But we do need to grasp what it means to be separated from God in this life even, to the point where we are driven passionately, not only to thank God for what we have, but also to share the gospel with those who don't believe.

[41 : 25] And there's a lot of mystery in all of that, Laura. And I think we sometimes are a bit too simplistic about everything, because of the free will He gives us and because of the blindness of people's eyes and hearts.

And sometimes we simply just need to trust and believe that what He has said.

And interestingly, it's bad if you get a question that you haven't prepared for because you end up rambling on, but interesting because you remember things. But interestingly, the person that spoke most about hell was Jesus.

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, is the one who spoke about it most, who was aware of it most, who recognized it most, who knew he was going to face it on the cross, and who balked at the idea in Gethsemane.

If it is possible, take this cup from me. It was almost too great for the eternal God to face in this humanity.

[42 : 37] So I think we need to be very careful when we talk about hell to recognize that there are a lot of images and metaphors and pictures in the Bible, but all of them are picturing a bad place to be.

And we remember that because we experience bad things here. I'll finish with this. When I first went to Roskeen with Kenny McDonald, who was the minister there, and who saw many, many people coming to faith in Christ, he preached, and we'd often say this, he preached the love of Christ powerfully, and he preached the love of Christ relentlessly, he said, because a lot of people that he was preaching to who came into the church came from an experience of they had been wealthy, they had known there were a lot of people who moved down up to that part of the world with the oil-related industry, and then that whole industry kind of, or with the smelter, and that whole industry collapsed.

A lot of people were unemployed, there was a lot of social deprivation, there was a lot of poverty and difficulty, and he said, they've tasted what hell's like.

Now, you have to be guarded in that, but their life was kind of hellish if we talk about that in human terms. But they were drawn to the gospel because they knew in a very real way what some of the experiences have been separated from God, and they were drawn to the gospel, and they preached the love of Christ, and they were drawn to that, and they were saved by that.

Preaching hell never saved anyone, it's not fear of hell that saves anyone, it's the grace and the gospel of Jesus Christ that saves people.

[44 : 33] The reality of hell can drive people to the Savior, but it must be the grace and mercy and love of Christ that redeems us not a kind of selfish escaping from hell.

So I don't know if that answers your question, probably not, but I'm not going to say any more. So, in all of that, and in all of our work around the gospel and in all your reading of the Scripture, we need the Holy Spirit to enlighten us.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, and all God's people say. Amen. Amen. Amen.