

Question Time - October 2022

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Preachers: Cory Brock, Brian McDowell

[0 : 0 0] All right, so we do this just a few times a year on any time we have a fifth Sunday evening And so we've asked the congregation to send questions in and we've gotten a number again And a lot of them are really hard So we didn't include those Some of them were really hard actually we did include them so we'll give it our best shot But hopefully this will be a time that's helpful to people and that you'll be thinking with us and Thinking because these are some of the questions are important some of them are super practical and some not so So we'll do that together Brian, why don't you take one minute and tell if maybe if somebody here a guest or somebody doesn't know know you What's what's your story?

I'm not from these parts my wife and I are from Northern Ireland and I Was a minister in the Presbyterian Church there And after retirement we have two sons who live and work here in Scotland We were traveling over a lot so we decided Before we got like old we would We'd moved permanently and we did and We had our plan to visit around a few churches in Edinburgh before settling on a fellowship and came in here our first Sunday and I had said to Mary now you know what these churches are like We sit to the back as soon as it's over we escape because you know again and Derek Lamont Said that Sunday morning look talk to the people beside you get to know you know and we were trapped So we've been here ever since

Love it. Love it. Absolutely. Love it. Yeah, and that's good The good news for us, which is bad news for everybody else is that ten minutes into the service our back clock died So it still says 540 So that means that until it hits 630. I don't stop So that's why I say that actually to say I pulled my phone out not to be rude But so I can not go over the time so alright question number one This is a helpful question. What spiritual lesson have you had to learn that has helped you the most in your Christian walk?

Brian Without out patients Yeah, patients waiting on God's time and I'm not I Don't have a bad temper. I don't think I'm not hot tempered. I don't lose my temper but I Have found it. It's got better as the years have gone on I have learned to look to scripture and to look to the Lord for help but I like the psalmist I just wonder why God doesn't do things at the time that I think would be best and but of course After a little while I discover that God's time is actually always best and it's helped and You know just in in so many different ways and it helped me learning to be patient

You know not to argue with folk and Some folk like to argue about the things of God It's a good way of keeping them at arms length and If you're drawn into those arguments, you know, they just go round and round and I've learned that it's best to say well Look, you know, we're maybe not getting anywhere. Let's let's just leave it and And and it's also and I see helped me to enjoy the Lord more and I found when I was younger as a Christian and I should maybe say I didn't become a Christian until I was in my 20s and then You know was married and me and I had our first son when God called me to the ministry and You know, I thought well far better if I'd been converted as a teenager and you know, it called me then

[4 : 36] You know that that instead of having a wife and such But of course all the things I learned through that Were so useful in the ministry that actually again another instance of God's time I'm being better than what I had originally thought and also When you learn to accept that things are happening You can't change them. You're waiting for God to do something Actually, you can enjoy each day. You know, you're not So that that that would be my and Obviously, there's so many scriptures that that help you and because So many folk in the Bible you see their story where they're led Abraham Moses Joshua Daniel Jesus says follow me and but the one the one story that helped me and

I'd have to say strengthened me was Do you remember when Abraham was an old man Sarah had died? He was living amongst the Canaanites. He didn't want his son Isaac to marry Some woman from from amongst the Canaanites So he sent a servant back to Nahor to find a woman and the servant eventually after prayer is led to Rebecca and And he says I Knows that Rebecca is the woman and he says I being in the way the Lord led me and so I find it right if I Walking as closely as I can in the way with Jesus He will lead me in his time in his way So that was the lesson for me. What?

Yeah This is a hard question. I was thinking about it earlier. I think Think I'm gonna say just what what I'm thinking about most right now on this score and I think it's this I think that I've been thinking a lot about how The entirety of the Christian life is really just learning to get your heart to believe in the presence of God That Really that that's the whole of what Christianity is and that God is present That he's really here. He's here in the worship space with us He's Omni president In every way and of course presence It's totally qualified by being in union with Jesus So I guess I've been thinking about that a lot We don't we don't believe in Christianity as you know Brian that there are thin places

You know a lot of religions will talk about thin places in the world Places where you can go and get closer to the divine So you think about us the standing stones throughout Scotland those were erected to be thin places places where you could go and get closer To whatever deity there might be but God is present and then you know that just makes me think that whether we're washing dishes You know you're washing dishes God is present. You're by yourself at home God is present you're Trying to get the kids to quiet down in the car God is present state a student a State home mother God is present in your vocational life and everywhere. So I think that's just what's been on my mind and heart lately Okay Shall we continue we've got six seven of these okay, so number two This one this it immediately gets harder. Okay, what really happens to people when they die and will actually happen when Jesus returns

So I'll start on this one You know we all here today. It doesn't you don't have to be a Christian to believe that death is a great enemy Death is a death is a great enemy for everybody. Nobody wants to die We all fear death to some degree and death is our enemy So one of the things I think we have to say is what Paul says that what happens with we when we face death and when we begin To die and then when we die is that death loses its sting It doesn't lose the fact that it's bad death is always bad and even in the state of death where we leave our bodies To be with the Lord We still in that state or in a death condition It's not what it ought to be It's not what we were made for disembodiment is bad and so What really happens to people when they die well, you know, we're disembodied and

[9 : 45] And simultaneously for those who believe in Christ Who are united to Jesus Jesus us today you will be with me at the time of your death and so The reason these questions go together is because we've got to in our in our Christian understanding of death in the afterlife understand that there's a difference in life after death now and Eternal life when Christ returns that the resurrection is future And so what actually happens when Jesus returns is that God puts bodies and souls back together again And he condescends into the space that is earth and he Brings the true and final kingdom, which is a physical kingdom a spiritual kingdom. There's no dichotomy there That's why in Revelation 22 we see God coming down the city coming down not humans going up The only thing that humans do and going up is they their bodies come up from the grave and they're reunited to their souls now I

Think the questioner is probably wanting me to say something more about Heaven and hell a little more so let me say something The first thing when you're I think and then I'll let you talk you fix it. Okay. Yeah, okay. Yeah The first thing is that when you're talking about heaven and hell, it's very important to be modest To know that actually the Bible speaks to us of heaven and hell in metaphors and That doesn't mean that heaven and hell is not a reality. No not at all It absolutely is but the way that we come to understand what it means is metaphorical in scripture oftentimes It's through pictures and images. So even when Jesus is talking about hell go henna He we know that he's talking about a real place in Jerusalem He's talking about a space in Jerusalem that looks the trash dump of the city where little fires were burning like any city dump does to burn the garbage up the rubbish up and

He's saying that's hell. It was also a spot of Babylonian early Babylonian pagan worship in the time prior to Christ the same place So he's got all sorts of things that he means there Here's where I'm gonna I'm gonna say something and not be able to spend time on it. Okay, so So sorry But hell actually in the New Testament is a word that's not used except for at the second coming of Jesus So the way the Gospels talk about Life after death for a person who doesn't believe the gospel who's gonna be separated from God is not hell Until the resurrection from the dead occurs Instead it talks about the place of the righteous dead and the unrighteous dead what the Gospels call Hades and that's a word that was borrowed from the Greeks of the time and

We see That in all sorts of ways throughout the Gospels if we had time we could show it That's why in the Apostles Creed we confess not that God that Christ at his death descends into hell But the original word is that he descended into Hades the domain of the dead And that question is coming actually somebody asked that exact question about Christ descent and Then in the book of Revelation when Christ raises when God raises all bodies up from the dead It then says now There's either the kingdom of God on the physical creation earth renewed or there's held the lake of fire in Gehenna And that's a place that we're only given metaphors for it's a place of being separated from God It's miserable and at the same time. It's exactly what a person seeks when they reject Christ So it's a very difficult thing to talk about and we would really need to spend a lot of time to talk about it Well, but those are a few of the distinctions. I think you've got to hold on to when you talk about it

Yeah, the only thing I'd say For those of us here Christians John Bunyan has a wonderful image of what happens to us when we die and The character he talks about is Mr. Valiant for truth and He says, you know when it was noise to broad that Mr. Valiant for truth was summons on the day that he was to go hence a Great crowd accompanied him to the Riverside And as he stepped in they heard him say oh death Where is I sting and as he went deeper? I heard him say grave. Where is thy victory?

[14 : 46] and so he passed over and All the trumpets sounded for him on the other side and I just think that's Let me add a sentence just because I forgot to say the most important thing And that's that what happens to us when Jesus returns and what happens to us when we die The most important thing for the Christian is that we see Jesus Christ So I don't want to leave the question without saying that that the entire point of our existence is to see our God and That's what we're headed towards. That's that's the entire point. So good. All right. Well Here we are with a question that's Related the third question when the thief on the cross came to faith Jesus said today you will be with me in paradise How could that be if it was three days before Jesus rose again from abandonment in hell?

so From the very beginning of the church Christians have been trying to summarize the fundamentals of the theater into creeds and catechisms and probably about the fifth century and a number of these came together and What's been called the Apostles Creed?

And not that the Apostles produced it, but it was kind of a summary of what the Apostles had taught and these were thought and it's a very succinct and Very clear Sitting forth of what Christians have believed I believe in God the Father Almighty And then it's only some Jesus Christ our Lord Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost?

part of the Virgin Mary suffered under punches pilot was crucified dead and buried and descended into hell Now that final phrase is wrong Jesus did not descend into hell When he said to the thief on the cross today you will be with me in paradise. He meant exactly that When he said it is finished he meant exactly that his work of atonement and His place in God's plan of salvation for us Was finished so what actually happened was His body was placed in the grave But his spirit his soul went to be with his heavenly Father to return on that Three days later on that first Easter morning to be reunited with that resurrection body and

Now Unfortunately, there are lots of myths about you know, we all know them and some people believe some of them and so and this is Unfortunately, one of those mistaken ideas that has come down through the years to us that Jesus went to hell and suffered and Abandonment from God, but he did all that on the cross Reformation Sunday John Calvin says, you know Jesus and on the cross Jesus and endured hell Because he said, you know my god my god, why have you forsaken me?

[18 : 34] so so that that that was the punishment and and so I Can understand why folk can't can be confused because it would be confusing Some folk who still hold to that mistaken view that Jesus went to hell Try to argue and they say look when Jesus said truly truly I say to you today and You will be with me in paradise. They try to make the today refer to the truly truly rather than the phrase You will be with me in paradise, but that doesn't work. It's not the right way It's it's it's just it's just grammatically doesn't doesn't work in the in the Greek at all and so there's not really a paradox here and Jesus went immediately to be with his heavenly father and then was reunited with what and

And pastor Lee that's an encouragement from because that's what's gonna happen to us. We'll be reunited with our resurrection Body when Jesus comes again. Yes, so just one thing fantastic answer So when I said a minute ago that the the Apostles Creed language originally was he descended into Hades That's exactly the important distinction right not hell But Hades the term means into the place where souls go after they die His soul went into the realm of the dead of dead souls which is with God the father in in the kingdom of heaven and I think that first Peter first Peter 3 is where this whole question comes up, right?

Yeah, and I think first Peter 3 just to add one more thing is suggesting that In in the domain where souls dwell in the heavenly life Where Christ's soul was separated from his body for three days he by book by being there According first Peter 3 pronounced his victory to the captives meaning By just simply entering into the heavenly realm He was preaching his victory over death to all those who have been captured by death And first Peter 3 when you read it, it's gonna give you language. It's very confusing, but I think that's what it's saying So yeah, I completely agree. Yeah, really good Okay, good question number four Is Is democracy compatible with Christianity?

So yes, it definitely is and I think in fact that Christianity leads us to a political theology that calls for democracy and That has been the majority Protestant position for quite some time now. Why would that be? Okay?

Well, we believe in the doctrine of the image of God so that every single person is Named by God to be unique and important and loved and full of gifts and Democracy has an accent and its political orientation Towards everyone towards the people towards recognizing the image of God in every single person every single individual On the flip side it also tells us Christianity also says to us that every single state Needs to know its relative power and its relative authority that no Emperor No king needs to everything that they have the kind of authority to dictate the moral order To that they that they need we say we pray 1st 22 that the kings the emperors the presidents the prime ministers would submit to God and Know that God is the ultimate authority not them and so that leads us over time to gather a logic where God says everybody's really important and

[22 : 28] God's power Relativizes the state which means that we need to seek states that are people That are governed by the people that come from the bottom up not the top down now There's one more idea here that we might this is a big subject, right?

You said you would answer. Yeah. Yeah, so Yeah Let me give you two more reasons one On top of the image of God the relative authority of any state is also the universality of sinfulness So total depravity everybody is corrupted Nobody needs absolute power Nobody does Almost always only bad comes from that unless you have you know the one time in history I think where we could have given it to somebody was probably Queen Elizabeth, you know, but Other than that nobody needs absolute power Because we do bad things whether we're sinners and so that leads us toward more towards democracy the final thing I'll say and this is a bigger discussion, but I think that Christianity leads us towards a view of Society Where God has actually given us all the major?

Institutions that society needs and he's given them to us directly himself So he doesn't in other words the family doesn't exist because the state wants the family You know marriage doesn't exist because the state said marriage should exist or not exist None of these things are products of civil determination Actually, they're all products of God's direct creation of these institutions and family is actually one of the the original Marriage is at the very beginning. It's prior to any state So it's always been the case that each of these institutions answers directly to God before they answer to any state and That means that the state has a sphere of authority But doesn't have authority over everything and Democracy actually lends to help us see that a little bit better that that families need to be left alone unless They break justice The state is the sphere of justice, but they're not the spirit of the family

They're not the sphere of the church the church has its own Remit and these things are directly given by God with their own authority their own institutions their own power structures And so the state actually has to know its place Society's at its best when the state knows its place I think and I think Christianity leads us towards that and that plays out in some form of democracy What do you think you want to say anything no all right yeah, no government government by consent You know rather than as you say a very authoritarian, you know one person picked dates or the very Let's say fair that everybody just knows what they want where it's anarchy but where there's discussion and compromise and a desire for what the greatest good of the greatest number you know that that that's what Democracy aims at and it can be as good or as bad. Yeah, as the individuals Yeah, we want we want the society to seek the common good and democracy tends to emphasize that now

We are not in any way talking about a political party or anything like that. So don't email me Please do actually to talk about it more but but no no We're not putting our stamp on anything but but the broad idea of democracy All right. Well next question number five How do you think about the doctrine of election?

[26 : 16] pastorally Am I starting there are you you didn't say okay, I'll start Yeah So this is a tough question and but an important question and so let's let's think about it together for a minute What is the person mean by the doctrine of election?

The doctrine of election comes from Ephesians 1 4 and 1 11 and a bunch of other places in the Bible and it says that God has from all eternity known and named Those that will be his people that will be his church and it's very difficult to get around that because the Bible says it so clearly and so many times over and over again and It can it can be really difficult to think about and talk about because it feels as if there's an injustice in that That if God knows his people from the beginning of history beginning of eternity, which has no beginning no time at all then Then what about those that aren't his people and is that really fair?

a few things on the pastoral John Calvin when he writes his great book about theology the institutes he actually Famously sticks this idea more towards the back not the front So people think of Calvinists right and they think of them as only thinking about this election and predestination and when you read Calvin He he doesn't actually spend a ton of time on this and he puts it very much at the back of the book not the front of the book And there's a real reason for that and that this is because again This is an area where we have to have modesty, but it's also an area pastorally I think that drives us to say this we need to expect not to understand God you know if we if we ever look at the scriptures and we start to Say that we're totally okay with everything they say and none of it hits us strangely and none of it hits us hard then actually I think we've come to be in a pretty bad place Because the what the Bible if it's if the Bible's God's word then it has to have the power to

Critique every single culture in history. It has to have that power It has we have to expect that if we're sinners that the Bible would come in and say something to every single culture That hits them in a raw way that says I'm not sure about that. I'm not sure if I can handle that but we're talking about God and So of course there's gonna be utter and radical radical meaning at root Divine mystery when it comes to the power and the providence and the elect election Sovereignty of the living God and so I guess I don't want to say a lot about it but what I want to say is just simply that I think it helps us to To understand the weightiness of God's divine majesty When we consider how difficult it is for us to possibly conceive of even what this means and that's a good thing and The last thing I'll say is this Jesus Christ's death and resurrection is sufficient for the salvation of the world

So Jesus Christ has purchased has died and And his death is is sufficient to cover the sins of anyone who will repent and come to faith And so when we put this idea together with what Jesus has done We say that Jesus Christ death is sufficient for all efficient for some Meaning that Christ's death is going to be used in some people's lives to change them and transform them and To bring them into the family of God not everybody And yet know that Jesus Christ death covers the sins of the whole world And so that means that our job is simply to go into the world and know that we can preach and teach and tell the gospel to anybody and That they if they repent and they confess like we saw this morning and say I'm a sinner and I say what God says about Jesus then they are part of the family of God and that's it and and so the first is an utterly grand divine mystery and the second is our marching orders and

[30 : 42] And I think that's what we've got to lean into Yeah, I think that's a great question because it You know ask about the doctrine of election pastor a lie and Certainly my experience In college in the ministry with students and Wherever it's discussed, you know The arguments are like bullets, you know, they're designed to do damage and to do harm and I think it's Significant that the apostle Paul who maybe deals mostly He's the one who deals with it most often in the New Testament and You know, he doesn't make a big issue of it and He's not ashamed of it. He's not embarrassed by it and he simply accepts it and declares it as the truth of God and

You know, there's there's mystery in it. We know that and we don't understand as Corey said, you know, it shouldn't make us complacent and What it really ought to do is To make us on all of this great God you know because this doctrine of Alex touches on the kind of inmost secrets of God's will and We're given a glimpse. We're told a little bit, but the rest is hidden from us and That should be okay, that should be we should you know, but say, you know, how great is our God But she also humble us That God has chosen us, you know for for no good reason that that we can think of and You know, I've heard folks say I will look there must be something, you know some little bit in why he chooses this person and not that person and and

There maybe is a danger there if I could say you do that wonderful parable Jesus told about the Pharisee and the public and and the Pharisees in the temple and Lord I thank you that I'm not like other men and the public and you know, he won't even lift up his eyes to pray and The point of that is, you know Jesus wants us to see ourselves there Are we like The Pharisee are we comparing ourselves with other people?

Because you know, I'm not all that great a person. I know that but you know, I don't beat my wife I don't fill in my taxes You know, I'm kind to animals and little children and And but that's not who I compare myself I compare myself with Jesus and I feel ashamed of the person that I am That's what that's what the public and dead and that's why he wouldn't even lift up his head I think in this doctor we have to be so careful pastorally that we just do not ever think We've been chosen and because there was anything in us But I think as well as humbling with the people that I'm talking about Well as humbling us. I think it it's a brilliant assurance That because God has chosen us and has drawn us to himself We have the assurance that even when we fall we will be lifted up and accept it again

It's I I think pastor I would think pastorally Corey. That's the way to think of election pastorally rather than a theological I mean IWT was there the American writer. He said Delving into the mysteries of predestination and election may make theologians, but it won't make sense And I think there's a warning there No, yeah Okay, so we're this we're about out of time So let's let's try to do the last two together and because they fit together and we'll just right do them quickly and they are What are some of the most important books that shaped your view of the Christian life outside the Bible?

[35 : 23] And then what is your go-to book of the Bible your favorite book of the Bible? So a couple fun ones to end on yeah Do you want to start with I start I've got okay, um, I've got four well five really Mary my wife asked me this morning What were the questions tonight? And this we only one I told her about the books of the Bible I said would be there are the the books that have shaped your view says would be there all night You won't really you won't really we all have stacks of books and And basic Christianity by John Stott that was the book I was given Before I became a Christian when I was trying to understand it and Absolutely brilliant For people who are not Christians. I've given away so many copies of it and Fundamentalism and the word of God by J. I packer I heard him speak on the authority of scripture when I was a student and then got his book and it's

Absolutely, it will convince you If you need convincing that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God And they must be your authority in everything The Pilgrims progress by John Bunyan Next to the Bible my favorite book there are folks who think that you know tall king and the Lord of the Rings and those I Mean that they're just nursery rhymes compared to pilgrims progress. You know it is absolutely Brilliant and if you're getting a copy for Christmas for people that you love Get the banner of truth copy because it has the Bible text in the margin and then finally and the knowledge of the holy by a w tozer it's a book about the attributes of God and and and it is phenomenal and It would just help help anybody so much and he begins and finishes each chapter on each attribute with a prayer which I have personally just found and the other been a final one

I was going to say was and it's it's from Back home and it's the church hymnary and it was produced in 1898 Actually along with the church of Scotland, but I think mostly Presbyterian church in Ireland did it and it contains all the metric of Psalms nearly seven day Bible passages paraphrased and over 700 hymns and And when I find myself stuck You know I'm dry Gods far away. I Need reassurance. I need help with my prayers Going going to the hymns and the Psalms They're just they're just brilliant So that answers my last the last question Corey the book of Psalms the Samas open their hearts and I See myself there It's good. So my books are

Some of the you know tough to answer tough to answer I think I want to say in terms of learning to Learning the crypt the best book I think I've ever read on the Christian life is Augustine's Confessions and then for Theology for growing and knowledge of God. I think the book I would recommend the most is Herman boving's wonderful works of God Which is I think the best popular theology that's ever been written in a single volume So I think the Augustine's Confessions Herman boving's wonderful works of God For helping me understand helping anybody understand The modern mind and how Christianity relates to the secular world Tim Keller's making sense of God Will I think really help everybody?

Awaken to exactly what the world we live in is like and what the kind of way we can talk to people that will help them to Understand why Christianity still matters? so I would really point people towards that one and then lastly I Think a amazing place for anybody to go start kind of spending some time reading is in the world of really just how to read the Bible better and so I would commend Anything in the realm of what we call biblical theology So how to read the Bible through the lens of Jesus Christ from Genesis to Revelation The book that threw me into that that I love so much is Stephen Dempster's dominion and dynasty a Wonderful book that I encountered in seminary, but there's all sorts like even Graham Golds where these Trilogy on reading Christ in all of scripture So something in those realms would be the books of tonight tonight's books

[40 : 44] I Don't know So right now right now my favorite Bible book is Leviticus in the Old Testament Because I'm reading a wonderful book about Leviticus from Michael Morales Leviticus is an amazing gospel book and then Ephesians because Ephesians Ephesians casts our entire theology Through the the coming again of Christ the renewal of creation and then works backwards And I really have found that to be a wonderful way of doing it from Paul so right now this too. All right Thanks for putting up with us. Let me pray for us Lord We give thanks for your church family and this church family and There are a lot of people here Lord that you know that are are seeking to grow and to think and to know more of you And love you and so I just asked that you would bless us with inquisitive minds and give give

The leaders and each and everybody here the the ability and the hunger to sit alongside each other and to talk and to talk about these things and to answer questions and to encourage and exhort and So we just ask for that spirit among us and we pray these things in Christ's name Amen. Oh, yeah