

Questions and Answers, 2009

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If you have your Bibles, we're going to be a little bit everywhere this morning, so I'm not going to send you to a [specific] text because this is [a] question and answer [sermon]. If you've been around Calvary Bible Church, you know that usually we ask for questions at the latter part of July, and then usually spend a couple weeks in August answering your questions. This gives you an opportunity to ask those questions [from the Bible to which] you always wanted to know the answer, and then I try to answer them. If I don't know the answer, I just don't answer that question.

Actually a lot of the questions [that I received] have already been answered. If you look at our website, you will discover that pretty much any question that has ever been asked is on there somewhere.¹ I don't know where, but it's on there. But if you've ever been to our website, [you know that] we have sermons by text, topic, and series.² If you go under Classes, we have all kinds of classes, conferences, and handouts [available].³ We

¹The Question and Answer series is available at the following link:
[http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/Series/Questions and Answers](http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/Series/Questions%20and%20Answers).

²The following is a link to the main sermon page and from there you can find sermons by clicking on the various links:
<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/Year/2009>.

³The following is a link to the Classes section of the website:
http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/teaching.aspx/relationship_series_2009.

[also] have the Calvary Review [online].⁴ There's quite a large batch of information [on the website]. We hope in the future to somehow get all of that into a database that we can search, but right now it's not quite possible. But a lot of times, if you really want to know the answer to something, if you call the office we can give you a resource that you can listen to, look at, read, or whatever. Please make use of that.⁵

We're just going to jump in this morning. The first couple of questions we're going to address have to do with marriage. Since we talked about singles and marriage and talked about divorce and remarriage from Luke 16:18 last week, I think some people are thinking, "Well, I have some questions about that." And so, here we go. These are some of the hard things that you read in the Bible that kind of just [get to you].

The first [question] is this: "Regarding the exiles who had married foreign women in Ezra 10[:19], 'they pledged to put away their wives.' Was this divorce and was it OK?" If you've ever read that [passage in Ezra], it's kind of shocking. You'll be reading along and all of a sudden [it says], "They sent their wives and children away." You can imagine, if you love your children and you love your wife, how heart wrenching that would be. A lot of times when we read this, we think, "Well, surely that wasn't right. Surely they must have done wrong. Surely it doesn't seem good, that God would approve of that." First, let's answer both questions. The answer to both questions is "yes." They divorced their idolatrous, pagan wives and sent their pagan wives away with their children. And, second, was it OK? Yes, it was OK.

You think, "How could that be?" Let's talk about it and try to explain this text. Again, the frustrating part is [that] I want to preach a whole sermon on every one of these questions—they are *so* fun. But, in short—as short as I can do it—the real question is: Why was it OK? Why did they do this

⁴You can find the latest Calvary Review at:
http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/calvary_review.aspx.

⁵The following is a link to the Contact page of the website:
<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/contact.aspx>.

and why was it OK with God? First of all, you need to go back and ask yourself, “Why were the people of Israel taken captive in the first place?” Ezra records what happened when they returned from captivity and began to settle in the land. They were in the land [for] a while. The question is: Why were they in captivity in the first place? The answer is: idolatry. If you read through [1 and 2] Kings and the Prophets, you will see that [the Israelites] had committed idolatry—worship[ing] foreign gods—over and over again. God had made this covenant with them that they all agreed to in Deuteronomy that if they started worshipping idols, God would send enemies upon them and drive them into foreign lands to be captives [see Deuteronomy 4:25–32]. That’s what they did, and so that’s what He did. They have just come back, they have settled in the land, and they’ve married foreign women.

God wanted the people of Israel to know that He alone was God, and He alone was to be worshiped and served. He didn’t want them worshipping false gods and idols, which are really no gods at all. He wanted them serving Him and Him alone, since He is the true God. That is, I think, pretty understandable. He wanted the people of Israel to be holy. We have a different situation in that the Church is to go out into the world and evangelize. God’s plan for Israel was for them to be holy and *separate* from the nations so that the nations would look upon them, see that they were separated from sin and [were] holy, and then be drawn to ask why and be led to the Lord in that way. Of course, [the Israelites] didn’t do a very good job [of doing that].

Holiness is a concept we need to understand. We use the term[s] “to be sanctified” or “to be holy.” The word [“holy”] means “to be set apart from sin and [set apart] unto God.” You [can think of it this way]: we have certain things we set apart for certain tasks in our house[s]. [Say you] have a mixer [with which you] mix cakes. If your husband came in and dumped some sand, gravel, and cement in there and was making some concrete, you might get a little angry. Why? [It is] because it is set apart for a different purpose. It is not a concrete mixer, it is a food mixer. In a similar way, God

wants us to be set apart to be holy unto Him and apart from sin. That's why, when you read the Law of Moses there are all these regulations—do this, don't do that, do this, don't do that—because [following those regulations] would make Israel look distinct, separate, from all the other nations—the pagan nations—that were around them.

Because of this, God then gave instructions to Israel and in, for instance, Exodus 23:31–33, he talks about how He is going to drive out the inhabitants from the land and [the Israelites] are going to move into the land. He says this: “You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods. They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against Me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.” There He is not talking about marriage, but He says there's a snare there with their gods. Of course, He hasn't made that covenant of blessing and curses yet, so [if they do this at this point] they're not in as [much] trouble as they [will] be [once they have accepted God's covenant].

But then [the Lord] says in Exodus 34:12–16:

Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim—for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God—otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice, and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods.

Here is Moses, writing down God's instruction to [the Israelites], saying, “This is what's going to happen. When we go into the land, you are

going to drive those people out of the land so they stay out of the land. Why? [It is] because if you befriend them, you [will] start spending time with them and eating with them, and they [will be] sacrificing their food to pagan gods. You[’ll] start by eating food that’s sacrificed, [saying], ‘Well, there’s not really any cooties on it. It’s not going to hurt me. It’s going to be OK,’ then what happens is you get comfortable with their paganism, and then their daughters and your sons start marrying, and pretty soon those daughters who are pagans start influencing your sons and start having children, and they raise them up to be pagans. Pretty soon they’re living in the land and you’ve got full-blown paganism happening in the land.” That is exactly what happened in Israel.

In Deuteronomy 7:3, we read: “Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons.” So, this was the regulation: no intermarrying with foreign women. We know [it was] because idolatry would bring God’s wrath upon them, and God would disperse them into other nations if they worshiped idols. Solomon is a great example of this sin. He was very wise [and] he was very godly. At the beginning, he thought, “I’m wise. God has given me this. I’m king. I can handle this. I want to make peace in Israel, so I’m going to marry all these foreign women to make political alliances and bring peace.” And you know what? He did [just that] and you know what? It brought peace. But [do] you know what else it brought? [It brought] idolatry into Israel. It brought *major* idolatry into Israel. Why? [It is] because these wives, whom he loved, kept saying, “Well, can’t I just set up a little altar to Baal? Can’t I just set up a little Asherim, a little pole, and worship this little totem pole thing? Can’t I just have my own little corner?” Then they [taught] their kids to do that, and pretty soon, those kids [were] talking to other kids at school, and [the wives were] talking to other neighbors, and pretty soon idolatry [began] to grow and grow and fester in the land. Then God [had] to keep His word—God always keeps His word—and then they [had] to suffer the consequence of their sin.

In 1 Kings 11:1[-2], it says:

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love.

Nehemiah even comments in Nehemiah 13:26 that though God loved Solomon, though [Solomon] had great wisdom, yet these foreign women even caused him to sin. That’s a problem. That’s what we need to understand as we approach the text in question. How is it that Ezra could agree and the Bible say nothing about these guys all sending their pagan wives and children away? I’ll give you a summary of [Ezra] 9 and talk about how it all came about.

[The Israelites] have come back from captivity, and Ezra discover[s that] a lot of the leaders have married pagan women. He can’t believe it. [He says to them], “Didn’t you just come back from captivity? Weren’t you just in captivity because of idolatry [and] now you’re marrying idolaters?” He falls down on his face, pulls out his hair, rips hair out of his beard, [and] he’s weeping [and] crying. He’s broken. This goes on and on, and crowds begin to [wonder], “Why is Ezra the prophet wailing in the middle of town?” More and more people gather, and they begin to hear him as he’s pouring out his heart to God because he doesn’t want them to be destroyed and driven off into captivity again for another seventy years, or maybe 120 [years] this time.

He’s weeping and the people begin to get convicted. Pretty soon they all begin to weep and they begin to repent of their sins. Then a man named Shecaniah comes forth and proposes, “Really, to be truly repentant, we need to get rid of our foreign wives so that they won’t continue to infect the land, since the law makes it clear that God doesn’t want idolaters in the land” [see Ezra 10:2–3]. They begin to inquire about this. What happens is [that] so

many of them seem to have done this—the leaders were leading the pack—that Ezra said, “OK, this is what we’re going to do. In three days, we’re going to come back and meet here to deal with this” [see Ezra 10:4–9].

Well, in three days it’s raining. It’s the middle of winter. It’s cold. There is no indoor, heated amphitheater. Everybody from Israel comes and they’re all marching through the mud, and they’re cold and miserable. They’re standing outside, and they realize, “Oh, no. What have we done?” They realize there are too many people to deal with right then and there. So, all the leaders of the city are then required to go back to their cities and they are given three months to survey everybody in their [cities] to find out who married the pagans, the idol worshipers. That happens [and] at the end of three months, all those people—all those husbands—are required to divorce their wives and send their wives away with their children [see Ezra 10:7–44]. It’s a condensed narrative—I’m sure [the men] took [their wives and children] back to their people, took them back home to their fathers, or whatever, and tried to make provision for them.

You [may] think, “Man, that sounds really brutal.” It is, but it’s not as brutal as when we sin against God. That’s brutal. You see, a lot of times when we see things like this, we think, “Isn’t that kind of harsh? Isn’t that majorly bad?” Well, what happens is [that] when sin enters the picture, things always get bad. Let’s say [there is] a husband who is beating his wife. She comes and tells [the church leaders] and the police get involved. We say, “You need to separate from your husband until [he] get[s] some help. The Bible says, ‘Don’t separate, except for a time for the purpose of prayer by mutual consent [see 1 Corinthians 7:5], but we’re going to have you separated.’” [During the time of their separation,] they begin to grow apart.

You’re thinking, “Well, what do you do? What’s better, to send the wife home [to] get beat[en] up by the husband, or to have them separate when they can’t have a relationship and they should be together?” The answer is: Neither. The answer is: “Husbands, love your wives [see Ephesians 5:25]. Cherish your wives. Nurture your wives. Deal with your wife in an under-

standing way. Grant her honor. Treat her as a weaker vessel [see 1 Peter 3:7]. Serve her.” That’s the answer. But when you don’t do what God says, then you suffer the painful consequences. What was the solution [in Ezra’s time]? When you [have] a whole bunch of idol-worshiping pagans in the land and the Law says, “You can’t have them in the land,” what are you going to do? [You] send them away. So, all those husbands sent all their wives, with their children, away. I’m sure it was heart wrenching, but it was the only way to deal with the problem so that it wouldn’t bring God’s judgment upon them again.

If you look in the New Testament, does it say we should do the same thing? No. It doesn’t even say to do it in the Old Testament. It says, “Don’t do it to begin with.” But, of course, there was a law, necessarily, that regulated what to do if you married a pagan. [Are] there any parallels like this that go on today? We have already seen from 1 Corinthians 7, if you’ve been here in previous weeks, that we are not to divorce unbelievers. If an unbeliever is willing to live with a believer in harmony, then that is fine. If they want a divorce, yes, Paul says, “Let them leave.” But, if they’re willing to stay, then stay with them [see 1 Corinthians 7:10–16].

Probably the closest parallel is in the Church. Remember, Israel was to be a holy nation, separate from the world. Well, in our instance, the Church is to be holy, separate from the world. When somebody comes in to the Body of Christ [and] he begin[s] to call [himself] a Christian, [but he’s] living in open sin, doing whatever it is that is contrary to God’s Word and [he is] confronted in private, and [he] won’t repent, and [he is] confronted again by two or more, and [he] won’t repent, then we tell it to the church and we do what? We remove [him] [see Matthew 18:15–17]. Why? [It is] because God wants the Church [to be] holy just like He wanted Israel [to be] holy back then. So that is probably the closest parallel. So, that is the short answer to a very interesting text.

Second [question]: “Why did the prophets in the Old Testament not say anything against polygamy?” Whenever I read these I kind of laugh because I think, “Oh, these are painful [questions].” [Why] isn’t [there]

a verse that says, “David sinned against the Lord by having too many wives”? Well, we saw the [passage] about Solomon that [said his] pagan wives caused him to go astray. A couple of texts are mentioned here [in the question]—Deuteronomy 17:17, which [tells] kings not to multiply wives, and Deuteronomy 21:15, which talks about the regulation of polygamy when it happens—but let’s just talk about [the question] “Why doesn’t the Bible speak out against polygamy?”

First of all, it does. You say, well, where does it do that? In Genesis 2:24, [which] is the blueprint for marriage. It is quoted four times in the New Testament as God’s blueprint for marriage. What is that blueprint? “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” One man, one woman: two people becoming one. That’s marriage. There’s no, “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his *wives*.” It’s one man, one woman, and that’s how we see it. That is God’s standard. You even see it more clearly in the New Testament. For instance, elders are to be the husbands of what? One wife [see Titus 1:6]. A[n elder is to be a] man devoted to one woman, not two [or more].

So, we have the Genesis 2:24 scripture, which, of course, came at the very beginning, before the Law [was given]. The [person asking this question] mentioned [that] in Deuteronomy 17:17 it does say [that kings] should not multiply wives for themselves. Solomon did it anyways and disobeyed that law, too. In Deuteronomy 21:15–17, it talks about a man, if he has two wives, and what happens. [Do you] remember when Jesus said, “You can’t serve God and mammon. You can’t serve two masters” [see Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13]? Well, guess what? You can’t love two women equally. You’re going to favor one over the other, so that text is about this [concept as well].

[Let’s say] you get married [to] two wives and you love one a little bit more than the other. But the problem is [that] the unloved or less-loved wife is the first one to have a child. That’s your firstborn. [Since you] love this other woman more, then she is coming to you, and [saying], “Well, I know my son came second, but I’m the most-loved wife. Can’t you make him

the firstborn so he gets the double blessing?” [That’s why there] is [this] regulation [in Deuteronomy 21 that says], “No, the firstborn gets the double portion whether [his mother] is the loved wife or the unloved wife.” It’s not giving permission for polygamy, it’s not advocating polygamy. As we learned last week, there are many laws in the Old Testament [that] regulate sin when it occurs. So, if the sin of polygamy occurs, that’s just one law that deals with the sin once it happens. But, the standard is Genesis 2:24.

Oh, another thing, just before we move on. Another kind of subtle argument against polygamy is this: When you read about the [men] in the Old Testament who had more than one wife, were they happy? There. That’s another reason. First Corinthians 10:6, 11 talks about the Old Testament being written for our instruction and giving us examples so that we would learn not to crave evil things. So, when you read about those who had more than one wife you need to learn from that example.

OK, moving on. [Question] three: “When did the twenty-two books of the Old Testament become thirty-seven?” I think this is a typo because they didn’t, they became thirty-nine [books] of the Old Testament. I think it was a typo, but I just wanted to say it was thirty-nine. [The question continues]: “When did the order change and when did that all come about?” This is kind of interesting. When you study history, you discover that around the time of Jesus, and before that [as well], the Hebrew Bible had twenty-two books, [but] ours has thirty-nine. You might wonder, “Well, why is that? What’s going on there?” Let me tell you.

The Hebrew Bible used to have twenty-two books and they were divided up into three divisions. This was the *Torah*, which was the five books of law: Genesis through Deuteronomy. Then there was the *Nevi'im*, or the prophets—the eight books of the prophets. In this case, Joshua and Judges were combined, and 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings were [each] combined into one. Then there was Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and then all the twelve minor prophets were combined. So, even though there was the same content that we have, there was a lot of combining of books. Finally, there was a third division called the *Kithuvim*, the writings—

Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Esther, Daniel, and then Ezra and Nehemiah were combined, and 1 and 2 Chronicles were combined. So, all the same books existed, it's just that they were combined and organized into groups a little bit differently than ours.

There is only one place in the Bible where the threefold division is mentioned. If you go through the New Testament, you'll see it talk about the Scriptures, and sometimes the Writings, or Moses and the Prophets, but there is one text that mentions all three divisions. It's at the very end of Luke. After His resurrection, Jesus is speaking to His disciples, and we read this in Luke 24:44. Jesus says, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." The Psalms [were] part of the *Kithuvim*, the Writings. So, those are the three divisions. That's why there [were] twenty-two books.

The second part of the question is: When did they become thirty-nine [books]? Well, if you remember, Daniel tells us about the Gentile empires. There was the Babylonians, then there was the Medo-Persians, and then who came after them? The Greeks. Alexander the Great came in, conquered, and he wanted to have a standardized language for all the nations he conquered so they could inter-communicate. [He also wanted to] Hellenize, or bring Greek culture into all these [nations], so he created common Greek for everybody to speak. That became the common language. It became so popular that pretty soon the Jews were saying, "We should probably get a translation [of the Scriptures] that is in Greek because so many people are speaking Greek now that sometimes people don't know Hebrew and so they can't read the Scriptures." They went to task, and they translated the Bible from Hebrew into Greek, and that is called the Septuagint or the LXX. In the LXX, they broke up many of the books so they would be smaller and easier to reference, and they ordered them a little different[ly]. Yes, they had the five books of the law, five books of poetry, twelve books of his-

tory, five major prophets, and twelve minor prophets, totaling thirty-nine [books]. So that is when that happened about 200 BC.

[Question] four: “Why were the dialogues in Job, being a true story, recorded as poetry rather than prose? If the original dialogue was not spoken in poetry, why would God inspire an altered version and not record it word-for-word?” You know, that’s a good question. You think, “Obviously Job and his friends didn’t speak with polished poetry when they spoke to each other, so why is it recorded in Hebrew poetry if it wasn’t that way?” Well, here’s the answer to that question. A lot of times, when something is recorded it is recorded because it is true not because it is verbatim, chronologically consistent, or because everything is exactly in the same sequence, order, and comprehensiveness as it could be said.

For instance, if I were to get here early in the morning and there were three cars out front—a red car, a blue car, and a white truck—somebody might come in and say, “Hey, there’s a nice red car out there.” Is that true? Yeah. There is. Somebody else could come in and say, “There [are] three cars out there.” Is that true? Yeah. Somebody could come in and say, “I saw this really nice truck out there.” Yeah. See, that’s not a problem. Leaving out information is not a problem. What’s a problem is if I come in and say [that] there is *only* a red car when there [are] more [than just that car out there].

When you read the Gospels, the[y] record many of the same events, but if you read them, the accounts are different. Why? [It is] because they are edited, because things are left out. Why? [It is] because each author is trying to emphasize something different, [such as] Jesus the King, Jesus the Son of Man, Jesus the Servant, [or] Jesus God. Each [of the authors are] taking information from Jesus’ life and they’re compiling it to emphasize a certain theme. This isn’t a contradiction. A contradiction is when they say one thing and something else that excludes the other thing. That’s a contradiction. When God records events that happen, He doesn’t do it because He wants to meet up with copyright laws and modern expectations of journalism. It’s amazing how stringent unbelievers get about the Bible. [They say things]

like, “It doesn’t seem very scientific.” Well, it’s not a scientific document. “[Why does] this say that and that says that?” Well, because [that author is] emphasizing this and [that other author is] emphasizing that.

You do [this same thing], right? If I say, “Oh, so you went to Disneyland.”

You say, “Yeah.”

[I ask], “So, what happened?” You give me three or four sentences [that summarize your day]. Well, that’s not all that happened, but that’s *part* of what happened, so it counts. A lot of times people want to discredit God [for doing this same thing].

Another reason why the Book of Job is in poetry form is because poetry is easier to memorize. In our day and age, and I can say this because I live in this day and age, people are getting dumber. You [might] think to yourself, “No we’re not. We’re an advanced civilization.” Well, we’re not very civilized, and we’re not very smart. How many people here know seven languages? [Do] we [have] any seven-language people here? Raise your hand if you dare. See? See, all the hands? Look around. See all those hands? Yeah, there are *so many* people here who know seven languages. [A while ago] I was in Polokwane, South Africa, which is right on the northern part of South Africa before it gets into the real tribal areas. All these guys c[a]me down from these tribes—they live in towns that have no electricity, no water, and no computers—to learn how to preach the gospel. They all [spoke] seven languages at least. Think about that. All these people who live in that very uncivilized culture speak seven languages—some of them eight, nine, [or] ten.

When I was preaching to them, I thought, “I don’t think I’m connecting with these guys.” Some of the guys [were] looking down. I [was trying to make] eye contact with them, you know? So, [later] I asked one of the professors, “What’s the deal here? I’m preaching my heart out, and I’m looking at some of these guys and they’re kind of staring at the ground or staring up at the ceiling.”

[He] said, “Well, English isn’t their first language. It’s just one of seven, or eight, or nine, or ten languages they know. When you’re speaking, they usually look at something [else] so as not to be distracted so they can translate [what you’re saying] quickly.”

“Oh, OK.” I mean, I don’t even know English yet. I’m hoping I die before I get my superlatives fixed.

The whole point is [that] when you have poetry it is easier to memorize. Back then, if you wanted to have the Bible, you didn’t pull out your PDA, your little Bible, [or] your little compact whatever—you memorized it. You memorized huge chunks of information—stories, genealogies, [and] church histories. Since poetry is easier to memorize there’s a lot of poetry in the Old Testament. There are acrostics and things like that, which help you memorize things if you know Hebrew. In English it doesn’t come across [as clearly], but if you look in your Bible [and see those] indented [passages], [that] shows you that it is poetry.

[Question] five: “Why do we and most other Protestant churches put so little emphasis on the worship of the Holy Spirit? Is it OK to pray to Jesus or pray to the Holy Spirit? When Jesus was on earth, He prayed to the Father. Can we [pray] specifically to Jesus or specifically to the Holy Spirit? Is that OK? Is that acceptable? Is there any scriptural evidence for this?” The answer is yes and no. First of all, when Jesus was on earth, He prayed to the Father and so that’s the example we get from Jesus. He was a man living on earth, and so He prayed to the Father. That was the standard example.

But you need to remember that Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit all have different roles and functions within the Godhead. Jesus is the mediator between God and man. He is the one who represents God to man. He is the angel of the LORD, the voice in the burning bush. When God speaks from the mountain, it is Jesus. Jesus is that person [who] communicates God to man. Then you have the Holy Spirit, who is the one who energizes people, convicts people, confronts people, causes them to be born again, and illumines the Truth. The Father is kind of the planner, the overseer, the

one who sends His Son into the world. They each have their own roles, [which] all work together in perfect harmony. The Holy Spirit's role is to point people to Jesus. That's what the Holy Spirit does, [saying], "This is Jesus. Go to Jesus. Look at Jesus."

So, when you look in the Scriptures, yes, there are the many examples of Jesus praying to the Father, but there are also many examples of prayers to Jesus or instructions to pray to Jesus. I'm just going to give you a couple so you know that they are there. [In] John 14:14, Jesus says, "I'm going to go away, and when I go away," He says, "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. All you have to do is pray to Me in My name and I will do it as long as it is according to My will, I'm going to do it" [see John 14:13–14]. So, right there, He advocates praying to Him. In 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul addresses those who "call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours." Christians constantly are calling out to Christ, praying to Christ. That is standard. When Stephen was being stoned to death in Acts 7:59, he call[ed] upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer. So, that's just a couple of many examples that could be given of praying to Jesus.

All the examples that are praying to the Holy Spirit are zero. There [aren't] any. There [are] no examples. Sorry. There just [aren't] any. So what does that mean? Well, faithful believers have always conformed to the Word of God, and since the Bible doesn't emphasize praying to the Holy Spirit, it gives no instruction about praying to the Holy Spirit, therefore most believers stick with the Bible and do what the Bible says. They pray to the Father, they pray to the Son, or they pray to God in general, and in praying to God in general, they are praying to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, right? That's what is usually done. Now, would it be a sin to pray to the Holy Spirit? Absolutely not. I don't think it would be. Otherwise it would be stated in [the Bible]. [The only thing is that] you're kind of in uncharted waters because it just isn't mentioned. That's all I can tell you because the Bible doesn't say [anything about praying to the Holy Spirit].

Question six: "In Daniel 9:24 it says that during the seventy weeks of Christ's Second Coming—actually the seventy weeks of Daniel leading

up to Christ's Second Coming—that vision and prophecy will cease or be 'sealed up.' Yet our church's stance is that signs and wonders and prophecy ceased during the Apostolic Age. Does that mean it will start up again?" So, actually, we have three or four questions thrown in here. This is a very tricky one.

Daniel 9:24 is a summary verse of what will have been accomplished by the seventy weeks of Daniel. That is, the seventy weeks when the Gentiles are pretty much dominant. They record the history of Israel from that time all the way through the Gentile nations until the Second Coming. When Jesus comes back the second time, then the seventy weeks will have been completed. These are the things that are mentioned: first, finish of the transgressions; second, make an end of sin; third, make atonement for iniquity; fourth, bring in everlasting righteousness; fifth, seal up vision and prophecy; and sixth, anoint the most holy place.

So, we are talking about vision and prophecy. What does it mean [when it says], "to seal up vision and prophecy"? This is where the problem is because once you understand that, then the rest is pretty much easy to understand. The problem is, what does that mean? People are in disagreement, but here are, I think, a couple good options. Charles Feinberg and Leon J. Wood suggest [that] the phrase means "confirm Daniel's prophecies." In other words, when [Daniel] says, "When the seventy weeks are finished"—the Church is Raptured after the Tribulation, Christ comes back a second time—when all of that is completed and everything that's told [to] Daniel is completed, then all of it will be confirmed. All of it will be sealed up—there won't be any doubt anymore. It will all be shown to be correct. [Feinberg and Wood] are saying that that's what the [phrase] means, [that] "to seal up" means that you won't have it unsealed, waiting for it to happen, [but rather] it would be, "Oh, it's done." It's sealed up and ready to be put on the shelf for archiving.

John Walvoord suggests that the phrase means that by the time the Second Coming occurs, visions and oral prophecy—those sign-gift-type things—will come to an end. Obviously, that's true, too. When Jesus comes

back, He will rule and reign from Jerusalem, the Word of God will go forth from Zion. There will be no need to have visions and prophecies to find out the word of the Lord because Jesus will be present and [will] tell us. Actually, both of those interpretations fit together because we could say, “Yes, it confirms it *and* it brings an end to those gifts.”

OK, [let’s address] the second part of the question concerning Calvary Bible Church’s position on signs, gifts, and prophecy, and why we say they came to an end during the Apostolic Age, that is, the age [during which] the apostles were still living. This is a totally different question. It’s not what Daniel is talking about. It is true that when Christ returns, there will be no need for prophecy, as we have already stated. Before I answer the question, I’m going to give you a couple [of] resources you can look at because I can only deal with this briefly. There [are] two sermons that would be very helpful if you want to understand [the answer to the question], “Why do you guys think that tongues, sign gifts, miracles, and healing aren’t happening now?” Here’s where you can look. There is a sermon on our website entitled “Miracles Then and Now,” from Luke 6:17–19, [which was preached on] May 8, 2005.⁶ There’s another sermon called “The Purpose of Signs and Wonders,” from Luke 9:1–11, [which was] preached [on] June 4, 2006.⁷ These are some of the most frequently downloaded sermons on the website because people want to know [the answer to] this question.

So, why do we teach [that] the sign gifts and prophecy, that is, receiving direct revelation from God through visions, dreams, and things like that, and even the ability of guys to do miracles [have ceased]? [Can] I go down to St. Joe’s and empty out the whole hospital at lunch some day, [say], “I think I’ll just skip lunch and heal everybody there”? Why don’t we think that’s happening?

⁶This sermon is available at:

<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2005/20050508>.

⁷This sermon is available at:

<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2006/20060604>.

Here are the reasons. First, because miracles, signs, and wonders were *never givento* be normal for all believers in every place in every time. When you look at the Bible and you look at what the Bible says, what do you discover? You discover that Moses was given those gifts, wasn't he? Yes. Elijah and Elisha were given those gifts. Jesus and the apostles and a few select followers—the seventy or whatever—[had those gifts]. So, you have, yes, some believers, Moses, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and His apostles and a few of His followers [who] were given those miraculous gifts to do miracles [and] that is [it] within [a span of] 6,000 years. It was always a very select group, in a specific location, for a certain time, and then the gifts came to an end. That is what the Scriptures teach.

So, that's one of the reasons why we don't believe those gifts are for all people of all time. Second, when you look at the purpose of signs and wonders, you understand that what are they for? Are miracles just for 'wow' effect? "Cool! I can turn this water into blood!"

"Oh, yeah? I can turn it back again."

Are [miracles] just for entertainment's sake, wow effect, for fun? "Cool, [there's a] little dead bird, let me raise it from the dead."

"I'm hungry. Why do I have to go to the store?" [Poof! There's] lunch.

Why is that? Why are [there] miracles? Well, miracles have a purpose, and their purpose is to authenticate the messenger of God or to authenticate Jesus, the Son of God, when He was here on earth. Those are the two reasons. When miracles were given to those few people, in every instance that they were given, the Word of God was being written. Moses wrote the Law of Moses; the prophets Elijah and Elisha represented the prophets and all of their writing; the apostles wrote the New Testament. So, while revelation was given, these gifts functioned, and once the revelation was complete, the gifts what? [They] ceased once God gave them the message.

[Third]: But there were other times [when] the Word of God was being written and there were no miracles. God just did it as a mercy at certain times. Also, if you read church history, you will discover that after the apostles died, there [weren't] a whole bunch of people running around raising

the dead, healing all manner of disease and sickness [see Matthew 4:23, 9:35; 10:1], and adding new books to the Bible. There were some false teachers who were doing that, but no true ones. So, church history verifies that [the sign gifts] came to an end.

The fourth thing is that once the Scriptures are written, we have something more sure than miracles [see 2 Peter 1:19]. See, a lot of times, people want miracles because they think they're compelling. I go down San Fernando Boulevard, and I say [to someone there], "Hey, do you believe in God?"

"Listen, I'm an atheist."

"Well, how about if I were to turn this chair into a dog? Then would you believe?"

"Well, let's see you do it." Then I turn the chair into a dog, "Ruff, ruff!" and it runs away and gets hit by a car. So, that happens. Now, does the guy come to faith? No. See? Christians a lot of times long for miracles and in their hearts they want those miracles because [they think], "If [people] could just see a miracle, then they would believe, [or] then my unbelieving uncle, my unbelieving mom and dad, my unbelieving children, or whatever, then they would see that God exists and God is true, and then they would be compelled to come to know Christ." That's not how it works.

There are a couple of messages [that] you can listen to online. I'm just going to refer to them and summarize [them] very quickly. On 2 Peter 1:20–21, there are two messages called "The More Sure Word."⁸ They are in the series called "The Word of God." If you listen to that, you'll kind of get the big gulp of what I'm going to tell you in a very condensed form now.

Peter, in 2 Peter 1, talks about [the fact] that God has granted to us "everything pertaining to life and godliness," and it comes through God's precious promise through the true knowledge of Him, which comes from the Word of God. Peter, wanting to emphasize that God's Word is far more

⁸These sermons are available at:

<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/Series/The Word of God>.

important than miracles, tells of the most incredible, miraculous experience he ever had—[being with Jesus on] the Mount of Transfiguration. He says, “We went up on that mountain, and we saw Jesus in His kingdom glory. We saw Him just radiant in glory. We saw Moses and Elijah talking to Jesus. We heard God the Father speak from the heavens, and you know what? We have something more sure than that. [Do] you know what that is? It’s the Bible—the ‘more sure’ word to which you would do well to pay attention as a light shining in the dark place” [see 2 Peter 1:17–21].

So you can [learn] about that [in those sermons I mentioned]. Do you remember what happens in the [passage about the] rich man and Lazarus [see Luke 16:19–31]? ([This passage] is coming up in [our series on the Book of] Luke and I can’t wait to get there. In three weeks we’ll be there.) You remember what happened. The rich man goes to hell. He is suffering in hell and what does he tell Abraham? “Abraham! Send Lazarus back to my brothers so that they will believe and not come to this place of torment.”

Abraham says, “Oh, they have Moses and the Prophets.” In other words, they have what? The Bible.

Then [the rich man] says, “No, Father Abraham, but if someone rises from the dead, then they will believe.”

Then Abraham says, “No. If they do not believe in Moses and the Prophets, neither will they believe if someone rises from the dead.” Miracles don’t save anyone. Think about the people who came up out of Egypt, who saw the ten plagues [see Exodus 9–11], who crossed the Red Sea [see Exodus 14–15], who had bread fall from heaven [see Exodus 16], their clothes never [wore] out [see Deuteronomy 29:5], [they] never got sick, the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire every day for forty years [see Exodus 13:21]. All the women [here at Calvary Bible Church] who were in the Hebrews study know that at the end of Hebrews 3, when it talks about those people, how they were in the wilderness and saw all those miracles for forty years, he said they all dropped dead because of unbelief [see Hebrews 3:17–19].

You say, “Well, they saw lots of miracles.” Yeah, but miracles don’t save anybody. That is a false assumption that people make. In John 12:37, it says: “But though He,” Jesus, “had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.” Jesus brought a curse down on His hometown near Capernaum, [saying], “Woe to you, for if [Sodom and Gomorrah] had the signs that were committed among you, they would have repented in dust and ashes, and yet you have not believed” [see Luke 10:12–16]. So, miracles never are compelling. They just point to the object of faith. What saves people is a clear presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is what is compelling. When the Holy Spirit attests the Word of God, it breaks people’s hearts, and they come to repentance and faith because they understand the truth, then they believe, and then they are saved. That is what we see when we look at the Bible.

The Bible is not some sort of card-trick-type thing, where we do a bunch of miracles, and people go, “Wow! That is so cool! I think I’ll become a Christian!” No, that’s not how people are saved. People are saved when the gospel is presented that Christ died for our sins, according to Scripture, that He was buried, and that He was resurrected on the third day, and that if you repent of your sins and you place your faith in Christ and Christ alone, He will cause you to be born again. That happens because of a work of God, a miracle in and of itself, in the heart of a sinner.

Now, of course, there are those people who say, “Well, I have the gift of healing.”

“I can raise the dead.”

“I heard about this missionary. . .” There’s always somebody in another country, and another culture, who was healed of an earache or something. Just compare what you see and what you hear with what is going on in the Bible. In the Bible, [miracles were] verified: “Go show yourself to the priests” [see Mark 1:44]. Everybody knew the lame guy who had been laying in front of the gate for forty years [see Acts 3:2–11]. Everybody knew the woman who spent all this money, her entire fortune, trying to get healed, and she was healed by just touching the hem of [Jesus’] garment [see Luke

8:43–48]. [These miracles were all] verifiable. Raising the dead—it’s hard to fake that one.

Now you have these faith healers. They are con artists. They are working you for money. They are deceiving you. They are deluding you. They’re trying to get you to believe things [that are not true]. Remember, in the last times, it says that Satan will come on the scene—both Jesus and Paul state this emphatically—[and] the way people are going to be deceived in the last days is by what? Lying, false signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the what? The elect [see Matthew 24:24]. That’s one of Satan’s tricks, [but] we have the “more sure” Word, so pay attention to that.

We’re out of time. Oh! Oh! I wish I could just finish this. [Can] you guys give me five more minutes? I beg you, by the mercies of God! Let’s just talk about signs and wonders. The last part of the question is this: “If we don’t believe that [the sign gifts are being given now], then are [they] going to start up again? What’s going to happen? If we’re saying, “Signs and wonders given to believers [are] no longer functioning. (God is still doing miracles.) Are they going to start up again?” The answer to that question is “yes.” How do we know that?

I’m just going to give you two quick examples. One is from Acts 2:17–21, [which is] actually from Joel 2:28–31. Paul quotes that prophecy. This is what Joel says will happen right before Christ returns in glory. Listen to this, [from] Joel 2:28–31: “It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind,” which is what happened in Acts—that’s one of the reasons Peter quoted this text.

And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

Jesus speaks of this in Matthew 24, that these kinds of things will happen right before He returns. So, during the Tribulation period, the Church is removed, and God turns His attention to Israel. He begins to do miracles and give visions, dreams, and prophecies. Two examples would be the two witnesses in Revelation 11. Do you remember those two? The two witnesses in the Book of Revelation display miraculous gifts. For instance, it says in Revelation 11:3–6 that they can command fire to come out of heaven and devour their enemies, just like Elijah did [see 2 Kings 1:10]. That's a good gift if you have enemies. [The two witnesses in Revelation] can cause drought; they can turn water into blood; they can strike the earth with every kind of plague. And so, they do the same kinds of things that Moses did and Elijah did and that's why a lot of people think the two witnesses of Revelation 11 will be Moses and Elijah returned.

So, we believe God still does miracles. We believe sign gifts are not operating now. The Bible says that after the Church is removed, [those gifts] will be functioning again. Thank you for that extra three minutes. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You so much for this morning. Thank You for the patience of those here. We thank You for Your Word, which is so fun to study. It has so many good answers. It is so thrilling to just go through, read, ask questions, and search. I just thank You for the privilege of being able to study Your Word. I thank You for what a blessing it is to me personally and to all those who love You. I pray that all of us would be diligent students of the Bible, [that] as we come week-by-week we wouldn't just have Sunday be the time when we are in Your Word. But [rather], Father, [that] all week long we would listen to sermons, read our Bibles, and read good books that teach us about those things so that we might be blessed, we might know You, and we might live for Your glory. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.