



## Q&A 2021 – Part 2

Pastor Mike Fabarez

**Question:** So my question is there are a lot of Christians who believe that the COVID vaccine is the mark of the beast. How do you respond to that?

**Pastor Mike:** It's not. You want more than that? It's really not. It's superduper not. Yeah. No, the mark of the beast is a sign of loyalty to a world leader who will be this Antichrist who will be doing false signs and wonders. It is an expression of loyalty to a one individual that Jesus talked about, that Daniel talked about, the Old Testament prophets talked about, book of Revelation talks about. It is clear what it is. This was said when they started issuing credit cards. This was said when they put a chip in the credit card. This was said when, you know, you name it, anything that is going to help you get through a door electronically it was said about it. This is not the mark of the beast. So stop saying that. Yeah, I mean if there's hyper sensationalism about everything that people start to do that is technology-based or is identification-based or is in this case mandated, or it's not quite yet mandated by certain professions, that's when everyone gets spooked. Listen, you want to deal with that as an issue, deal with that as an issue. But don't now make it a theological issue regarding the Antichrist. When it's related to the Antichrist, you'll know it. Right? And it won't be, you know, the Illuminati or some, you know, clandestine gnostic group out there. It'll be clear and this is not clear. This is a mess, but it's not the Antichrist.

**Question:** My daughter this week asked me what happens to children who pass away and don't have a chance to hear or respond to the gospel. How do I respond to her better than, "That's a great question for Pastor Mike." Where can I show her in the Bible that responds?

**Pastor Mike:** Yeah, I wish we had a clear passage I could point you to. A lot of people like to point to various passages and say, I think it's here. When David, for instance, grieves over the child, the child dies and he said, you know, what can we do now? They're all surprised. He washes his face and gets up and worships God and they say, wow, what's the deal? And David says, "Well, I can't bring the baby back. He can't come to me, but I will go to him." And so you think, OK, well, that means if he's going to heaven, the baby must be in heaven. I'm not saying that that may not be true, but that's not what the passage is teaching. We're talking about death. He can't bring back the dead. Here's the problem with the whole question. Romans Chapter 5 talks about the fact that because we were related to Adam, we all are born with a problem that is imputed to us because of our identification with the human race. And because of our identification with the fallen human race and our ultimate parents, we are all guilty from the start. "We are conceived in iniquity" as it's put in the Old Testament. So to say, well, how does that iniquity get taken care of? You say, "Well, you hear the gospel, you respond to the gospel, put your trust in Christ and all that's reversed. And just as sin came into the world through one man and it was imputed to us, now righteousness has come into the world and our salvation through one man and that's imputed to us through faith in Christ. And that's the whole point of the book of Romans, including Romans Chapter 5. Well, if I need that, that establishes the question. How is that going to happen then for a child? And of course, it can't. And it's not just the child. It's someone who is mentally impaired, they can't figure this out or they have no sense of a moral conscience. Right? And there are plenty of



people that because of this problem or that they don't have that ability. So what we need is something the Bible does not specifically say. In other words, well, then God just obviously must impute righteousness to them without their consent. And while I can't point to a passage that says that we look at the nature of God and we say, OK, if God says in Romans Chapter 2 that even those who have a conscience and don't have the teaching of the law, if God shows mercy and grace to these folks who respond rightly to the light they have, wouldn't it follow, can't we extrapolate that God is going to impute grace to those who never had an opportunity or the ability to respond to their conscience, to creation, to Scripture, to the gospel. And most of us would say as students of the Bible, yeah, I think that's an extrapolation you can safely make. So I'm of the opinion and I just build that on the overall composite of the nature of God, that God is a God who imputes the righteousness of Christ to those who are incapable of faith. And if you want a theologian with much more depth and articulation to say that to you, you can read Millard Erickson's book on Faith, I think it's called... and that's why I brought my laptop up, because there are a lot of books that have been written through time. Let me, give me two seconds just to be complete. How are you all this morning? All good? I know it's about... Pastor Mark's up here. Is it about hearing? Faith? How shall they then hear? How shall they hear? That's what I want to say. "How Shall They Be Saved? The Destiny of Those Who Do Not Hear of Jesus" by Millard Erickson. The last chapter deals with those incapable of faith. It's an old book written February 1996, but a good book. I think it's in our bookstore. That will go in depth. But that's the answer. The answer is I can't point to a verse that's going to say it, though people try to claim that. I look at those verses. I can't say that's an accurate interpretation of those verses, but I can say based on the nature of God, I'm trusting that he will impute his... And here's the deal. Let me say this. I do know this about Romans Chapter 2. Even if we were to say, OK, God is not going to say that. I know some people even in our church who would say that. Here's what I would say. He is not going to impute judgment on actions that are done in ignorance. That's what he says in Romans Chapter 2. So I know this: there would be no active punishment. Judgment is two-fold, it's passive and active, right? We are away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. That's what it is to be separated, outer darkness. If you're not a Christian, you don't have the grace of God. You don't access to God in the afterlife. You get excluded. That's passive judgment and you don't want to not be invited to the party. Then there's active judgment. Well, there is no active judgment for those who don't have conscious awareness of sin. So we know that that is impossible. So would there be exclusion with no compounding issues of volitional decisions to sin? And so I'm going to say, even if you're of a hard line saying, "Well, I'm looking at Romans Chapter 5, I see no verse anywhere. So I'm going to say, yeah, I'm sorry." Well, you can say that, but what's the experience going to be? That's why the Roman Catholic Church and others have come up with this concept of limbo. It's not a biblical concept. We've made that up. But I am going to say that's not my position. My position is I believe that God imputes Christ's righteousness to those who are incapable of faith. That's my answer. Millard is much more eloquent in the answer than I just was, clearly.

**Question:** A lot of young people specifically in my circle, which I recognize I graduated from Bible school, so maybe my circle is more flush with this right now, but are deconstructing and not from church as a whole, but to like a new faith, whatever they want to call it. These conversations, I don't know how to have them. There is no reasoning. There's no logic. There



are people I know know the right answers and they're intentionally walking away from them. How do we effectively engage in these conversations?

**Pastor Mike:** Well, the concept of deconstruction can apply to many different areas. So what are you speaking of specifically?

**Question:** Faith, church, God.

**Pastor Mike:** Ok, they want spirituality without religion. That's often how they put it. Is that what you're talking about?

**Question:** Kind of, yeah.

OK. Kind of. Is there something more accurate, a better way to say it? What are the kinds of things they're rejecting?

**Question:** Purity culture which is coming all the way through to like, well, we can have sex before marriage. Or God doesn't want this to happen or Jesus was a socialist. All that kind of stuff.

**Pastor Mike:** Yeah. OK, well, here's the thing. And that's an interesting, that's an interesting development. Let me separate two things. Postmodernity, we call it. There was a modern era which came after World War II, where everyone was saying with innovation and technology like that tomorrow thing at Disneyland, they used to have, like everything is going to be solved. That was modernity. Postmodernity was there's no hope in that. We're lost. Francis Schaeffer talked a lot about that. You're going to have this postmodern reality, he didn't call it that necessarily. But you have this, which is generally characterized by relativism, like no one can tell us what to do. Your opinion. My opinion. It doesn't matter. And some theologians have rightly made the distinction that we've passed from a soft postmodernity, which is everyone is entitled to their own ideas. It's like Oprah. "You can believe what you want. I'm going to believe what I want. It's fine. All roads lead to heaven. Whatever. Your truth, my truth." Even those phrases were not known in the modern era. They were outliers. Now it's like everybody's got that. "My truth is... speak your truth," right? Whatever. Your generation is shifting into what some call, let's just call it what one theologian calls it, a hard postmodernity, which is "I can still derive truth based on what I feel is right and what my peers think is right. But now I can militarize it and I can say you're absolutely worthy of my angst and my hostility and I can enforce now my view on you." Right? For instance, if you say women can't be pastors because you're quoting this Bible or you're saying you can't have sex before marriage and you're quoting this Bible, right? We've decided, we got here through a postmodern way of thinking. "I'm going to feel my way through this. I don't feel that that's right. And if I were God, I wouldn't say that." OK, now we got there. Now, all of a sudden in the old days, it's like, well, your way, my way, find a church you like, but now it's like, no, you can't have a church that says those things. Now it's been a militarized, hard-edged postmodernity which says, you are having to bow to me. There's no middle ground. There's no, speaking of limbo, there's no limbo. You're either with us or against us. And so your generation, unfortunately, has got the

pitchforks and torches and they want to burn down everything that doesn't agree with them. The problem is they got to those conclusions with an unmoored, we say this detachment from objective reality. And objective reality is, as Francis Schaeffer rightly put it, is that there is a God and he has revealed himself and he's revealed himself in propositional truths that are black and white and objective. And as Schaeffer liked to say as he saw this postmodernity coming and growing. "It's true truth." We believe in true truth. And if you've ever read Nancy Pearcey, she has helped to modernize or palletize. She's made this much easier to digest, which is she took Francis Schaeffer's upper story, lower story truths... Let me just put it this way. There are preferences that have become militarized in the modern era. And what Francis Schaeffer is saying, you need to understand the difference between preferences, "I like Rocky Road ice cream." I don't. But let's just say chocolate. I'm very plain. I like vanilla ice cream. And that's my preference. Right? That's not right to say vanilla ice cream is the best. Right? And they would say, well, they took all these concepts and they've said, like your religion, Christianity is best. No, Buddhism's best. No, some conglomerate of the two is best. Those things now everything has been subjectively arrived at. But now I can attack you for not doing it. Matter of fact, I can exclude you. I can kill you. I can shout at you depending on the form of the militarize postmodernity. So we've gone from a soft postmodernity, as Owen Strachan says, to a hard postmodernity, and we now have a fight on our hands that's hard to battle with. Because I want to point to the fact, no, I believe there's a God. It makes sense. I believe that he's revealed himself because the Bible shows signs of his revelation and he's clearly revealed himself. Now we got to do what he says. And like my generation said, "No, I don't like that and it doesn't feel right to me. But whatever. live and let live. "C'est la vie," Your generation says, "I don't think it's right and I should drive you out of society." And so we just need to know that we got to take one step back from the hard edge postmodernity to the postmodernity that got us there. And Paul Copan, we had at our church training our leaders. He wrote a book, "True for You, But Not For Me." That is where we live. He also wrote one I think called "When God Goes to Starbucks," which I even like even better. I just the way he goes through that in talking about the relativism. Greg Kouki, a friend of ours, he's spoken here as well, talks about "Relativism: Feet Planted in Mid-Air." That's the name of his book. And all of those deal with the problem that we were dealing with 20 years ago and now has become an unquestioned foundation for what is truth. "If I think you should have sex before you get married then who are you to tell me I can't? And not only who are you to tell me I can't, who are you to say it," right? Now it's no longer you're impinging on my freedoms. It's you can't say it. And I think that's what we need to be ready for. And a lot of things in society have put us in that place. So if we're not ready to fight, number one, for the fact that you can't derive your own truth, truth by your feelings, you have to derive your truth by something objective. This is called foundationalism. It has to be truth is a correspondence to reality. And that's not where my generation was. They were like, "No, it's whatever I feel." And now your generation is, "Yeah, it's whatever we feel. And if we feel it, you guys should be punished for it." So how do we deal with it? I don't know. There's a quick sketch of the problem. I think you go back as the Scripture says, you go back to God's testimony, God's law. line by line, what does he say? And at the end of time, every relativist, every postmodernist is going to be judged by the God who opens the books and says, "I revealed to you something in Scripture." You say, "Well, they just believe something else." The Bible says that Scripture comports with their conscience and in the end, everyone suppresses the truth in their unrighteousness. So



we know that when we speak the truth of God's word to people, whether it's about male headship in the Church, whether it's about sex outside of marriage, we are speaking the truth that their conscience was initially wired to comport with. And that I think sometimes we always have an advantage in our evangelism as Christians because we're speaking from a book that is written by the same Spirit who designed their conscience. Now they may have worn their conscience out, or as Paul talked about, they may have seared their conscience or, you know, made their conscience very calloused, as he puts it. But keep speaking the truth and keep going back to the Scripture, because one day that book will judge every post-modern person. That seemed a little too deep. Let's go simpler.

**Question:** On August the fourth in our Daily Bible Reading in Romans 5, I got hung up on verse 13 and 14 and it says, "For sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there's no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses." Now my question is this: does this mean that those who died before Moses gave the law, they have no part in heaven and hell? And then what about Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? They were counted righteous.

**Pastor Mike:** Right. And if you can't... And here's the problem with our Daily Bible Reading, we read a chapter in Romans, we read a couple in the Old Testament. We keep moving. In this case, we're in Psalms. So you were, what? Two, three, four, five. Three or four days ago you were reading Romans 2, but Paul was expecting this book to be read in one sitting. As it was read to the church, if you read that, you couldn't read it divorced from Chapter 2, which reminds us that even if you don't have the law because of God's testimony in creation, Chapter 1 and conscience Chapter 2, these people without the law are a law unto themselves. Now, they may not know certain things, like I know, as Paul goes on to say in Chapter 7, coveting. If I didn't have that clarity about coveting, I wouldn't know that coveting was wrong. In the act of coveting, I might see the bad effects of it down the road, but I wouldn't know it. But God said it. So now I see it and now I realize, "Oh, man, I'm condemned." So now all of a sudden it made me a transgressor because I understood coveting. But sticking needles in babies eyes, that's clearly a sin in every culture all the time, right? Taking someone else's stuff that they hunted the boar and I go into their hut and I steal it and I take it and cook it and feed it to my family, everyone knows that's wrong. So the law in a simplistic form is always something that God has revealed in the conscience, so much so that we can go all the way back before there was the law of Moses, and I think if you study Old Testament with us, you'll find that Job is in a period before the giving of the law, and you've got him described as a righteous man who does righteous things, who God is pleased with. So, again, when you have guys, you think about people with multiple wives in the Old Testament, how can God say they were righteous with all these multiple wives? Now, kings weren't supposed to multiply wives and Solomon did that. But to have Abraham, who was the father of faith, he's got more than one wife. He's got two other servants and he's got four women he's having children with. Well, what's going on here? Well, because we did not have the clarity of, in this case, it's super clear in the New Testament, that you are to be the husband of one wife. Plural marriage was gone. It's like marrying your sister. Of course, when Adam lives for a thousand years and has all these kids and people are having marriages with their sisters and their cousins, they had all kinds of children. Think about it. Even if you lived



to be 300 and you were healthy before the flood and you have all kinds of kids, you're marrying your close relatives. Then the law comes along and says in Moses' day, 1440 B.C., you can't marry your close relative. Of course, there are reasons God does that. But the point is that clarity of that law made it wrong. And so you could be righteous and not keep the details of the law. And God can say you're keeping the law because your conscience and creation and whatever revelation he's given through the prophets is a law to yourself. But with increasing clarity there are increasing rules. If a priest did not put on the breastplate to go into the service of the temple, he would be violating the law. Well, people worshiped like Job at an altar. He wasn't even a priest, and he was considered righteous. Why? Because the law of that particular command was not there. So you've got to read Chapter 5 in Romans about, "well, no law, no sin," in a sense in which we're talking about the details of the law. And the distinction was made in Chapter 2, you Jews think you're righteous just because you have the law. Now you've got more things that God expects you to obey. And before that law there was a lot less for you to obey because conscience and creation and whatever prophetic word there might have been through the spoken prophets, that's what you had to keep and whatever that was. So it's not an absolute statement. And we know that because of Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, which don't... Chapter 2 in particular because it talks about living before the coming of the specific laws and then in Chapter 7 again. So I would say this, if you want to help with Chapter 5, read Chapter 2 of Romans and read Chapter 7 of Romans and then read Chapter 5 again. And you'll know these cannot be absolute statements in the sense that we're not talking about any sin. Of course, you can be a sinner before the coming of the law of Moses. And of course, you can be righteous. Like 2000 B.C. there's a man named Melchizedek who God calls righteous. He's a priest. Well wait a minute. We don't have Levi yet, right? We don't have the priesthood established yet. Melchizedek is called a king of righteousness. You're not suppose to have a king and a priest in one office in Israel. How can that be? Because God counts him as a righteous person. Why? Because there was no law about those things at that point. But it doesn't mean there's no law absolutely in any sense. Right? Coming and taking your stuff. Everyone knows it's wrong. Killing your children, though our culture doesn't seem to think that's wrong, but you can see throughout... That wasn't funny. I get why you didn't laugh at that. But that is a sad reality of our culture. It's a culture of death as others have called it. So, anyway, again, a little too verbose this morning, but that's my best answer in the time I have.

**Question:** I have a dear friend, a Christian friend whose son is currently transitioning from male to female.

**Pastor Mike:** He's not, but OK.

**Question:** Well, yeah, he's going through that process.

**Pastor Mike:** He's trying.

**Question:** He's trying. And their church has completely rejected them. And she's obviously feeling very isolated and alone. How do we as Christians deal with that issue?

**Pastor Mike:** Right. We tell them this is wrong. It's a perversion. It has been from the beginning and it needs to be addressed as sin. But we're living in a culture where it says that isn't sinful. Right? Our culture says, "You want to be a dude and lift weights in the Olympics as a chick, as a girl. Right? No problem. We respect whatever you think you are." This is the insanity of our culture. So we're saying as rational Christians, God has been very clear about he created male and female. The Lord of the universe repeated it. He said in Matthew 19, "He's created them male and female." There's no confusion on this. There's no confusion in nature. There's no confusion in our bodies. There's no confusion... But today we love to be perverse and rebellious against God's law. And that's what's happening in that family. And it's a sad thing when you have a kid who is being rebellious against the law of God. So how would you respond to a mom whose kid has now decided he's going to be a "smash and grab jewelry thief" and he's hitting all the jewelry stores throughout Southern California? Well, you'd be sympathetic and compassionate because you think what a horrible thing that is, but you would never, ever affirm what the son is doing. And so we can't. And that's the problem. A lot of people say, "If you love me, you'll affirm what I want." Which goes back to our question here. In a culture that says, "No one can tell me I'm wrong. As a matter of fact, anyone who tells me I'm wrong about stuff I don't want you to tell me I'm wrong about, then we're going to say you're wrong and we're going to attack you." We understand we're at a deficit in the cultural temperature that we live in. But the problem is we're playing games with this whole thing. I mean, your desires may be perverse, that doesn't make them right. And we need to say it's wrong. And we need to say we'd sure like to help you help your son do what's right. But, yeah, we can't approve it.

**Question:** My friend thinks that there's a mental health component to this. So is there and does it make a difference?

**Pastor Mike:** Well, again, these are words C.S. Lewis talked about. We're adding a lot of therapeutic language to sin and then making us feel OK with that. I don't care what you call it. A perverse desire is a perverse desire, and it's a perverse desire for a man to say, I want to be a woman. That's perverted. And I say that in the sense it carries a lot of moral weight. But that's just a natural thing to say. I mean, it is an unnatural desire to put it in terms of Romans Chapter 1. So there might be a lot of reasons for that. There might be a lot of things that explain that, but it never excuses that. If my kid were a "smash and grab" robber of jewelry stores, you might say, well, let's just figure out how he was raised. And did he not get enough candy or I don't know, whatever you're trying to figure out, fine. You're right. But when, as Lewis said, you have lab coats telling us what can be considered sin and what can't, we've lost it. And I love what in an article he wrote in "God in the Dock," he talks about the fact that when we lose the concept of a jury trial where peers can really sit there and say we as normal people say that's wrong, right. There should be enough revelatory light left and he was writing back in the 60s, 50s and 60s. To say we have to defer to psychologists and mental health experts and all, you tell us if it is wrong or not. If an ox gored your child, the ox was to be killed. Right? I mean, we didn't say, well, let's just say the poor ox didn't know what he was doing. Right? There is judgment for these things. In the grace of God there can be deliverance. There can be forgiveness. It may not mean that those desires go away because there's something messed up, you might say, and you might give it a clinical definition. But



we're still going to say we want that to stop. Why? Romans Chapter 2. Because you're storing up wrath for yourself for the day of God's judgment. Do you care about that? I would care about that. Why do I want my neighbors to be upstanding citizens and pay their taxes? Why do I want them to be faithful in their marriages? Why do I want them to be not killing people in their backyard? Right? What if they don't affect me? I don't care. No, I do care. I care for you if I love you because I don't want you to store more wrath for the coming day of judgment. The same thing with you violating the nature of God and the nature of man by saying we're going to just pretend gender doesn't matter. Your gender matters to God and God has assigned that gender. If you don't like, you may not like a lot of things about the way you were made, but too bad. I don't like when I was born. I would have been born in the 1700s. It doesn't matter. You're here. God chose for you to be here. So you're going to have to live with that. Right? And for some people with their desires say, "My desires, if I'm going to be authentic." You can have your authentic feelings and still be wrong. Right? What we want to say is you're going to have to in some ways get used to disappointment because there are a lot of desires you have and I have that we can't act on. Why? Because we know they're wrong. Why? Because for us as Christians, it'll be an act of discipline that God brings in our lives. So we can't capitulate in our culture to saying things that the world wants us to say are right are right if God is clear in Scripture about it. And he's so clear in Scripture about this. Male and female. You're stuck with the gender you are. Make the best of it. Some lament, "Well, I don't like the other gender." Great. Well, then you're going to be single. That's fantastic. "I'm going to struggle with desires." Hey, welcome to humanity. We're all struggling with desires that are wrong. I mean, that sounds dismissive and of course I started with we want to be compassionate. "I got a friend that says my kid's a "smash and grab" thief. You say, "Oh, man, that must be hard. That's tough. Let's pray about how we get him help." The culture now says you can't get him help. Reparative therapy is wrong. Right? OK, I don't care what the world says because they're going to hell. They're going to stand before God and be cast into the eternal fire the Bible says. So what I care about is the God who made us. What does he think about someone transitioning or attempting or playing around at transitioning? That's what I care about. That's what you should care about. And that's the problem with authority. In a day, and it gets back to the first question about college campuses and where we're living today, when we don't understand that authority has jurisdiction we've lost it. And that's where our culture is right now. As it says in the book of Judges twice, everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Right? Why? Because there was no king in Israel. There was no righteous king. There was no one to tell us this is right. And so they said, "Well, I'm going to be a law unto myself," and that's a bad place to be. Read the book of Judges if you want to see how bad it can get in our culture when people do whatever they want to do. And of course, I don't mean to be a negative, but I was really negative right there about all of that. But you already watch the news. You know how bad it is. Right? And I'm sorry. People struggling with those things.

**Question:** Can you clarify the timeline before creation? I was reading a book with my son who was reading a book on, you know, the universe and other rock formations, and they were giving, you know, millions of years. And I've told him in the past, well, you know, it's not millions of years and then so many other readings I'm getting confused because a lot of the secular stuff is getting put into the Christian stuff where, "Hey, God used the Big Bang Theory to create the world." And so, again, not that I'm getting confused, I'm just wanting clarity.





**Pastor Mike:** Well, I don't think you meant what you said which something about time before creation because there was no time before creation. Right? As a reality - time. Right? Matter, time, energy. So, but here's what we we're saying. We reject the secular view, the naturalistic view, that we are the product of some thoughtless, chaotic singularity that for lack of a better term, exploded and billions of years later we're here. And, you know, 4.7 billion years ago something called "life" showed up and then it turned into a lizard and a hamster and a rat and a monkey and then a man. We're saying, no, that is not right. It doesn't comport with God's revelation. Some ask, "Well, what about the geologists and the paleontologist who say different?" Geologists and paleontologists depend a lot on each other, but their canon, their rule, their measuring stick is what they call primarily and it's their key, radiometric dating. Right? That parent isotopes decay into daughter isotopes. And they say, OK, we know the rate of some of the parent-daughter decays and we can time those. And since we know how long it takes for a parent isotope to decay into a daughter isotope, all we have to do now is find a rock and say, what are the ratios? And then I'll know, I'll just go back in time and assume that that rate of decay has never changed and that it started at one hundred parent and zero daughter. And I can look at how much daughter, how much parent. I can say that's how old the rock is. And then the paleontologists, when he finds something in a rock formation, they say, "Oh, well, OK, I know this dinosaur bone because it matches my storyline, it must go to this time period because of the rock that the geologist said is based on radiometric dating is this old. And so now all of a sudden you're like, "Wow, how does the whole creation story fit in, which is a much shorter time period of, you know, thousands and thousands of years, but not millions or billions of years. How does that work?"

**Pastor Mike:** I would say this, if you don't respect the fact that Christ comes on the scene and has this rash of creative miracles, creating something out of nothing with the word of his own power that then on the other side, as soon as he does it, has the actual physical, chemical, scientific appearance of age and history that it never had, then you don't understand what the Bible is teaching from the very beginning, that God speaks out of nothing, things into reality. When Jesus turns water into wine, wine is one of the most complex chemical thing that you can make. Right? With peptides and proteins and enzymes and all the acidic balances and all those things have to be just right for this wine to be at that wedding. At the wedding they said, "Wow. This is the best wine we've had all night." Well, how did you get all that? Well, Jesus took these stone jars and said "voila" and they were there. How long did it take? Well, how long does it take to get all those enzymes and the balance and the fermentation and everything to be just what it should be and the proteins and... Well, it takes a long time. It takes a while to make some good wine. Well, that he did in a word. Now, no one seems to be stumbling over that, even in the modern church. "Oh, yeah, Jesus did that." Or raised Lazarus from the dead after four days. I've done the unpleasant work of reading books about what happens to the body instantaneously upon death and what happens in terms of the chain of putrefaction from death into a four-day period. I mean, I can go further, but the reality of all that is just amazing. What's the miracle that must take place for Jesus to say, "Lazarus, come forth," when Mary and Martha are saying, "He stinks." Right? He's rotting in a grave. This is an amazing thing of God taking something that did not exist in that biological unit, speaking with the word of his power into reality things that weren't there that had an appearance in

history of age that never happened. The Bible says God created the universe out of nothing. God created order to it. He then put a man and a woman in a garden and made them. He started with a man, made the woman, all of that. They had belly buttons they never had an umbilical cord attached to. They had fingernails that didn't have time to grow. They had hair, whatever length it was, never had any time to grow. They're sitting there around trees with rings in them that they never developed, with rocks with parents and daughter isotopes that they never decayed into. That's everything about creation is exactly the way it is about every creative miracle that's done in the Bible. And granted, there are less than 90 of them in the Bible, but every one of those is an act of God's creative power. Second Peter Chapter 3 says, just with that word of power that not only created the world but sustains the world. You can talk to Heisenberg and Heisenberg's "Uncertainty Principle," he's dead now, about how the sustaining power of God, as it says in that passage. "He upholds it," Hebrews 1:3 says, "by the word of his power." Acts 17, "He gives every man life and breath and everything else." "In him we live and move and have our being." So God is not only creating things out of nothing, he's sustaining things actively. We're not deists. We don't believe he made a watch and wound it up and walked away. And then he will, according to Second Peter 3, with the same word that he destroyed the world with in the flood, he will then, as he's reserved it for fire, he'll destroy it again, and it will be destroyed instantaneously. So God is a God who creates something out of nothing. And all of us have the problem of something being here rather than nothing. That's why the silliness of reading about the Big Bang Theory should give you trouble. Here's how they describe the Big Bang. OK, here's a quote from some of the scientists. "You have to have a series of physical laws that do not now exist from that moment of singularity." And of course, they're talking about seconds and microseconds, nanoseconds and within three minutes we have this completely different set of physical laws. "Now, we had a set of physical laws that created the physical laws, but we don't have those physical laws anymore. And so we don't even know how that happened. But don't ask us about that because we're here." Right? And all I'm telling you is it's absurdity. There's an old book, it's not a popular book, but I think it's called "Evolving Evolution," which was an interesting book for me to read, to think through the process of how even in the discussion of the Big Bang, there has to be such faith in a set of rules that none of us can replicate, see. Why? Because we're all deal with the same problem. How do we get something when there was nothing? Jesus comes on the scene does it over and over and over again. Here's something where there was nothing. I'm creating a muscle in the calf of a paralytic that did not exist, it had completely atrophied. And I'm going to do it with nutrients and blood vessels in it that weren't there a minute ago. All of that, proteins, enzymes, everything in place. That's a God who creates something out of nothing. So I'm going to believe that Christ turned water into wine. I'm also going to believe that that Christ, as according to John 1, everything that was created was created by him, created by the word of his power, upheld by the word of his power. You are a remarkable miracle sitting here as a conscious breathing person. Even the four horsemen of the modern atheists, they struggle with life itself. "What is life? What is consciousness?" Right? One of them spent his dissertation just dealing with that. "How are we conscious? What is that? What's the difference between a conscious body and then the body five minutes later after that body dies and it's not a conscious body. We're naturalists. We've got a problem with that." And we can theorize about that. Most people don't like to think about that. But the reality of you sitting here is a problem in and of itself that demands a

miracle. And you can describe that miracle on Wikipedia or your science textbooks to say somehow it just popped into being through a set of laws that none of us know anything about. Or you can say, "Yeah, God is a God who calls things into existence when there was nothing there before. And it all has after he does it, an apparent scientific physical appearance of a history that it never had. And that's what I believe. That's what the Bible teaches. And I think it's rational and reasonable. A lot of smart people would affirm the same. And so, yeah, the world has an appearance of age that it never had, including the rocks. And that's why the geologists say it. And the paleontologists depend on the geologists to date a lot of their fossils and bones and... If you want to book on that, just the fossil record, Marvin Lubenow wrote a book called "Bones of Contention." It's the second edition out now with more things that they discovered that he is interacting with. But that might be a good book to dig into that with your kids. "Bones of Contention." Yeah, sorry, that again, way too long-winded this morning.

**Question:** My question is when Jesus is on the cross suffering, taking the penalty for our sin, is that just a physical suffering or is there an internal spiritual component? And if there's an internal spiritual component, how does that affect the Trinity? Does God the Father turn his back on God the Son during a brief time on the cross? Is that reconciled before death? What's the extent of that penalty that Jesus is taking? Again, is it just physical? Tom Schreiner answered that question at the Matthew series by saying, no, it's just physical. I have trouble accepting that.

**Pastor Mike:** Well, the reason people have trouble with accepting that is because the quotation of Psalm 22 in Jesus on the cross, which I don't think is just a reference to the first verse. He is trying to get us to think of the whole passage and who knows how much of the passage he might have quoted, although probably just the first verse. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And so in that people read a lot of this trinitarian struggle between the Father and the Son, that Schreiner, who is very astute theologian, is trying to protect the trinitarian relationship. And I am going to say, and I like the way Piper puts it, the Son absorbed the sin of humanity. When you say spiritually, if I were to cut your leg off after church, you'd have a spiritual problem and a physical problem. Right? That would be really bad. It would mess your day up and your brain up and your mind up and your heart up. Whatever you were thinking about that made it a pleasant day, it would be a very unpleasant day because I cut your leg off and all your stuff be dangling off the end of the stump that I cut off. Sorry. And I didn't grow up watching any horror movies either. I didn't. So I am going to say, and this is how theologians talk about human beings being a psychosomatic hole. We have and I am a dichotomous. I believe that God made us out of the dust of the earth. He breathed into us the breath of life. So I believe we're two components. And I think the real US ultimately is who we are, our software, our spirit, we're encased, and as I wrote in my book on the afterlife, we're enmeshed in that body. OK. Because of that enmeshing, that psychosomatic hole as some theologians call it, you cannot divorce the physical suffering from a personal suffering that goes beyond just, "Ouch, I hurt." I think there was a suffering that you would say, just like anyone who suffers physically, you're affected by that. I mean, I know people right now on their sickbed that they're just their whole life is affected by that. But to say the Father cut his relationship with his Son on the cross, I just think that's too simplistic of a way to put it. And I don't think that's what's happening. He is, as Piper said, he's

absorbing the penalty of sin and he was found in the appearance of sinful man. Then Second Corinthians 5:21, "He became sin for us." Well, again, what does that mean? He's the target of God's justice on the cross. Was it restored before it was over? Well, I don't think there was a detachment of Father and Son, but of course, when he says, "Into your hands, I commend my spirit," he's in fellowship with the Father. He says to the guy on the cross, "Today you'll be with me in paradise." There's no divorcing of Father and Son. Is there an effect to the depth of who he is as a person? Yes. And God is a lot more... I'm going to preach all week to the high schoolers about being made in the image of God. There's a lot more similarity, even though he's distantly and infinitely separate and transcendent and different than us, other than us. There is more identity than we'd like to think. And I think when God takes on human form and suffers physically and becomes the absorption of God's justice, yes, there's more to it than, "Ouch, my head hurts because those thorns are in it." But what Dr. Schreiner is trying to maintain and I would agree, we don't want to say, "Hey, there was a break between the Father and the Son." I think there can be no break between relationships between a mother and a child. But when a mother goes through labor to have that child there is a kind of labor and pain that is unspeakable and yet relationship is intact. "You're causing me great pain, but I'm still your mother," which happens beyond labor. But I just think there's a relationship that we can say is sustained, even though there's great personal pain that goes beyond physical pain. Yeah, and the reason this is a hard question because there are borders we have to maintain. And I just think quoting Psalm 22 is not enough to go, "See there. The Father then just said, I'm done with you, Son, for 30 minutes or three hours. That's a hard question you've asked me there. And you knew it was, too, when you asked it.

**Question:** How would you explain in a simple way the Trinity. I know it's a complex thing, but to kids, you know, and I ran into a Muslim who was challenging Christianity as not being only one God. So how would you give a simple explanation to that complex idea of the Trinity?

**Pastor Mike:** Yeah, I would say this, that every time you try to explain the Trinity in a simple way, you are bound to fall into error. So I don't know that I want to try and explain it in a simple way. I can state it in a simple way, right? There is one God who is coequal in three persons. Right? I mean, I can tell that to my kids from the time that they're infants, right? There's one God, we're a monotheistic faith, but he exists eternally as a triune fellowship. And the distinctions in the words that we use and these guys have taken the class, they can go on and on about it that Dr. Schreiner taught or Bruce Ware taught. Was it Bruce Ware? You can ask Schreiner. Didn't Bruce teach our Trinity class? You're going to have to make a distinction between essence and person and that has no equivalent. It's not ice and water and vapor. It's not as someone tried to explain to me last night, "Oh, it's like the time. Time in the future, time in the present, time in the past." You know, there are all kinds of errors you fall into that the Church is trying to avoid for 2,000 years when you illustrate it in anything other than God himself. So I have no easy way to explain it other than just to repeat the simple distinction that there is a distinction between Islam and Judaism and Christianity, even though they're called the three great monotheistic faiths. Right? The distinction is that we believe that God is a triune God. And even that is a contradictory phrase. Right? "Tri" is three, "uni" is one, "uni." So I get that. But that's a brain twister. And I would say to the Muslim, talk to me a little bit about your God, because he's eternal. Right? And all I have to do is dig a little deeper



with thinking about that 10 trillion years ago when your God was around, how long had he been there at that point? Even that I can talk about time itself. And again, it's easy to say, well, he exists outside of time. It's an easy thing to say. It's a hard thing for you to really explain to a child. There's no easy explanation for the eternity of God. There's no easy explanation for the triunity of God. There's no easy explanation for the sovereignty of God, and yet creating culpable, responsible human beings who act as agents in the world. These are hard things. So I don't think there's any easy explanation. There's no easy explanation for light being a particle and a wave. Right? There's no easy explanations for these things, no easy explanation for them to explain relativity. Right? So I just think some of these things defy an easy explanation. And if you want a funny expression of this, which I don't obviously agree with the Lutherans on everything, a lot of things. But the Lutheran satire YouTube channel has a fun little cartoon of the Trinity. So if you just type "Lutheran satire Trinity" on your YouTube app, watch it after church, not right now. But you'll get a funny little well done satire about the problems with us trying to illustrate the Trinity. It's a problem. You can thank me later for that laugh and leave.

**Question:** Yes, Pastor Mike, my question is why? And please explain the dynamics. I'm confused or I'm challenged by the last three chapters of Judges and primarily where it starts with the crime against this person and his concubine and then all of Israel together as one person comes against Benjamin and they inquire of God, and then they immediately lose about 40,000 people. They inquire again, they come back. And so Benjamin is trounced and then in 21, they say they weep bitterly and they say, "Oh, Lord God of Israel, why has this happened in Israel, that today there should be one tribe lacking in Israel, Benjamin?" And then they go through this whole process of getting them women? I have an extreme amount of difficulty to understand why and what is the lesson I am to learn and to take away from this.

**Pastor Mike:** Yeah, and that last part is a harder problem because much of the book of Judges in this 400 year period of a cycle of defeats. It's not just a cycle, but a cyclical downward spiral into the kind of depravity that the book ends with, cutting up concubines and sending it to the twelve tribes. This is a horrific period in the life of Israel. So what we're going to learn from it, I think, is what's repeated twice and ends the book with, "There was no king in Israel. Therefore, everyone did what was right in their own eyes." We need to see the chaos of untethering ourselves from the absolute and objective truths of God and adhering to his revelation, which we started our time with. So I think that's the general lesson. This particular lesson, it's a lot like when David is incited by Satan to take a census. It can be hard for us to kind of think through the details of that. And I guess the best I would do with all that happened at Shiloh and the wives that were gained in the chaos that all took place is direct you to a good commentary, because those chapters have several sequences to them. And I would recommend two, the brief explanation of this weird section I think is helpful and good in the "Bible Knowledge Commentary - the Old Testament," there's one volume, it's in our bookstore, it's available online electronically, "Bible Knowledge Commentary." Read those explanations to try and piece those things together, because it is a bit of a head scratcher. A lot of things, by the way, in Judges, as it spirals into chaos is... Jephthah's vow. Right? Like what is that about? Did he kill his daughter? And if he did, it seems that... why would you ever say... what is that about? Right? Cutting up the concubine, the wives at Shiloh, all of that. So



I'm going to say that's the first commentary I would have you get. And another one, I think we do carry in a bookstore, Frank Gaebelin has a 12-volume set. I think it's 12 volumes, but on that one on Judges. And I think he adds a couple other books with that in that volume in what's called the "Expositor's Bible Commentary." Is that what it's called? Come on Mike Fabarez. Take a little commercial right now, hold on. "Expositor's Bible Commentary." Why do I doubt that I had that right? Yeah, there's an abridged version, but I would get the one that has the Judges volume and it probably is in our bookstore. I think we sell those as individual volumes and it may be more than 12 volumes, but the one on Judges will help. None of those individual stand-alones, I can't think of any good ones on Judges off the top of my head, but I would start with those two to try and piece together some of those details. And that's where commentaries are helpful. These men, particularly who study ancient Egyptian history, there are a lot of things that are going on even in surrounding areas and in the Canaanite backgrounds that will help you say, OK, there's an insight I wouldn't have gotten just by reading my Bible 15 times in this passage. That's not a lot of satisfaction. But your second question was harder and yet there is an answer I think. We can't get like Israel was, particularly as the people of God in the Church. Yeah, let's do one more or at least one more.

**Question:** Pastor Mike, I had a question about the rapture. Some of the churches that reject rapture being pre-tribulation, and they also point to the fact that there is no mention of it within the book of Revelation. They claim whatever verses there are to be things that are post-tribulation at the very end, that's when we will meet up with Christ. How do we respond to such people?

**Pastor Mike:** Right. Well, number one, I like the way you frame the question, because a lot of people say that some people don't believe in the rapture of Christians. You've got to believe in the rapture because it's taught in the Bible. The question is, when is it? So I'm just commending you for the way you worded the question, because that's the right way to word the question. There's this period of time, which I believe is the Old Testament prophecy of the time of Jacob's Trouble, the seventieth week of Daniel, the period of time described from Revelation Chapter 6 through Revelation Chapter 19, that this is a period where God is going to take his people, Israel, draw them to the Messiah, have them saved. A lot of people being saved. But his wrath is going to be poured out on the earth. That period of time, you say, well, the rapture is not mentioned in there. Well, a lot of people that do understand the rapture as being pre-tribulation would say, well, number one there's no mention of the Church in that period of time. The word is not used. A lot of saints by people who are coming to Christ, starting with 144,000 Jewish missionaries at the beginning of that section. But they would look at even when John is told to come up, to be caught up in the beginning of the book and he sees that scene in Revelation Chapter 4. So all I'm saying is it may be an argument from silence, but the absence of the Church as it's described and John loves to talk about it. Right? I mean, that the whole New Testament, dealing with the church, the "Ekklesia" in Greek, the the body of this one new man, Jew and Gentile and this one new organization, it's not describe there. It's all now Jewish. It's all about the temple. It's all about the two prophets. It's all about the 144,000 from all twelve tribes of Israel. We seem to be going back to the Old Testament promises to Israel, which I believe, and that's why I believe that this time was for Jacob, Israel. The time is for the twelve tribes. The time is for a reassembled Israel in their



land. So I'm a pre-tribulationist. The post-tribulationist say, it's all going to happen at the end. We're going to get caught up and then we'll come right back down and you'll feel it in your stomach and you'll go whoop! and then you're down. I'm going to say no, I think we're going to go up. I think we're going to enjoy the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and then we're going to come back. I think the way to help people think through this and of course, you just got to choose a church that believes... I mean, you don't have to, it's a secondary issue. But all of our pastors agree in a pre-tribulational rapture, which means that we believe that there's a distinction even in the gospels, as Jesus is talking about this in Matthew 24 and elsewhere where there's a distinction between the coming of Christ to get his Church and meet the Church in the air and the coming of Christ, as it says in Zechariah 14, where his feet come and touch the Mount of Olives, when he comes back WITH the saints, not FOR the saints. He comes back at the Battle of Armageddon to make this final judgment before this kingdom period begins. We just see a distinction there. And there are so many things. And I remember in the school master's work I was doing and I was challenged to write something on everything in the New Testament that described the coming of Christ as a surprise, imminent return. And all the ones that talked about it, like you should know when it's going to happen. Right? You can time it. If you start doing that, I think you'll find you can put these things in two categories, and I was thankful for Dr. Robert, who made me do that project. It was like, OK, yeah, there is a distinction. There's a distinction between the comings of the Lord. Christ is going to come, I believe, for his Church. Christ is going to then come in judgment on the world and in salvation for Israel. And then Christ is going to come to take Israel and establish a kingdom at the end, it's going to come with his things. There are a lot of comings in that. The Day of the Lord is not a 24-hour period. So that's my view. There are books I often recommend on that. Doctor Mayhue, a friend of our church, he's been here to preach, wrote a book on the rapture. I think, Ed Hindson wrote a book or maybe it was someone else, our friend from Oklahoma, he teaches at Dallas Seminary. "Can We Still Believe in the Rapture?" I think it's called. That would be a good start. "Snatched Before the Storm" is Dr. Mayhue's book, "Snatched Before the Storm." You should read that. I think that certainly makes a great case for pre-tribulational rapture. The other book I'm thinking of is the guy who wrote that... Mark Hitchcock may have written the book called "Can You Still Believe in the Rapture?" Either Ed Hindson or Mark Hitchcock. But that one would be worth looking at, too. So that's the argumentation. But I think there's more evidence there than the average person is willing to see. And plus, a lot of people say, well, this is a Johnny come lately, Plymouth Brethren thing. This Darby guy came up with it. I think that's absurd. He popularized it, systematized that. I get all that. But it's like saying there was no clarity on the deity of Christ until, you know, the Council of Nicaea. I just don't know. It's not the case. It's all there. It's just maybe not grown in popularity. And even our own Dr. Goodrich, who works at Compass Bible Institute. I don't know if he wrote the chapter on it, but they came up with a book on, I think one of the chapters in it, I don't know if he's here right now, on the pre-tribulational rapture. One of the chapters in the book of "What we believe," I think it's called anyway, look at John Goodrich and you can find that book.

**Pastor Mike:** This seemed like a waste of time from my perspective. Tell me it wasn't. Right? (audience applause) OK. Was there something here? A waste of time I feel real strongly, but in my brain I feel like I'm bouncing all over. I like sermons, as I often have my prayer team



pray, that are coherent and that hold together, are cohesive and this is the exact opposite of that. So I'm tortured on these weekends. I don't feel the cohesion of what I'm saying from the platform. If you enjoyed it, then that's good. If you didn't enjoy it then it's over. So that all I can say is it's over. Let me pray for you and I'll let you go. God, thanks for our time to talk about all kinds of things. And while none of it seems satisfying to me because I think we could go so much further on every topic and I know that if you're not interested in that topic and I know that there are people here who probably checked out half way through some of these answers. But I just pray that something would be beneficial that we can take away, if nothing else, that we could study your word better, we could dig deeper to think through what you have told us and even weigh it against what our culture is saying and just know that we want to be on the right side of history by standing with you, the God who is going to send his Son to dispatch from heaven to get us, even if you are a post-tribulationist, that you're coming for your Church. And God we want to ready, to be found busy being about the work that you've called us to do. So God redeem this time this morning. Let it be a catalyst for our lives and in our thinking and study.

**Pastor Mike:** In Jesus name. Amen.