

Hot Topic Questions: 17/09/12

Below are the questions we did not get to on Monday evening. Tim, Allen and Graham present these answers for your thoughts.

1. *Could you roughly pinpoint what the youthful emerging church has diluted in the Gospel of Jesus?*

The short answer is that some individuals identifying themselves as “emerging” get the gospel right and some don’t. And often it’s not easy to tell whether someone has “crossed the line” and denied the gospel. Some individuals affirm the right things but emphasize the wrong things. Others affirm the right things but entirely redefine them. Still others affirm parts of the truth and say nothing about the rest of the truth.

Allen: The emerging church has tried to rethink how to do church in a way that relates to younger generation. The good aspect of this is their attempt to take the gospel outside the walls of the church, into pubs and lounge rooms and other settings. The danger is if the gospel becomes a story about me instead of the story about Jesus.

2. *Graham in regards to your teaching last unit. Do universalists take the scriptures out of context and apply a "new" understanding that the original audience didn't think of. Example?*

Not so much ‘out of context’ as there is not a reading of the scriptures with other scriptures in mind. It would be hard to deny that throughout all of scripture the idea of some are saved and some are not is ubiquitous. Allen’s use of the parable of the ‘sheep and goats’ clearly indicates that there are some saved and some not. When universalists use scriptures such as 1 Cor. 15:22 and Romans 5:18-19 they do so without relating or reading these with the rest of scripture in mind. The audience to which Paul was writing were abundantly clear that God would judge humanity and that some were going to be saved and some not. The challenge they had to overcome was the challenge of thinking they were by ‘divine right’ the ones who were going to be saved.

3. *If we are not to preach to people, then how are we expected to share the good news to others? I believe that Jesus went to Hades to preach to give the dead a second chance?*

I hope the message that came through was not that we are not to preach to people, if by preach we mean tell people of the gospel. We definite are called to tell people of the gospel. However the gospel we need to be telling is the good news of Jesus’ resurrection and his coming to establish a kingdom where justice and mercy reign.

In regards to the verses you mentioned let’s take a good look at them;

1 Peter 3:18-21 Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.

¹⁹ So he went and preached to the spirits in prison—²⁰ those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. ²¹ And that water is a picture of baptism, which

now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther writes in his commentary: 'A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means.' Study of the passage may have progressed since Luther's day, but his confession still warns us against over-confidence!

There have been several ideas over the centuries surrounding this passage none of which are without their problems. Much depends on what view a person holds in regards to the idea of humans having a 'soul' or 'spirit' which is an entity in and of itself. This idea is not a Jewish idea but a Greek idea so it would seem unlikely that Peter in anyway believed that there were immortal souls to whom Jesus could preach. (for example Ps. 6:5, Eccl. 4:5)

4. *Is there any chance that those who die without hearing the gospel, might get a 2nd chance...as Jesus said in the gospels that he's got other sheep which are not of this sheep pen which he must bring together...and also elsewhere that when he died he went 2 preach 2 those who disobeyed in the times of Noah*

See the answer to question 3.

5. *Does not the bible tell us to judge? If we don't judge we must be zombies coz we make judgments every day*

The verses that speak of not judging come from Matthew 7:1-6. You'll notice that in this section of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus goes on to speak about hypocrisy. The judging that Jesus warns us against is the judging of someone when we are doing exactly the same thing. If we are not to judge then what do we do with all of the passages of both Jesus and Paul about right behaviour? As we said last night we are to help our fellow Christians live better lives by helping them avoid 'dumb' practices but we are not called to make judgement as to who is in and who is out of the kingdom.

Allen: Our culture is flooded with choice, so we are constantly making judgements about little things ("What will I eat tonight") as well as bigger things ("Should I marry this person or take this job"), and difficult things ("Shall I continue to provide services for this company when they haven't paid for last time yet?"). But some judgements only God can make, such as who are his children and who are not. You can't fire someone who works for Queen Elizabeth: only she can do that. She might even take it personally if you tried to do that.

6. *Based on the alternate view being discussed i.e. God will decide, why spread the gospel then?*

Because the gospel is good news! This good news is meant to give people hope. The good news also tells of what the kingdom of God looks like and the hope that earth will one day be ruled in totality by Jesus and the kingdom will work perfectly. Bringing the gospel to people allows them to begin to make changes in their lives so as to live the 'kingdom way'.