Panel Discussion
By J. Richard Chase, Charles Feinberg, and Samuel Sutherland

- Chase
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- Chase
We have some good practical questions today and we trust our time together will be something that will whet your appetite for a daily study of God's work. We're going to begin with a question from the Midwest from Arkansas City, Kansas. Dr. Sutherland I'm going to ask you to answer this. The listener writes, "I am unable to understand John, chapter 5 verses 28 and 29. Does this mean that the souls of those who did good have not gone to Heaven to be with our heavenly Father forever, but are awaiting judgment?"

- Sutherland
Yes John 5:28-29 read on this wise, "Marvel not at this for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth. They that have done good unto the resurrection of life; they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." And my dear friends, there is a great body of Scripture dealing with the, the, the nether world. In the Old Testament there was the place called Sheol that's the Hebrew word. In the New Testament, there it is the place called Hades, that is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Sheol. It simply means the abode of the dead.
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From other portions of Scripture, we find that Hades apparently was divided into two parts; the abode of the righteous dead and the abode of the unrighteous dead. Our Lord on the cross said to the believing thief, "Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise." In other words the abode of the righteous dead was called Paradise. Elsewhere it's called Abraham's bosom. But it all refers from, from comparisons here, it all refers to the same place: the abode of the righteous dead where the souls were awaiting resurrection. You've got to keep in mind dear friends that when our Lord said this, it was before the cross. It was before He had ascended to heaven following His resurrection.

We read elsewhere that when He ascended, He led those who had been held captive in the abode of the righteous dead, He led them as His captives right up into Heaven. And we believe therefore that today the abode of the righteous dead is uninhabited that the soul of a believer goes immediately into the presence of the Lord in glory. Paul said, "It is far better to be with Him than to," the Lord, "than to remain here upon the Earth." But Paul had a mission to accomplish so he was willing to stay here. Now those who did good are, have gone to Heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ when He ascended following His resurrection. No one goes into Hades the abode of the righteous dead. That is a place now for the abode of the unrighteous dead and they are awaiting final judgment at the great white throne judgment of God, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Chase

We can rejoice that we who know the Lord Jesus Christ can look forward to that time and will be absent from the body yet present with the Lord.
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- Sutherland

Uh, may I just add this word Dr. Chase? "Those that have done good will be raised unto the resurrection of life." There may be a little confusion in the minds of some people as to what this means. Does it mean that we've got to give so much money, we've got to teach a Sunday school class, we've got to sing in a choir, that we've got to do enough good things, done good, in order to get to Heaven? Well that question can be answered once and for all dear friends when you look at John 6:29. The uh, those who were questioning our Lord at that, in this particular passage they said, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God? That we might do the works of God?" Jesus answered and said unto them, "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." Now those are the ones who are said here of whom it is said here "They that have done good." Those who have believed on whom, on Him whom the Father has sent. In other words if you accept Jesus Christ as your savior. That is the good work of God. And that is what brings resurrection unto life.

- Chase

Thank you for that crucial distinction between just being good and knowing the one who can make us not simply good but perfect in the sight of God. Right now Dr. Feinberg, a listener in San Diego has written a question specifically addressed to you. This one asks, "Is there a sense in which the Lord Jesus Christ is King of the Church or is this title reserved exclusively for Israel's Jews?"
That is a very pertinent question Dr. Chase because I have heard certain men who make very fine and they are valid distinctions in biblical relationships who will never talk about Christ the Lord Jesus Christ as being King of the Church. The Bridegroom of the Church? Yes. The vine of which the Church branches? Yes. The foundation upon which the Church members as living stones are built? Yes. But they will never concede that Christ can have any kingly relationship to the Church. That is a title reserved for Israel. I would say in the main, they are correct. The Scripture mostly speaks of us as sheep in the flock of the Lord Jesus who is our shepherd. Branches, we are branches, and He is the vine. He is the one who is the foundation and we are built upon Him as living stones and so forth and so on.

But my dear friends in First Timothy five and fifteen we read, "Which in His times is Lord Jesus Christ. He shall show who is the blessed and only potentate," that's rule that's King, "the King of kings and Lord of lords." And this definitely has something to do with us. "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ". So I think we could make Him King of our life as well sanctify Jesus as Lord, if He's Lord, He's potentate, He is sovereign. We have that wonderful hymn you remember "King of my life I crown thee now. Thine shall the glory be." I would say that the normal, the more often way of speaking of our Lord Jesus in reference to the Church would not be as King and yet though, it's not the principal way, it is also valid.

I'm sure that when King George the sixth of England was king, he's now passed on as you know in his daughter, the beautiful Queen Elizabeth the second is the lovely queen of England. But
King George the sixth when he was alive, I'm sure that his bride, his queen, now the queen mother Queen Elizabeth. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. I'm sure that she considered him as a father in the home, father of her children, as her sweetheart, as her beloved, and so on, as her husband. But there were times when she could also consider him as her king. That would be possibly a secondary designation but still a very real one. At the same time. I don't think that it detracts in any wise from our relationship to Him. In fact I'm very, very zealous that we see every one of us individually the Lord Jesus Christ in His many blessed, majestic relationships as we can. We cannot give Him too much honor.

- Chase

Thank you Dr. Feinberg. We've got another question from San Diego. And this listener was listening to another radio program and heard an answer to a question that disturbed her. So this person wrote in and asked, "Who were the 24 elder spoken of in Revelation? This question was asked on the program I was listening to and the answer given was the Church. They said nowhere are elders spoken out but only in the Church. So the 24 elders means the Church. That answer disturbed me. I'd like to know what you have to say about it." Dr. Sutherland?

- Sutherland

(Laughs nervously) Yes. I hope that she's not going to pit what we have to say against this other radio preacher because he may be a wonderful man of God. We do believe however, that the 24 elders are 24 men. Real men, they do not symbolize anything. They are real men. Now they, we believe, they represent the Church.
Notice, will you, in Revelation chapter 4 verse 4, "Round about the throne were 4 and 20 seats and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold." Then in verse ten of chapter four, "The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne and worship Him that liveth forever and ever and cast their crowns before the throne." And then over in Revelation chapter 5 verse eight, "When He had taken the book, the four living ones and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors which are the prayers of the saints."

We do not know who the twenty four elders are. Some have speculated that they are the twelve sons of Jacob and the Twelve Apostles. But John saw the twenty four here in vision and he was one of the apostles, so he should have seen normally only twenty three elders if the apostles were included in this listing. We, the simple facts are, we believe that we do not know, their names are not given to us because as persons they are relatively unimportant. It’s what they do and whom they represent. That that constitutes their significance.

They were sitting upon their thrones and they had crowns of gold. They were assisting in, in ruling there in Heaven in that particular instance because a crown represents authority. Then we read in verse ten that, "They fou-, fell down before Him that sat on the throne and worship Him forever and ever and cast their crowns before the throne. For they say, 'Worthy. Thou art worthy O Lord to receive glory and honor and power,'" and so forth.
The authority that they had, the crowns, rewards or whatever the crowns might mean, that they had on their heads, when they saw the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory, they realized that they deserved absolutely nothing and they cast their crown, their authority, their rewards before Him on the, at His feet. And they said, "Thou art worthy".

Then over in chapter five verse eight, "The four and twenty elders fell down, fell down before the Lamb and every one of them had a harps and golden vials full of odors which are the prayers of the saints." There was a responsibility apparently that they had in gathering the prayers of the saints and casting them at the feet of the Lamb or the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Then they come to what I believe is one of the most magnificent passages in all of Scripture, "They sang the new song saying 'Thou art worthy to take the book and open the seals for Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood. Out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation.'" And John says, "I beheld and heard the voice of many angelic beings round about the throne and the living ones and the elders and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand. And they sang the song of the redeemed and the twenty four elders led in that the great Hallelujah chorus."

Their identity is not known because as individuals are not significant but they are twenty four individual men and what they did at this particular time was tremendously significant and we'll see my dear friend someday who they are and we'll know them.
- Chase

Many of the questions that we get we've seen before and as you can imagine there is a lot of repetition in these questions that come in. Dr. Feinberg, the one I'm going to ask you now is probably one that we haven't had for some time, if ever. This person is a local person here in Whittier, California. And they write, "if you can, explain in plain language just what God is saying through Paul in Galatians chapter 3 verse 28.'There is neither male nor female.' Does this mean if we are plunged into Christ Church, put on Christ born of God into the kingdom, we become new creatures and sexless? If so, is it being taught so people will not go off their rocker when the time actually comes?"

- Feinberg

(Laughter)That's bringing it up to date. And let me say one thing in answering, Dr. Chase. If we are plunged into Christ Church that's not the way to get into it. We are born again into the body of Christ.

Now what's the meaning in Galatians 3:20? It does state, "There's neither Jew nor Greek. There's neither bought nor freed. Neither male nor female, for you are all," in what sense is there this unity, "one in Christ Jesus." If you read far enough in the verse you see it in verse 26, "For ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus." When you are born again, if you are a lady, you remain a lady. If you are a man, you remain a man. Male and female are kept that way. If as in the even in the early church, if a man was a slave it didn't mean when he was saved he immediately became free. But the point was, as far as spiritual status is concerned with God, we are all one. It isn't as if a lady begins to pray and God says after a while, "Well after all this is
just a lady praying, Angel Gabriel will you put on your earphones while I go off and you listen to
the rest of her prayer? She's only a woman." That's not true.

In the sight of God in spiritual privilege and spiritual opportunity, we are all one.

- Sutherland

Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this privilege of coming into the homes of so many of these, our dear friends. How we thank Thee for each one of them listening in today. We do not know where they are. We do not know many, many of them personally and yet Thou dost know and understand and they are our dear friends because we hear from so many. And we thank God for each one. We pray that they will guide and comfort and direct as Thou seest the need in each heart listening today. And we'll give thee the praise for we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

- Chase


- Chase

The Christmas season always raises special questions in the minds of some of our listeners. What about the date, December the 25th? Is it really accurate and can you be a good Christian and enter into the activities of Christmas and even have a Christmas tree? Well, let's see what our panelists have to say to some of these questions. We're going to begin right away with Dr. Feinberg and ask him, "Why do we celebrate Christmas on December the 25th? I hear that Jesus Christ was really born in the spring of the year."
- Feinberg

Yes a great number of folk have the concept that our Lord Jesus Christ was actually born in the spring of the year and they judged that mainly from the passage in Luke that the shepherds were keeping their flocks out in the open by night and that, in that time of winter like December 25th, the weather is not quite that climate. So the presupposition would be that they would not be keeping their flock out in winter time but it must be a springtime. Apart from the fact that seasons can change as much in the Holy Land from the normal as they do change for instance in the state of California. So you cannot draw any definite final conclusion from that.

And then there are such things in the Holy Land as in other parts of the world where there are what we call mild winters. So this would not rule it out there, but speculation on the exact date of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ stems the earliest speculation that we can have in recorded history comes from the third century B.C. Apparently, it didn't seem to concern people the exact date as it does now. Today, you know, we're so used to mystery stories and detective stories and so many unsolved crimes that we have to have a thing written up that it was just five minutes after 11:00 and the gong was sounding and such, a such a place and the principal participant just happened to be looking at his wristwatch. We have to have the day and the hour and the calendar and the chronometer and the thermometer and the barometer, that it was windy, and all the rest of that. Well people didn't figure it that way necessarily and in the Spirit of God can didn't consider that necessary. So we don't have it specified that it was on the third day of the fifth month or something like that just as we know on the 14th day of the first month was the Passover.
But Clement of Alexandria suggested a date and that may be where some of the folk have gotten the spring idea. Clement of Alexandria, who was a Godly man and a close student of the word of God, one of the early church fathers, just as we have, for instance, city fathers. They're leaders of a city, Church fathers were the leaders in the Church the first 7th century centuries of the Church's history. Clement of Alexandria, one of the Church Fathers, suggested May 20th. Well the general celebration of the birth of Christ as a general feast didn't really become an actuality until the latter part of the fourth century.

It's hard for some of us to believe that that many years were allowed to pass before there was a definite notation or definite recognition of the actual date of the birth of the glorious Redeemer into the world. The earliest mention of the observance of December the 25th, mark you, was in the year 336 A.D. Why? Well contrary to what a lot of folk think, that Christmas just carries on a pagan custom. My dear friends that date was probably chosen to offset and depose a pagan feast that it was already in existence for the birth of one of the gods.

And this was put in order that the people of God might have their minds on the birth of the true Redeemer savior, just as in some churches I know when they have junior proms and senior proms as so much that goes on there. Churches that want to keep their young people and I believe they ought to have our strict support and cooperation. What they do is to have a Christian time of social fellowship in order that these people would not be left high and dry. Now that may be something to take the place and don't leave our young people in a void. There is an awful lot of good Christian Fellowship around that they can enjoy.
Now the popular observance of Christmas on December 25th developed in England in the 19th century through bringing in some German customs. For instance, Christmas trees came from Germany and even one of our Christmas carols has it; O' Tannenbaum, Tannenbaum, Tannenbaum happens to be a German word meaning a Christmas tree. And not only the influence of Germany, but the influence of the great English writer Charles Dickens. Through these particular features Christmas' observance on December 25th came to be more and more widespread.

- Sutherland

Wouldn't it be of interest to add here, as you said Dr. Feinberg, a lot of people get hung up on this idea of December the 25th. But isn't there a parallel here? For instance the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, it takes place in over a period of years takes place on at least 27 different days. Because Easter is observed as the first Sunday after the first full moon, after the equinox. And so the equinox occurring I guess it is on March 21st or 22nd. There is a whole month in there. I have never heard anybody complain about worshipping the risen Lord on Easter Sunday even though it's never the same day in any two successive years. So why do people get all disturbed because December the 25th is not actually the date of the birth of our Lord?

(Multiple people talking at once - inaudible)

- Feinberg
I'm glad for that added word and very, very timely and the parallel is excellent. And the reason there has to be that adjustment as Dr. Sutherland just pointed out friends is that the Jews went on a lunar calendar and we are on a solar calendar. So of course when you're making a shift, there's got to be some kind of rectifying of the dates and that's why the date shifts in that fashion. Well even December 25th, if you just keep it on the Gregorian calendar it will come out on the same day, calendar day every time. That was a splendid parallel. Thank you.

- Chase

Fascinating parallel indeed. And Dr. Sutherland, take another thought if you will from Dr. Feinberg's comments and develop that. He mentioned something about a Christmas tree and I know that there are a lot of families at this particular season that do not have Christmas trees because somehow or other they feel it's just not compatible with the Christian emphasis of Christmas. What do you have to say about that?

- Sutherland

Well we want to respect the convictions of these dear friends who we-, refused to put up a Christmas tree. They also refused to exchange gifts. They refused to recognize Christmas in any way whatsoever because they say and we believe erroneously as Dr. Feinberg pointed out, they say that, that it is actually celebrating a pagan festival. But as Dr. Feinberg so aptly stated a moment ago, it is in protest to this pagan festival that the Christian people are worshipping on December the 25th.
Now the Christmas tree. As he said, it came over to England from Germany. Now just the historic background of the use of the Christmas tree apparently is lost in antiquity. Except that it does go way, way back in German history when at certain times of the year the evergreen trees were decorated and there were pagan rites that surrounded it. But the Christians took the Christmas tree and made it to symbolize something that was distinctly Christian instead of distinctly pagan. And that is the heritage that we have. Although this question does not involve the lights and so forth. Let me add this, that the colors in scripture are very significant. We have our yellow or gold lights at Christmas time. Gold speaks of the purity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the purity of Heaven where the very streets are paved with gold. Green lights and the green the evergreen Christmas tree, speak of the eternal springtime of, of the Christian life and the evergreen, the ever living One. Other trees fade, their leaves wither and die and are dropped but not so the evergreen tree it's always green. And it speaks of the, the eternality of human life, I mean of divine life. And then the blue of the Christmas lights speaks of Heaven itself being in the, in the heavens of the blue, heavens.

So we could go on all of these colors are significant to the Christian. Now the fact that the world takes them and abuses them and has no, gives no spiritual significance to them whatsoever. That doesn't mean that we can't use them and maintain our spiritual relationship and significant to these trees. My dear friends we would urge that for the sake of the children in your home, put up a Christmas tree, decorate it, exchange gifts, make the most of it and above all else take a time take time out and talk about the wonderful Lord who made all of these things possible and who has given us the supreme gift: life everlasting.
All right well gentlemen we have all around five minutes at the most left for our questions and we have three basic questions that have come in that in one way or another deal with the virgin birth and maybe we can just have a little roundtable discussion on these. And I want to begin by asking you Dr. Feinberg, what about the problem that some people raise and I think in one of the current books there is this question raised that Jesus Christ's father was really a German soldier? What do you think of that and what kind of a reaction should you as a dean of a theological seminary or any Christian have to that kind of a statement?

I would say Dr. Chase, unequivocally and without any kind of doubt that that book that indicates that Jesus Christ's father was a German soldier, I would say that book is not just in partial error but it is in 100 percent error. And let me indicate something Dr. Chase as to the source of that view, we're not interested in the Biola hours you know we have never been from the beginning in personalities as such. We are interested in principles so I'm not even going to mention the name of the theologian, but this supposed Christian theologian said, "Of course Jesus was blond haired because His father was a German mercenary soldier who was stationed in Palestine." Beloved that is a blasphemy. It makes our Lord Jesus an impostor. It makes Mary a liar. It makes the whole Gospel story a falsehood. This isn't God coming into human form. This is the product of not even a wedded love.

My dear friends the history book, it may claim to be history but it is not history at all. Where did that writer in that book know about Jesus Christ in the first place? You cannot a legal procedure
take certain part of evidence to use against another part of the evidence unless you have some
overriding third evidence that's objective and you cannot use one part of the Gospel story against
another. And there's no place in any of the gospels that would give you one single scintilla, one
spark of evidence that Jesus Christ had a human father. Notice even incidentally when they
wanted the Lord Jesus to come out, they said, "Your mother and your family are seeking you."
He said, "Who is my mother, my brother, my sister, but he does the will of God." Did you notice
what relationship in the family He left out? That was not accidental; mother, father. No. Mother,
brother, sister. He did not mention father because He had no earthly father.

- Chase

All right well right along that same line Dr. Sutherland, "Is it really necessary then to believe that
Christ was born of a virgin?"

- Sutherland

I don't like to use this phrase: "Is it necessary to believe that Christ is born of a virgin to be
saved?" It depends upon our concept of Jesus Christ. Its natural I would say to believe that Jesus
Christ was born of a virgin because of who he was. A natural birth is normal for a natural being,
a supernatural birth is normal for a supernatural being.

(Quietly by unknown secondary speaker) Amen.

- Sutherland
And so if you've got the right view of Jesus Christ, the virgin, the matter of the virgin birth is no problem whatsoever. And anyone who stumbles over the idea of the virgin birth, he has a low view of who Jesus Christ actually is.

If you think of Him as a man, then you are going to have a problem with the virgin birth. But if you think of Him as God the Son eternally manifested here or in human flesh, but God the Son and eternally manifested as the Son, the second member of the Trinity, then the matter of the virgin birth fits into the scheme of things perfectly. I, I don't like this phrase: "Is it necessary to believe that Jesus Christ was born?" Its natural, its normal, its reasonable and we believe it with all our hearts on every true born-again child of God I verily believe is also convicted of this fact. Yes, Jesus Christ is born, was born of the Virgin Mary.

- Chase

Our Heavenly Father, we're thankful for this time that we've been able to have today in looking at these questions that relate so distinctly to this season of the year. We're thankful above all for the gift of eternal life that is ours through the Lord Jesus Christ. We're thankful, our Father, that there is no inconsistency in Thy Word -

(Quietly by unknown secondary speaker) Amen.

- Chase
- when we understand it through the Holy Spirit that illumines our hearts and our minds. So we're thankful for this brief time that we've had together to share not only these questions but to share these answers with these our friends.

Guide and direct us all at this season of the year that by our very life and by our words, we might indicate others that we are not simply lost in the details of activities, but that we're truly lost in the cause of making the Lord Jesus Christ known to others through everything that we say and do. Guide and direct now for we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

- Sutherland
Amen.

- Feinberg
Amen. Good.

- Sutherland
We're done!

- Chase
Yeah.

- Sutherland
Okay, we-