

Dr. Whitcomb Answers Your Questions (No. 3)

Note: The following is a written transcript of *Dr. Whitcomb Answers Your Questions (No. 3)*, which is available in audio form on Whitcomb.SermonAudio.com.

Paul Scharf: This is Paul Scharf for Whitcomb Ministries, and we welcome you back once again. We are recording a session here, just an informal time together called *Dr. Whitcomb Answers Your Questions*, and I'm sitting here with Dr. John Whitcomb in his study and he's ready to field some questions that have come in over whitcombministries.org at the *Frequently Asked Questions* section. And once again, these will be utilized for SermonAudio as well as being listed in written format on the Web site a little bit later.

Dr. Whitcomb, we're going to tackle four questions today, some of them are a little longer than the others. We start with a short one that came in from Randy, and he says, "Is there any teaching in Scripture about cremation?"

Dr. Whitcomb: Paul, there is not that I know of, but we need to be careful about the whole point of burial or cremation - namely, how do we view the human body? That's the whole point of burial in the Bible anyway. It wasn't just Jews that did it; Egyptians went to elaborate lengths, of course, to bury their dead – the Pharaohs – in gigantic pyramids, etc.

But the real issue is, how do we view the human body in the light of the promise of God for resurrection? Is it something to be despised? Do we take the Greek attitude, namely, the body is just some temporary drag upon our real person, namely, our soul, spirit, mind and so forth, and the sooner we get rid of it, the better?

No, the body is a vital, and yes, essential and eternal part of our person. And when we're dead and separated from the body (of course, death means separation of soul/spirit from the body), that is a temporary and non-ideal, non-ultimate situation. Resurrection is the

ultimate goal. The resurrection of the body unites the physical with the spiritual part of us, that is, the immaterial part.

So cremation, of course, does happen to believers. I was in Hong Kong a number of years ago, and burial is impossible. There are no more places on that island for hundreds of thousands of people to be buried anymore, and so cremation, even for Christians, is carried on as an essential. And I say, there are circumstances in life that lead people in due respect, I'm talking about Christians now, in due respect for their dead loved ones to allow for cremation, to plan for cremation. But the issue in the sight of God is, what do you think about the body? Do you believe in resurrection? Jesus rose from the dead, and 1 Corinthians 15 says that He is "the firstfruits of them that slept" and "afterward they that are (His) at His coming" (v. 20, 23, KJV).

In other words, our resurrection is the ultimate follow-through, the firstfruit, the harvest of what Jesus Christ our Lord experienced when He was buried and then the third day rose from the dead. What is our mentality about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ in terms of the essential aspect of the body to our human nature exemplified by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? And the circumstances in which we provide for decency and respect for our dead loved ones is based upon what we think of what the Bible teaches about the significance of the human in the light of the resurrection hope that we all have because of Jesus our Lord.

Paul Scharf: Dr. Whitcomb, Caroline has written in an interesting question that is multi-faceted, but I'll try to keep it as simple as we can. She says, "Dr. Whitcomb, my question concerns how mankind was dispersed all over the world on every continent." She says, "After the flood, there were eight people in one place. How did they get to places far beyond their boundaries, and before the flood, was the earth one landmass that was separated by the flood?" I can see you are turning there to Genesis, and I'll let you tackle that question next.

Dr. Whitcomb: Yes, when the flood ended, of course, there were only eight people in the world – Noah, his wife, three sons, their wives – eight people. But what happened when the flood ended? Genesis 9:1, “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.’” He wanted them to multiply and to repopulate the post-flood world. By which means, we don’t know exactly. There were, of course, land bridges by which people could migrate from Asia across to Alaska, there were land bridges down to Australia. People had boats available, we know, to migrate, to disperse to the various islands of the world such as the Hawaiian Islands – the most remote landmass in the world from major continents, by the way. The amazing thing is, of course, that human beings have done that in spite of an original rebellion against God’s command on the part of people who decided, “No, we’re just going to settle in Mesopotamia, Shinar, and build a tower whose top represents heaven – a ziggurat, a worship center.” You see, God had to disperse people from there by His supernaturally creating language barriers between the workers – by which they became deeply frustrated and took their families and moved away.

And then it was by God’s judgment and implementation of that Genesis 9:1 command that people began to migrate across the entire world where we see them today. So how that happened is an amazing story, of course, of the versatility of the mind of man to get where he wants to go, no matter what barriers of oceans, or mountains or climate might loom before him. God implemented His own plan in Genesis 9:1 by the judgment of Genesis chapter 11 at the Tower of Babel.

Paul Scharf: Dr. Whitcomb, I’m going to let you catch your breath here for just a second and remind those who are listening on SermonAudio.com that they can just go over to our Web site at whitcombministries.org and see right there that they can click on *FAQ’s*, frequently asked questions as we’re dealing with in this series, and they can ask you a question. And maybe they’ll get to hear their answer as well as see the written result of that, and we trust this will be a blessing to many people. They can actually submit a question in any of five different categories: Christian living, creationism, difficult texts, prophecy or just miscellaneous questions. So we’re not dealing with them by category or

in any particular order in this series, we're just trying to deal with them as best we can. You'll get to listen in, and then you can also check the Web site and actually see there, in order, the written result of all of that. So we hope you'll keep checking back at whitcombministries.org.

Dr. Whitcomb, the third question we're going to deal with here in this get-together comes from Diane, and it's a question about salvation and it deals with some pretty weighty issues that are being discussed and have been for quite a long time, that have a lot of implications in theology. But let's see if we can deal with it here.

She says, "Dear Dr. Whitcomb, is eternal life received only by believing in Jesus Christ alone? Is assurance of salvation found only in believing the promise of God as recorded in His Word?" She references a debate going on that says you must be willing to turn from your sin or that you can't be saved, and that you must look to your life for evidence of assurance of salvation. We'll let you take that question next.

Dr. Whitcomb: Well of course, if we have to get rid of all of our sins to be sure that we are saved, none of us will have the assurance that we're saved. So, there is such a thing as Lordship Salvation, an idea that says that unless you make Jesus your Lord, actually, in your life – every moment, every thought, every word – you have no right to the assurance of your salvation. Well, of course, that excludes everybody that claims to be a Christian. No – the Apostle Paul, himself, the greatest theologian of the early church of course, said to the Philippian jailer who asked, "What must I do to be saved?" And he didn't say, "You have to get rid of all your sins, of all your doubts, all your fears, all your problems, and be a perfect disciple, and then, and then only, can you be saved." He said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."

So there's something fundamentally clear, simple and basic; however, there is indeed another side to the story. There are many, many people who say, "Well, I raised my hand at some evangelistic meeting or when I was a child or something," and give no evidence whatever of a love for God, of a life of prayer, of an appreciation, a hunger for God's

Word, a desire to live a godly life in any sense at all. Such people certainly do not have a right to the assurance of their salvation. Paul made that clear, too, in his epistles. He said, examine yourselves “to see if you are in the faith.” Yes, of course, so there’s that balance.

But the Apostle Peter made it clear, didn’t he in Acts chapter 4 verse 12, “There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.” So yes, only through Jesus Christ, only through faith in Him and His finished work on the cross, confirmed by His resurrection from the dead, can we have the assurance of our salvation.

But you see, let’s be careful. It’s not how you feel, it’s what you know in your mind to be a transaction that Jesus accomplished for you and me on that cross. We count His work on our behalf. In other words, His work was applied to us and our sin was applied to Him. There’s a transaction. We are positionally in Christ even if we’re not worthy, we’re not perfect, we’re not sinless. Something took place. A transaction was accomplished when we believed and took Him at His word and the Holy Spirit gave us adequate assurance that we belong to Him. There has to be some kind of evidence, yes, that we have been saved, or we need to re-examine our relationship to Christ to be sure that it wasn’t just a perfunctory, superficial, a mere verbal thing under pressure maybe at some evangelistic meeting or something. And the Holy Spirit can give us that.

The whole New Testament is full of the fact that we have the assurance if we’re walking according to what He tells us to do sufficiently to have within our minds and hearts a knowledge, “I’m not perfect, I’m not sinless, but I know Jesus as my Savior and I know I’ll be with Him forever.”

Paul Scharf: Dr. Whitcomb, the last question is a real easy one. We’re going to give this to you here. Eve and Mike write in and they say, “I’m interested in making a donation. Can you tell me how or where I could do that?”

Dr. Whitcomb: Yes, Whitcomb Ministries, Inc., can receive charitable donations. Donors are able to claim a charitable deduction for their gifts. As you know, how to contact us, and if you care to e-mail us at jcwhitcomb@juno.com, or use our address in Indianapolis, 6147 Hythe Road, Indianapolis, IN 46220, we'll greatly appreciate donations that we trust will be used for the glory of God in the ministry of teaching and preaching and proclaiming the Word of God to the ends of the earth.

Paul Scharf: Well, Dr. Whitcomb, we are trying to expand the ministry as God enables, and utilize the opportunities that He provides. And one of those, of course, is right here at SermonAudio.com. We hope all those listening will join us again! We're thankful that they tuned in to hear you answer their questions, and so friends, God bless you until we join you back here on SermonAudio.com.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by The Lockman Foundation Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.