

We Believe in Jesus

LESSON
ONE

The Redeemer
Discussion Forum



THIRD MILLENNIUM

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Lesson One: The Redeemer

Discussion Forum

With

Dr. Steve Blakemore
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Dr. Robert Lister
Dr. Jeffrey Lowman

Rev. Jim Maples
Dr. John McKinley
Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.
Dr. Thomas Nettles
Dr. J. I. Packer
Dr. Jonathan Pennington
Mr. Emad Sami
Dr. Thomas Schreiner

Dr. K. Erik Thoennes
Dr. Derek Thomas
Dr. Steven Tsoukalas
Dr. William Ury
Dr. Simon Vibert
Dr. Willie Wells

Question 1:

How did humanity come to need redemption?

The concept of redemption implies that something bad has taken place, but that its negative consequences can be reversed or corrected. So, when the Bible talks about Jesus as our Redeemer, it's natural to wonder about humanity's original condition. What was humanity like in the beginning? And how did humanity come to need redemption?

Dr. Thomas Nettles

The redemptive purpose of God arises out of a necessity for redemption. And that indicates that there was a relationship that God had with man — had with that being that was made in his image — that was unbroken at the beginning. Our redemption is being bought out of a slave market of sin. God did not create humanity in sin. He did not create humanity with a need for redemption in the beginning — even though mysteriously in God's covenant this was his plan. But he arranged it in such a way that all the creation is under his control; he uses it for his own glory. And yet, there is operating within creation those, like, cause and effect relationships within the material order itself that do operate and genuinely can be discerned, and yet they're under the hand of God. And even in the more complex moral relationships, the beings who actually enact these moral relationships are responsible for them. So we are responsible for our actions. We are responsible for our sin, and yet, God nevertheless is, sort of, by his own determination, in the background making sure that these things go as he sees fit.

So the reason for the need of redemption is that the ones in whom we were all created, Adam and Eve, had a relationship with God that was filled with fellowship, filled with joy. There was only one positive command they had that would test their growing love for him and their continued determination to follow what he said no matter what else was brought to their mind. And that was not to eat of a particular tree

in this beautiful place where he had placed them, where all of their needs were met otherwise. But because of the subtlety of Satan, he tempted them. He caused them to question God. He asked them to question, “Has God said...?” and then led them to seek something that they were, perhaps were, convinced was good, but not in the way God had told them. And so they disobeyed God. That disobedience to God in such a situation was of infinite culpability. And this brought, not only Adam and Eve, but all of those in whose stead they were acting into a state of condemnation. And as a result of this state of condemnation, a part of the punitive measures that God took was to also increase our corruption, that we might know that we could not please God on our own. So the redemption is necessary, absolutely necessary, because of our fallen state.

Question 2:

Why did Adam’s sin have such terrible consequences for humanity and creation?

When God created the world, he wanted humanity to care for and rule over the earth. He wanted Adam and Eve to multiply, and to spread across the globe, transforming it into a paradise. But because of Adam’s sin, humanity and creation were cursed, so that human beings and the creation itself became incapable of cultivating and sustaining the earthly paradise God desired. Why did Adam’s sin have such terrible consequences for humanity and creation?

Dr. Derek Thomas

Well, when God created Adam and Eve, he did so in such a way that they were to be representative for the entire human race. In retrospect, from Romans 5, Paul gives a theological twist on that, that as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. The point that he is alluding to, among others, is that Adam was a representative for the human race. So all of us, all of humanity — in the words of a Puritan — hangs on Adam’s belt. He put it in a more seventeenth century way than that, but that’s basically what he entailed. And therefore, the curse, the judgment that came, not just upon Adam but upon creation itself, so that labor became more difficult — the sweat of one’s brow and productivity, thorns and thistles and so on, the metaphors that are used in the book of Genesis, plus man’s own personal fall, Adam’s fall and consequently humanity’s fall — making it impossible for man to save himself. His will fell, his affections fell, his mind and thinking fell. The way he postulates a worldview fell with it. So there were consequences for the entirety of mankind and for the entirety of mankind’s faculties as a result of that first transgression.

Dr. Jeffrey Lowman

Humanity’s fall into sin was in response, of course, to Adam’s rebellion against God. He was tempted, Adam rebelled, and as the result of that, as God said, they died spiritually. Now when they died spiritually, it separated them from God, and of course, God is the source of all life. In that separation they no longer could have intimate fellowship with God. That resulted, in their own lives, of separating from

themselves. And what we see in Genesis 3 is Adam hiding from God, there is a sense of guilt and shame, and so there is a separation from himself. There is also in that passage a separation from one another that comes from Adam's sin, which is a separation between Adam and Eve in which he blames Eve for his actions. And you also see in God's curse in Genesis 3 a separation from the world in which Adam is separated from the environment, which he is in and his labor becomes difficult. Now all of that culminates in the fact that Adam is spiritually dead. It doesn't mean that he's not active spiritually, but it means that all he does spiritually is still in rebellion against God. He has no motive for God's glory. The other is that he is depraved in his lust. He seeks to do his own pleasure. We also know that he is under the influence of Satan, and ultimately he is under the judgment of God for eternity. And so the consequences when Adam partook of the fruit — he had no idea of the ramifications of what he was doing — and so the consequences are numerous, manifold. Only Christ can redeem us from those consequences.

Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

Many Christians thinking about sin, actually are only thinking about sins. They think about the individual acts and things we do that they know are wrong, sins of omission, things that we should do, we don't do, or sins of commission, the bad things we do we know we ought not to do, but sin in the Scripture, first of all, starts with something that is infinite. And the reality is that what we have in Genesis 3 is not just Adam and Eve each committing a sin. It is humanity in Adam and Eve, particularly in Adam, falling into sin. It is giving ourselves over to sin. You know, the background of this is the holiness of God. The holiness of God is infinite. The righteousness and justice of God are infinite. So, sin is an assault upon his infinite glory, his infinite holy, his infinite righteousness, and so it brings very devastating consequences. You cannot insult the infinite glory of God without dramatic consequences. You cannot rob God of his glory — as Paul describes the Fall and human sinfulness and depravity in Romans 1 — without grave consequences. The Lord himself warned Adam that there would be consequences to his sin. And what happened in the Fall, in Adam's sin, is that in Adam, we not only sinned, but we bear the consequences of that sin.

The consequences for Adam and Eve were immediate. The moment they ate of that fruit, they started to die. Mortality entered into them, and so all of a sudden the word "death" now enters into the human scene, and it's directly attributable to sin. But it's not just death. It's violence. It's catastrophe. It's the existence of carnivores and viruses. It's the problem of mosquitoes and murder. All that we see around us bears testimony to the effects, the devastating effects of human sin and God's judgment upon that sin. It's cosmic. There are hurricanes and tornadoes and earthquakes. There are lightning flashes and all kinds of things that take place in the created order that are testimony to, as Paul writes in Romans 8, creation groaning.

You know, what we see in Genesis 3 is a very straightforward and honest presentation of the consequences of sin. But, you know, there are Christians who read Genesis 3 and think that's all there is. But you come to read the totality of Scripture.

You come, for instance, to the last chapters of the book of Revelation, and you come to understand that the wrath of God poured out upon sin is going to make Genesis 3 look like just an introduction. This is what makes our salvation so important, so precious to us, is that our salvation is not just “being saved,” it’s being saved from something. It’s being saved from the wrath to come, from the just consequences of our sin. And not only do we need to be redeemed, but as the book of Revelation makes clear, so does creation itself. That’s why it speaks of a new heaven and a new earth. The consequences of sin are not just the fact that it rains on the just and the unjust and we have death in our bodies and a need for salvation. It’s that every part of this created order is now waiting for a consummation, a judgment and a perfection that only Christ can bring.

Question 3:

What are some of the effects of humanity’s fall into sin?

When humanity first sinned against God, the consequences were disastrous. We can’t possibly understand the full extent of the damage, but it touches the lives and beings of every person that descends from Adam and Eve by natural generation. What are some of the effects of humanity’s fall into sin?

Dr. Willie Wells

Well, there are a gamut of them, but the main thing is that the fellowship that we have with the Lord God himself has been broken, has been interrupted, because of the Fall. And when we think about the things that were lost — the innocence of man was deterred; therefore, because of the lack of fellowship, or the broken fellowship, man was in a deprived way. He didn’t have opportunity to enjoy the peace that God had initiated for us; thereby, his whole peace and happiness, the wholeness of man, was interrupted by that. And then, as a result of the Fall of man, humanity now, even now, we’re in a spiral moment as a result of that. But then the encouraging moment that we have that we always keep in mind is that the first Adam did fall, but then there was a second Adam. His name is Jesus Christ, and as a result of him, he is the nucleus, he is the one that brings man and God together again. So even though the Fall was catastrophic, but thank God, because of Jesus Christ, his Son, then we have a remittance, and we can be reposed or restored.

Dr. John McKinley

The consequences of humanity’s fall into sin extend in a first place to destruction of relationships and capacities that humanity was built with. So, in relationship with God there is loss of that, there is separation, and that leads to the unraveling of everything else the human is supposed to do and the connections that humans are supposed to have to each other and to the environment. So within ourselves, human beings now are trying to bear this burden of being the center for their lives. Instead of God being the center, because of our fall into sin, we’re now trying to relate everything to life as ourselves at the center, and that is too much for us. It crushes us and leads to all kinds of identity issues and pride in the first place, and these illusions that we can be in the

place of God. In relationship to each other, we are constantly trying to use each other, and competition and hostility still living with ourselves in the first place, instead of God in the first place, and so you have a destruction of relationships. Right away, with Adam and Eve, it shows, and as the human race unravels you have people murdering each other very quickly. In relationship to the created world, you've got chaos in creation where you now have storms and animals destroying each other. Everything is now hostile to life because humanity is supposed to order creation under God's rule, to live in ways that is for wellbeing. But now, having misled creation, cut off from God, everything is kind of off the tracks, and now things are destroying and self-destruction is just working itself out through all the extension of creation.

Mr. Emad Sami (translation)

Man lost the privilege of the relationship he had with God. This relationship between man and God has been severed. Man became a slave to his own desires, his instincts, and his weaknesses. So, he stayed condemned and convicted in judgment. Man's status today is that he is waiting for the judgment day and for punishment. These consequences have been placed on man's life as a result of his fall into sin.

Question 4:

Why do we need a Redeemer?

In order to save humanity from the consequences of our fall into sin, Jesus humbled himself, suffered, died, was buried and rose again. But was all that really necessary? Some religious traditions believe that if we work hard enough and follow all the rules, we can earn our way to God, meaning that we don't need salvation from someone else. Why do we need a Redeemer?

Dr. Jeffrey Lowman

When we think about redemption in the Scripture, what we look at are really the Old Testament context and the New Testament context. In the Old Testament, you had the kinsman redeemer who buys back an individual who usually is sold into slavery, and so the element of purchase is present. In the New Testament we see the concept of the slave market and Christ going into the slave market and purchasing a people for God through his shed blood. And so, to understand what redemption is, it's truly the buying back of an individual through a purchase price that's paid. And so the only way that humanity can receive that redemption is through someone paying that purchase price, and that's where the work of Christ comes in as the perfect man. And as God, he comes and provides a substitute, a sacrifice for our sins, giving us the ability to come to him by faith, and for the purchase price to be paid to the Father, speaking to God's justice, speaking to God's righteousness, and also very clearly demonstrating God's love, that his love sent his Son to purchase our sins.

Dr. Thomas Nettles

The Fall that we've already been talking about, brought man into a condition, not only of condemnation so that we need forgiveness of sins, but this condemnation is something that comes to us as a result of a single act of disobedience, as Paul said in Romans 5. Therefore, no matter what we do, if, say, if we were to obey the law from this time forward in our lives, we could never achieve a righteousness because we already are sinners. We've already broken God's law. There is no way that we can come back to the standard of righteousness. The one that does the laws shall live by them. But we already are lawbreakers. And so from the fact that the law has been broken and we are under condemnation, we need a Redeemer. There is an absolute righteousness that is needed, and so one must come who can fulfill God's requirement of an absolute righteousness. But also, even if we could, say, achieve some degree of righteousness by our present obedience, there's still the necessity of someone paying for the sins of our past. There's someone that must pay for the law breaking that we have already done. God will not violate his law, and he said that if we break the law, that we will die, that we are under a curse. Everyone that continues not in all things written in the book of the Law to do them are under a curse. So we are cursed, even if we obeyed all of God's law right now. So someone must pay for the curse, but we cannot pay it ourselves in such a way to gain forgiveness. It would simply be a just punishment that must continue forever. So, for someone to pay — in order for forgiveness actually to come — there must be a uniquely qualified redeemer to do this.

And a third thing that is involved in this is that there must be such an authority and such a glory in the redeemer, that God is fully satisfied with the honor that is shown him by the obedience of this person. And Anselm, who was a theologian in the Middle Ages, talks about this particular aspect of the atonement, that Christ, who was God himself, could not gain anything by himself by his obedience because he already had equal honor with God and therefore, his obedience must be given to others. And God is infinitely satisfied with this obedience because the person obeying also has the kind of honor that God requires. So this honor that is given to God is another part of the redemption. And the granting of the Holy Spirit — he is the one who can grant the Holy Spirit so that indwelling corruption we have also is gradually removed in the process of sanctification. So for all of these reasons and perhaps more, we stand in need of someone outside of us to be our redeemer. We're helpless and hopeless without that kind of help.

Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

No human being can atone for his own sins much less the sins of the world. No one can resolve the problem of sin. No human being can even come close to attempting. As a matter of fact, as the apostle Paul helps us to understand, the more we try to solve our problem, the deeper we find ourselves in our problem. We try to dig ourselves out of a hole only to dig ourselves deeper and deeper and deeper. The only one who can save us is the one whom the Father himself would send, whose perfect life would fulfill all, would indeed fulfill his righteousness. He would die in our place. He would do what we could not do. If I died a thousand deaths, it would not

atone for my own sin, but this one death of the only begotten Son of God could atone for the deaths of every sinner who would come to Christ by faith. Without Jesus Christ there is no atonement for sin. Only Jesus could die for our sins. But that was not where the story ended, or we would still be, as Paul says, of all people, most to be pitied, still dead in our trespasses and sins. Jesus not only died for our sins, he was raised by the power of God. He is the first-fruit of the resurrection that is promised now to us as well. Only Jesus could save. Only Jesus does save.

Question 5:

What motivated God to redeem fallen humanity?

Redemption is necessary because humanity's first parents — Adam and Eve — rebelled against God, and plunged the entire human race into corruption, condemnation and death. But God didn't leave them this way. Instead, he established a plan for their redemption — a plan that will ultimately redeem humanity and creation itself. But what motivated God to redeem fallen humanity?

Rev. Jim Maples

When we ask what motivated God to redeem fallen humanity, we must answer: nothing other than his goodness. The free and immutable counsel of his will motivated God to redeem fallen mankind. As Paul said in Ephesians “according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with ... his will.” We can say that God's plan to redeem fallen humanity was eternal even. Ephesians 3:11, Paul says, “...according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus.” And thus God's motivation to redeem fallen humanity does not depend upon any other thing or any other condition than his goodness alone.

Dr. K. Erik Thoennes

Asking what motivated God to redeem fallen humanity is a good question. But I think it's important to realize that a lot of times we're not exactly sure what motivates God. God does everything out of his sovereign freedom. He redeems and he creates and he does everything ultimately, though, to glorify himself, to display his character, so all of creation, from the heavens that declare his glory to human beings made in his image who are intended to reflect his glory, he's about showing his character, displaying his holiness and his worth and beauty. Everything he does is for that ultimate end. But, why does he redeem? He redeems so that he can display his glory through redeemed creation. You know, it's amazing these pictures we get of the worship in heaven where we gather around the throne as redeemed humanity worshipping the Lamb who was slain. God shows his glory in redeeming us. In the person of Christ, he comes and displays his holy character; he displays his holiness, his majesty, his grace, his compassion, his wrath. All these attributes converge in the person and work of Christ, especially in the cross. And we see this display of God's glory in human history. And it's that backdrop that is what we worship in response to. God glorifies himself in redeeming us and enabling us to reflect his image to the

world. So, God's redeeming work is ultimately to display his glory, like everything else he does.

Question 6:

Were people saved in different ways at different times throughout history?

Human beings need redemption because we're sinful. And we need a redeemer because we can't save ourselves. This is why Jesus came to earth. But what about people that lived before Jesus' incarnation — were they able to be saved? Has redemption always followed the same rules? Or were people saved in different ways at different times throughout history?

Dr. Riad Kassis

Many would think that in the Old Testament people were saved by obedience, by work, by doing, and many would think that in the New Testament this has been changed, that people are saved by grace, by faith. But I think that this is a misunderstanding of how God showed his mercy and his salvation to mankind. My understanding is that it is God's grace in both the Old Testament and the New Testament that saved people. So, in the Old Testament people were saved by faith. And the New Testament people were also saved by God's grace. It is God's grace, which is the foundation for God's forgiveness, for God's everlasting-life, and for God's blessings. Everything depends on God's grace.

Dr. Stephen Chan (translation)

In the teachings of the Bible, different methods are used from time to time in order to impart the lesson of salvation. In Old Testament times, God used the Law to reveal his grace, and in the New Testament he accomplishes this through the Son. All God's works are consistent. He used the Israelite's laws as a type so that we could understand his will. Of course, the Law and all of the Old Testament rituals themselves don't have redemptive power, even though they're all true teachings. Still, they gave the Israelites the ability to understand God's will for their day. In the time of the New Testament, God directly revealed himself in the Son, coming to earth to complete the work of salvation. And the New Testament is completely consistent with the Old; the basic principles of God's grace didn't change. To put it simply, Christ, as God's righteous Son, had to fulfill God's holy demands on our behalf, so that we could return to God and be reconciled to him. Additionally, as the Son of God, Christ was substituted for our sins, freeing us from sin's curse. So, salvation always has two parts: fulfilling God's requirements, and rescuing humanity. Christ is the only Savior who can fulfill these two aspects.

Dr. Simon Vibert

Well, there is a sense in which redemption through the Son did not happen until Christ came in the incarnation and supremely died as a sin-bearing sacrifice on the cross, but there is a sense in which throughout all of Israel's history, supremely

through the sacrificial system, there was an anticipation that there would one day be a sacrifice that would take away sins in a way that the sacrifice of animals could never do. So, there were patterns and types that could be understood with greater clarity once Christ had come, but obviously they looked forward to the day when the one sacrifice would be made for sin once and for all.

Dr. Dennis Johnson

Some people have read some parts of the New Testament as teaching that Old Testament people were saved in one way and New Testament people were saved in another way. Sometimes they are taught, or come to believe, that Old Testament people were saved by doing their best at keeping the commands of God that were given to Moses at Mount Sinai, whereas New Testament people are saved by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's really a serious mistake. It's a serious error. It's true that if Adam had not have sinned in the Garden, Adam and Eve could have been declared right with God. They wouldn't have needed salvation, per se, because there was nothing to be rescued from, but they would have been declared right with God forever on the basis of their own obedience. But once sin entered the picture in Genesis 3, it's utterly impossible for any fallen, sinful descendant of Adam, and that's all of us, the Lord Jesus is the exception — not fallen and not sinful — but for all of us, it's utterly impossible for us to ever commend ourselves into the presence of God on the basis of our obedience. So our best efforts at obedience, that is taught so clearly all the way through the Old Testament Scriptures, and it's taught so clearly in the New Testament as well.

Yes, it is true that God disciplined Israel at times for their disobedience. In fact, even expelling them from the Land of Promise because they had not adequately kept the covenant. But remember also that embedded in the covenant with Moses was the provision for the atonement of sins. The sacrificial system, right at the heart of everything which of course goes way, way further back than that. The apostle Paul also speaks very directly to this in Galatians where he's encountering some who are teaching Galatian Gentile Christians that having believed in Jesus, they now need to reassure their hearts that they are full-fledged, first-class members of the covenant people by keeping all the commands of the Law. And Paul points specifically to the fact that the covenant made with Abraham was given long before the Law given to Moses for Israel on Mount Sinai 430 years earlier. Paul says, you know even with human arrangements like this, a legal arrangement like this, that new conditions cannot be added later on. And God made a covenant with Abraham that he would declare Abraham and his children right, as Abraham believed God. And it was credited to Abraham through righteousness. That's the way of rescue for sinful people now, to look away from ourselves, to look away from our obedience or efforts of obedience and to look to Christ the one who perfectly obeyed. Moses in no way added any condition to that when God gave the law through Moses.

Interestingly in Romans, in the tenth chapter, Paul will quote Moses as announcing that principle that those that keep the Law could be right with the Law if there were such a person. He's already said elsewhere that that's impossible, but then he

immediately goes on also to quote from the books of Moses saying, the righteousness of faith says to us, we don't need to rely on our own achievement to go up to heaven to bring Christ down, to go into hades to bring Christ up. God has already sent Christ up to heaven to be our Redeemer. God has already brought Christ up from the dead. And the way of salvation, Moses teaches us, is the way of confessing with our mouth "Jesus is Lord" and believing in our hearts that God has raised him from the dead: one way of salvation. From the Garden of Eden, after the Fall, to the consummation of all things, it's resting and trusting in Jesus Christ, in him alone.

Dr. Steven Tsoukalas

People were saved by redemption through the Son at all times in all places. A key verse — Isn't this interesting? — We remember the "I am" statement of Jesus in John 8:58, "Before Abraham was, I am." But two verses before that, he states to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day. He saw it and was glad." And I thought to myself, in what sense did Abraham see the day of Christ and rejoice as seeing his day, implied there: of Messiah? Well, in Genesis 12, we all know Abraham is called by God. And what happens? He sets up an altar of sacrifice to the Lord. Now let's put those two together. All through Genesis, after Genesis 12, we have "Abraham set up an altar," "And Abraham set up an altar of sacrifice." Well, to whom was he looking? In the words of our Master, our Lord, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day. He saw it and was glad." Abraham was saved by looking to the coming Messiah through the sacrificial system that he set up by God's leading. And just as in the New Testament we have the outreach, the out-breaking of Jesus' ministry into the others, aside from the fold of the Jews, out-breaking into other nations. But we also have that in the Old Testament. The story of Ruth is a classic example of someone, how someone outside the fold can be included in the redemption of Yahweh in the Old Testament. So, my answer to: Has redemption always followed the same rules through the Son? Yes, through all times and all cultures. Before the incarnation of Christ, it was looking to the Messiah through the sacrificial system. And other people, other nations, were welcome through the example of Ruth, for example, to come in and say, "My God will be your God."

Question 7:

Why is Jesus the only one that can redeem humanity?

Many people are offended by the Christian claim that Jesus is the only redeemer provided to humanity. But does the Bible really teach that Jesus is the exclusive path to restored fellowship with God? What makes Jesus so unique that only he can save us? Why is Jesus the only one that can redeem humanity?

Dr. J. I. Packer

Salvation begins with the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus is the one who represented us before the Father as guilty sinners and died for our sins. And the way of salvation now is that we acknowledge him as the one who died for us, as the Lord who is risen,

and as the Christ who is here for us to trust, and enroll with him as his disciples. The pattern of personal salvation includes acknowledging him in that way and enrolling as his disciples. And otherwise, there's no link as yet between us and him, and so what's he's done for us doesn't yet apply to us. Union with Christ, by faith from the human side and through the Holy Spirit from the divine side is of the very essence of coming into the reality of salvation. So Paul, in Romans first five chapters, celebrates Christ for us dying on the cross for our justification and then in chapter 6 through 8, not changing the subject in his own mind but simply filling out the pattern that he started, he talks to us about Christ in us, and ourselves in Christ. And pulls the threads together in chapter 8, beginning with the great statement, "there's no condemnation now to them who are in Christ Jesus" — those who have entered into union with him in this way. And if we are going to preach the gospel, in the way that Paul did, we must hold together Christ for us and Christ in us, and make much of the thought of our union with him through faith and the Holy Spirit, just as we make much of his death for us on the cross, well, nearly two thousand years ago.

Dr. John McKinley

There are not other redeemers besides God the Son. We know that clearly because 1 Timothy 2:5 says that there is only one God and one mediator between God and humanity. Theologically it's consistent to say that only Jesus, God the Son, can be the mediator, the Redeemer, because there are at least two things that he's got to do to be able to accomplish salvation. And doing that requires that he be God and man to do it. One is that we've got to have our sin forgiven. The only way that sin can be forgiven is if somebody, who can suffer the punishment of God's eternal wrath of hell, has got to stand in as a human being and suffer that punishment. God can't suffer punishment without becoming incarnate. We can't get some animal to do it for us. It's got to be a human being suffering the punishment for the human crime. But then he's also got to be somebody divine because it's not just suffering the punishment, but it's being able to end the eternal wrath of God. As finite creatures, we cannot ever exhaust the punishment for our sin against an infinite eternal God. We'd never get to the end of it. That's why hell goes on forever and ever. But when you bring Jesus as a divine person into the punishing situation, he's suffering the punishment as a man, but it's the immense infinite eternal worth of who he is as a person that is able to exhaust and end, in a final way, the punishment against us for our sin, the punishment that we deserve. So those two things are necessary to fulfill if salvation is going to occur, and only a divine incarnation of God the Son is going to do that job.

Dr. Thomas Schreiner

One of the questions that Christians often ask is, "What role did Jesus Christ play in our redemption?" And here the epistle of Hebrews and the Gospel of John are very helpful to us. In order for us to be redeemed we know from the Old Testament that humanity needs to be restored. Humanity needs to have its sins forgiven, so to speak. How could this forgiveness take place? This forgiveness cannot not take place from someone who is not a human being himself. We read in the Old Testament that we have Old Testament sacrifices that were animal sacrifices. But the author of Hebrews makes it clear that animal sacrifices cannot atone for sins. They are unwilling victims,

they do not consciously know what they are accomplishing what they are doing for human beings. So we needed a person who was fully human, who shared in our humanity fully, who was sinless, who had never violated God's will. We needed a person who was willing to sacrifice himself for us on the cross. But also I want to say that at the same time he needed to be fully divine. A human being alone could not atone for our sins, one single human being, but a person united with divinity — such a person is of infinite worth and therefore he can offer a sacrifice that is of infinite effectiveness. And therefore we can gain from him forgiveness of sins if we put our trust and faith in him and if we repent of our sins.

Question 8:

How do human beings receive redemption from Jesus?

Fallen human beings are incapable of purchasing their own redemption. We need someone else to save us. And Scripture insists that that someone else is Jesus. But, how does the process work? What do we have to do? How do human beings receive redemption from Jesus?

Dr. Steve Blakemore

We can receive redemption in only one way, and that is by trusting in what God has done. If you think about it, what is it that's lost in the Fall? It is a relationship of profound trust in God and reliance upon God. Adam and Eve refused to trust in God's word about the tree. They refused to rely upon the wisdom of God, and therefore, their loss of trust and reliance, what we might call faith, is that which devastates the human condition. We can't fix that. We can't fix the betrayal against God that we have acted out. We cannot undo the affront that our sin is to God. Only God can change that. We can't set ourselves free from the power of sin. Only God can do it for us. So how do we receive redemption? We receive redemption by understanding, we can't do anything to save ourselves, to fix ourselves, and we throw ourselves completely upon the goodness, and the mercy, and the sovereign power of God to reach into our lives and redeem us by his grace.

Dr. Stephen Chan (translation)

Human beings receive God's salvation by grace through faith. The Bible tells us that there is no other way than the way of faith. And this faith consists of reliance on, acceptance of, and response to God. It's not a human decision. It flows completely from grace and responds to that grace. Everything is from God. He takes the initiative, and humanity responds. And in that process, grace continually supports us, leading us to God's great salvation.

Question 9:**What are some of the benefits of our redemption?**

Once Jesus has redeemed us, we begin new lives in restored fellowship with God. The blessings we receive as part of redemption are numerous, expansive and valuable beyond measure. Some of them we enjoy now; others we'll receive when we die; and still others we'll get when Jesus returns and consummates the new heavens and new earth. So, what are some of these blessings? What are some of the benefits of our redemption?

Dr. Dennis Johnson

When sin entered the world through Adam our relationship with God was disrupted. We see that in Adam trying to hide, Adam and Eve trying to hide from God, God covering their nakedness, of course, God expelling them from the Garden of Eden after he's confronted them over their sin. The relationship is broken. We are now guilty before the righteous justice of God. We need restoration. We need reconciliation. We need forgiveness. But even more than that, we need to be accounted right in God's sight, not just to be put back to zero, but to be accounted righteous in God's sight. Jesus has done that for us in terms of a relationship. He obeyed where Adam failed to obey. He kept God's covenant command from start to finish, inside and out. And therefore, we are declared right in God's sight because Jesus' righteousness is credited to us. And the climax of his obedience is his suffering death for us. And that suffering of death for us cleanses our conscience, cleanses our record of guilt. Those are the two sides we often think of when we talk about that big word "justification." That God has cleared our record of guilt because of Jesus' death for us, and that God has credited our record with Jesus' righteousness because of his obedience for us.

And along with that external, that forensic, legal restoration of our relationship comes right on its heels, and right with it, that wonderful theme of adoption, that we are declared to be children of God. Again, because we are united to God's eternal Son, we are now adopted sons and daughters of a living God and brothers and sisters of Jesus the eternal Son. That would be enough, but there's more. The Holy Spirit in applying to us what Jesus has done for us also applies that work of union with Christ subjectively. Paul talks about this in Romans 6, when he talks about our dying to sin and being raised to righteousness. But that's a dimension that Paul says, now, that's going to make for a new way of living, for a new freedom from the tyranny and the dominion of sin in our lives. Not that we'll never sin again, but we no longer need to be dominated by sin as though it were our lord. It's no longer our lord; we've died. And we've been raised with Christ and so the Spirit begins his lifelong, patient, quiet, relentless work of conforming us more and more to the image of Christ. That's what we call sanctification. What a wonderful benefit that is of the gospel, of the fact that we are united to Christ by faith. And sanctification is leading to the day that we speak of as glorification. When we will be made like Christ, when we see him at his return and are made like him in every respect. No more sin. No more guilt. No more

suffering or sorrow or pain. And it all flows to us because we are united to Christ by the work of the Spirit drawing us to trust in Jesus and what he's done for us.

Dr. Thomas Schreiner

When we look at the world today, we see that people are longing for meaning, for significance, for purpose. And there's so much confusion in our culture. What is life all about? What is the reason for living? Why am I here? And so people try all sorts of things to find meaning and significance — whether they pursue their job or sexuality or drugs. I mean, there are all kinds of venues and paths where people are trying to find happiness and joy. But the gospel tells us our fundamental need as human beings is to be in a right relationship with our Creator, with the one who made us. And the gospel tells us the truth about ourselves. It's a very difficult truth to accept. And that truth is that we are alienated from him. The truth is that I, Tom Schreiner, am wicked. I'm an evil person. And that's a very hard thing to bear. We all know what it's like to be in a conversation with someone and they point out one of our sins. We resist it; we're defensive. And the gospel tells us that our Creator is saying that to us. The one who made us is saying that you are evil; you have displeased me. And it takes a great work of the Holy Spirit to admit that and to stand before God naked, as it were, and to say, "I have displeased you, I have rebelled against you, I am a wicked person."

But the gospel doesn't end there does it? The gospel says that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for our sins, to absorb the wrath of God. God out of his love sent his Son so that our sins could be forgiven, so that if we put our trust in him we can be forgiven of our sins. And when we come to that experience, when we turn to Jesus Christ for such forgiveness, there is an incredible sense of peace, a sense of rightness with the world because it truly is a rightness with the world. We suddenly realize this is what we are created for. We are created to be in right relationship with God. We recognize at that moment when we confess our sins and we're forgiven of our sins, this is the truth about me, I'm flawed; I'm fallible. I was just reading the story yesterday of a very famous person, and one of his children was criticizing him for his sins. And it struck me again, isn't this the story of us all? We are flawed, sinful people, but when we confess our sins we're honest with ourselves. We turn to Christ for forgiveness, and we experience peace with God. As Paul says in Romans 5, we're a new creation now. And obviously there are struggles in our lives as Christians. We still have trials and difficulties. But I think we still have that sense of abiding peace. The love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and we sense now that nothing can be separate us now from God's love because we've been forgiven of our sins. We have a new status as God's children. We have a new destiny. We're filled with hope. We're filled with joy and we're given strength to make it through these pilgrim days.

Question 10:
What is the ultimate goal of redemption?

Given that redemption provides us with so many blessings and benefits, and that God doesn't give all of them to us at the same time, it's worth asking what redemption will look like in the future. When we've finally and fully received every benefit of redemption, what will we be like? What is the ultimate goal of redemption?

Dr. William Ury

If the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, has a goal for us I think it would be to restore the image lost at the Fall. Redemption is to save me from my sins, but it's also to produce in me a Christ-likeness that was, in a sense, the picture that God had for all humanity before the Fall. So at the other end of our lives — we've got the Fall, we have sin, the Lord's work upon the cross, his resurrection, the Holy Spirit's work in our lives — at the end — in Greek the word is *telos* — the goal at the end of human history, his ultimate purpose is to have reproduced in us by his sacrificial work in our lives and for us, and the Spirit's work in our lives, a re-formation of all that was lost. That love that became self-love is restored to a self-giving love. The unholiness, the unrighteousness, the brokenness of sin, is replaced by a fullness and a wholeness. So the restoration of the image — I'm thinking of Colossians 3 where Paul says that we are renewed in the likeness and image, or the image of our Savior. That concept to me is a picture of what the Lord is wanting to do. And I think the book of Revelation shows that as the nations are gathered, as people come to that final, climactic judgment and the fulfillment of the new heaven and new earth, you've got a concept of holiness and love and of persons remade in the image of the God who created them.

Dr. Stephen Chan (translation)

The ultimate goal of salvation is for humanity to be reconciled to God, to return humanity to its original place of honor and righteousness. While salvation includes the forgiveness of sins and the restoration of humanity's relationship with God, what's more important is that we can receive an even greater glory and be restored to our original position in creation. In this way humanity and God have an absolutely perfect and good union and fellowship. So, speaking from this point of view, Christianity is not like typical religions. Our ultimate goal is not to resolve our difficulties, but to return to God, to be reunited with him, and to achieve the original perfect place that humanity once had.

Dr. Steve Blakemore

Christ does not come simply to pay a debt that we owe to God, so that God can write our debt off of the books. No, Christ comes to bring us back to the Father. Christ comes to unite the divine life that is lost in the fall of Adam, back to our humanity. Only if Christ is the one who can bring God and man together can we really say that we have been saved. Not just forgiven of our sins, but saved, made again what God

intended us to be all along, those who bear his image, those who live in the fullness of his presence, and those whose lives are united to him in love and faith and obedience.

Question 11:

Would we have been better off if humanity had never fallen into sin?

The benefits Jesus provides as our Redeemer are so wonderful that some theologians believe they surpass the blessings humanity had before our fall into sin. Are they right? Was it worth suffering the effects of sin in order to receive redemption? Or would we have been better off if humanity had never fallen into sin?

Rev. Jim Maples

Would we have been better off if man had never fallen into sin? We have to answer in some way, yes, because man would not be subject to the depravity that now marks his very nature, man would not have lost communion with God, man would not have been subject to guilt and shame as the result of his sin, and man would not have been subject to physical as well as the spiritual death that he inherited as the result of his sin. Man passed from a state of *posse non mori*, possible not to die, to a state of *non posse non mori*, not possible not to die, as the result of his sin. But when we consider the states of man, I think that we need to look at Augustine and his four states that he said that man passes through from pre-Fall to glorification. Augustine said that man before the Fall existed in a state of *posse non peccare*, it was possible for man not to sin. After the Fall he passes into a state of *non posse non peccare*, not possible not to sin. It may be bad grammar but good theology. And at redemption, man passes into a state of *posse peccare posse non peccare*, it is possible to sin, possible not to sin. He is a new creation but, as Paul says, as that old man who does all the things that we do not want to do and doesn't do all the things that we desire to do. But at glorification, man passes into yet another state where it is *non posse peccare*, not possible to sin. So in that sense, you can say that man after redemption, after glorification is even in a better state than he was pre-Fall because is it not possible for him to sin in his glorified state. I think though, when we come to these "what if..." questions, I think we should always look at these and say that God is holy, just and good, and that whatever he brings to pass is good. As Romans 8:28 says it is "for the good of those who have been called to his purpose." So we have to say in the final analysis that whatever our state is now, it is good because a good and gracious and loving God decreed that it be so.

Dr. Stephen Chan (translation)

Humanity's state is better than before, because before the Fall, we were in a neutral state, able to sin, able not to sin. After the Fall, we became unable to stop sinning; everything we do is tainted by sin. But now that humanity has been redeemed, our original abilities have been restored, as in Eden, so that we are again able not to sin. We also have God's special grace. The Holy Spirit comes to be with us, so that we become sensitive to sin, and have a passionate hope for spiritual things. And we have

the true word of the Bible as our guide. When our redemption is complete, we will reach the perfect position of no longer being bound by sin. At that time, we will be completely sanctified, completely holy. We will still be created beings, but we will completely obey God and worship him. That is a glorified state, far better than that of Adam and Eve.

Question 12:

How and why will humanity's redemption impact the rest of creation?

When we think about redemption, we often reflect on how Jesus saves sinners. And we look forward to our final salvation when we will be with Christ for eternity. But we sometimes forget that humanity isn't the only part of creation that benefits from our redemption. How and why will humanity's redemption impact the rest of creation?

Dr. Robert Lister

Very quickly in the development of the narrative of the book of Genesis we find that after the creation comes the Fall, and so what God has designed now begins to be corrupted by his creature's sin, and there are detrimental effects brought about by the rebellion of the creature that bring corrupting effects to what God has made. And so what does that look like? How does that affect God's original design? And yet, very quickly in the aftermath of the Fall, God also announces a plan of redemption that certainly has different administrations within it, but it begins as soon as God's pronouncing the curse on the man, woman and serpent, he's announcing a plan of redemption as well. So, God is going to redeem and restore what has been corrupted by sin. On the other side of the fulfillment of God's redemptive aims is the new heavens and the new earth and the restoration of things to what they were originally supposed to be.

Dr. Stephen Chan (translation)

Humanity's redemption has a strong impact on the world as it exists now and as it will exist in the future. Because humanity is the only part of creation that bears the image of God, we can say from one point of view that humanity is in the world, but we can also say that the world is in humanity. When humanity fell, the world also fell. And when God restores humanity from the Fall the world will also be delivered. We are the world in miniature. We are also the world's kings. God gave us the whole world, commanding us to manage the earth. Thus, humanity isn't just one of many creatures, but we are the crown of creation. In this way, humanity's redemption is the key aspect of the destiny of the entire world.

Dr. Dennis Johnson

We are reminded that at the very beginning of creation it was all very good. God the Creator pronounced his pleasure on everything that he had made. It was very good. No sin, no suffering in any way to stain the joy and the delight of Adam and Eve in the fellowship of their Creator. Of course we know what happens in Genesis 3.

They're tempted. They succumb to the temptation. They rebel. Paradise is lost, as John Milton said. But God's intention is to bring us to paradise, to bring us to a place, really a sanctuary, a temple, a garden temple in which we enjoy fellowship with our Creator again.

Dr. Jonathan Pennington

The Scriptures are very clear that God cares for and values the physical creation he's made, both the world and us as the apex of that creation. He has poured himself, in fact his own image and identity, into us as his creatures. He cares about us and he cares about the world he has made. The resurrection of Jesus is one of the witnesses to the reality that God cares about the physical state and its resurrected and renewed form. Our hope, and what the Scriptures teach, is that we, in our final home, will be in a new creation — a new heaven, and a new earth, the Scriptures call it, which is a physical embodied existence. The Scriptures teach in Romans 8 that the world itself is longing for its own redemption even as we ourselves are awaiting our own adoption as sons and daughters of God's kingdom. So, it is a great hope. It is something that has impacted me as a parent as I think about speaking about the gospel and the future hope with my children. There is a day, I tell them often, when disappointments of broken toys, the day after one's birthday, or especially for us, the day after Christmas when all the anticipation of getting new things has gone away, and when friends die of cancer, and other situations that occur, I remind myself and my children by offering them the hope that not only will we have the forgiveness of sins, but that all of those things are signs that this world is not as it should be, and that our hope, our sure hope, is that there is a day coming when God will renew all things. We can see this especially in the beautiful words that Jesus taught us, his disciples, to pray when he said, "Our Father, who is in heaven, let your name be sanctified, let your kingdom come and let your will be done on this earth even as it now is in heaven." That crucial, central, foundational Christian idea is that we are now living in a time of waiting for the heavenly realities to become earthly realities, that the way things are done in heaven when God is hallowed, when all things are right, and righteousness and glory and truth and love reigns. Our hope as Christians, our sure hope, is that those realities of heaven will become earthly realities, and this is what the Scriptures promise and hope as the new creation, our eternal home.

Question 13:

How does Jesus' role as judge relate to his redemptive work?

Jesus, the Son of God, is our Redeemer. But the Bible also tells us that Jesus has authority to judge the world, and that he'll exercise that authority in the final judgment. Is this a contradiction? Can Jesus be both redeemer and judge? How does Jesus' role as judge relate to his redemptive work?

Dr. K. Erik Thoennes

When Jesus came, he came to redeem the world. And he comes as a Savior; he comes as a servant; he comes as a preacher. One of the main ways he comes, though, is the

judge of all. He's the Creator, he's the sustainer, and he's the one who is the way, the truth, and the life. And as the truth he represents the truth of God, he represents the righteousness of God. And so Jesus comes determining who is righteous and who isn't. To be righteous we need to find the righteousness of Christ and make it our own by faith. But Jesus will return again, and he'll come to judge the world. And every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is indeed Lord of all. And he comes, sorting out the sheep from the goats, the ones who find righteousness in him and the ones who suffer because of their unrighteousness. Jesus doesn't just come as a suffering servant; he comes as a ruling, reigning judge of the world. We all have to answer to him. When he comes again, the Bible says that every mouth will be stopped. And that's because Jesus comes as the judge of the world, and the one who not only judges the world, but who's able to justify sinners because of his righteousness.

Dr. Stephen Chan (translation)

In regard to redemption, the Son's ultimate role is that of a judge that comes to the world at the end of the age. When he returns, Christ comes as the Lamb that was slain, entering the world in perfect righteousness and love. And when the task of restoration is complete, he, on the one hand, will save those that belong to him, because he is the one that bore the sins of the world. But he will also condemn the unrighteousness and sin of those that rejected him. The world was created through Christ and is upheld by him, so it is most fitting that Christ be the one to judge it.

Question 14:

How should we respond to the redemption we've received in Christ?

There are past, present and future aspects to our redemption. Each one of these aspects impacts our lives in significant ways, and each one deserves a response from us. So, how should we respond to the redemption we've received in Christ?

Dr. William Edgar

First, of course, the Protestant answer, biblical answer, is faith, and faith has a number of components. We need to understand what we're about to receive. We need to accept it as true, and we need to entrust ourselves to Jesus. So, that's our basic response. From that, of course, derives our entire Christian life. We order our lives in view of the sovereignty of Jesus in our calling, whether we be called as citizens or parents or in particular jobs. All of that comes under his lordship. So it's a very comprehensive response, but it begins with trusting him for salvation.

Dr. Matt Friedeman

Well, I think if the cross of Jesus Christ takes us to a holiness, and we can understand that holiness as we'll be holy forever, we will be like him. What does that mean now? It means we want to be like him now. When Jesus says, "Follow me," he says, come be like me. The Holy Spirit is sent on so that we can be holy. The Holy Bible is so that we can be holy as he is holy. So this is what I want to do. I want to say, Lord,

here's my money. Can you make my use of money holy? Here's my sexuality. Can you make my sexuality holy? I want to take stuff like my relationships, my anger. I want to take my irritation with the people at work, and I just want to give it to him and say, Lord, could you touch that? Sanctify it. Sanctify it entirely so I can be like you. I want to do that with all of my life. And inasmuch as we can love him with all, we've done a good thing. Remember, Jesus said love me with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength. Now you either believe that that all is possible, or you don't. But I want to come from the understanding of Scripture that it is possible now.

Dr. Jeffrey Lowman

When we look at the epistles of the apostle Paul, what we see are writings that are literally filled with the sense that possibly even tomorrow the Lord Jesus Christ might return. And what this produced in Paul's life, and what it should produce in our lives, is a sense of a desire to constantly live our lives pleasing to God. Paul talks about this in 2 Corinthians 5 where he speaks about that he lives in both fear, knowing that he will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, but also that the love of Christ constrains him and calls him to live out his life before God in a very effective manner. And so there is an anticipation. There is also a sense of purification. 1 John 3 talks about the need to purify ourselves because we are children of God. That Christ will appear, and we will be like him, and anyone who sets his hope on this purifies himself. And so, both the anticipation, the purification, and the willingness of the believer to constantly be pulled, as it were, toward eternity. Our life is not here truly; it is hidden with Christ as Paul says in Colossians 3.

Since humanity's fall into sin, we've struggled with corruption and brokenness. But God hasn't abandoned us. Even before the creation of the world, he lovingly planned our redemption through his Son Jesus Christ. And through Jesus' redemptive work, we're now being freed from the consequences and corruption of our sin. And when he returns to complete our redemption, we'll live forever in perfect fellowship with God in the new heavens and new earth. Until then, we express our gratitude to him through praise, obedience, and love.

Dr. Stephen Blakemore is the Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Wesley Biblical Seminary.

Dr. Stephen Chan is Associate Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Seattle University in Washington State.

Dr. William Edgar is Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary.

Dr. Matt Friedeman is Professor of Evangelism and Discipleship at Wesley Biblical Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi.

Dr. Dennis Johnson is Academic Dean and Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in California.

Dr. Riad Kassis is Regional Director for Overseas Council, an international training ministry for Christian leaders.

Dr. Robert Lister is Associate Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at the Talbot School of Theology at Biola University in La Mirada, California.

Dr. Jeffrey Lowman is Senior Pastor at Evangel Church PCA in Alabaster, Alabama and Professor of Homiletics and Systematic Theology at Birmingham Theological Seminary.

Rev. Jim Maples is Director of the Doctor of Ministry in Pastoral Leadership program at Birmingham Theological Seminary in Birmingham, Alabama.

Dr. John McKinley is Associate Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Biola University in La Mirada, California.

Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. serves as president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the flagship school of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Dr. Thomas Nettles is Professor of Historical Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Dr. J. I. Packer is Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, and preaches and lectures widely in Great Britain and America.

Dr. Jonathan Pennington is Associate Professor of New Testament Interpretation and the Director of Research Doctoral Studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Mr. Emad Sami serves at Veritas College as the Regional Director of Middle East & North Africa.

Dr. Thomas Schreiner is the James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation and Associate Dean of Scripture and Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Dr. K. Erik Thoennes is Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Biola University and is a frequent guest speaker at churches, conferences, and retreats, in addition to co-pastoring a local church.

Dr. Steven Tsoukalas is Associate Professor of Apologetics and Christian Thought at Wesley Biblical Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi.

Dr. Simon Vibert is the former Vicar of St. Luke's Church, Wimbledon Park, UK, and is presently the Vice Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, and Director of the School of Preaching.

Dr. Willie Wells is Pastor at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Fairfield, Alabama and a professor at Birmingham Theological Seminary.