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# Your Questions about Scripture and Hope

**DARRELL DELANEY**

Questions are a natural part of our faith. It is how we work out what it means to live our faith. As a community, discussing these questions together gives us the opportunity to clarify what we believe and think together about what it means to live as Christians in the world. Today, we will continue this practice by looking at some of the questions and issues you have asked *Groundwork* this year. We will discuss questions we have received in response to our discussions on the Lord's Prayer, Joshua, and Revelation. Then we will discuss where we find hope in light of the issues some have shared about their most pressing things in our faith today. Stay tuned.

**SCOTT HOEZEE**

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

**DARRELL DELANEY**

And I am Darrell Delaney.

**SCOTT HOEZEE**

At *Groundwork*, we always encourage this at the end of every program, Darrell. We always say send us suggestions; send us your questions, your thoughts, what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*; and some of you do. We get e-mails, we get regular postal letters, we get Facebook messages; and so, we are glad to know that you, the listeners, are listening, and you are listening well; and therefore, you ask us some follow-up questions on some of our series.

**DARRELL DELANEY**

And we appreciate the fact that you reach out. It means that you are engaged; it means that you are paying very close attention; we know that you love the Word; we know that you want to grow in your walk with Jesus; and so, it is great when you are able to ask questions, because our faith, Scott, it gets stuck at the question. If we cannot understand what we are doing, or how to live, then we kind of get stuck there. So, I know we are not experts or super scholars, but we will do our best to look in scripture to help people when they bring questions to us.

**SCOTT HOEZEE**

We had a series on the Lord's Prayer not long ago, and we have a couple of questions that have come, and one particularly tied in with that part of the Lord's Prayer that says: Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. And so, a questioner named David asked us: Exactly why do we say that? What do we mean: On earth as it is in heaven? Are we supposed to be building a paradise here on earth? Are we trying to build the kingdom on our own here on earth? What do we mean by that when we say that in the Lord's Prayer?

**DARRELL DELANEY**

I think it is very important, and it is always going to be something that we would lean on as hosts of this show, *Groundwork*, is that we are going to allow the scripture to give us the context on what we are to learn and how we are to respond. So, when Jesus brings this prayer to his disciples, he is trying to get them to understand that the kingdom of God is actually here. It is at hand, because Jesus brings that in his ministry as

the first message he tells his disciples to say; and so, the kingdom of God is something entirely different than what this world is. So, I don't think we should focus on what is happening here physically, because it is a spiritual kingdom that is breaking into our world today. That is the first thing.

### **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Right; and by the way, I think we may have pointed this out in the Lord's Prayer series, and if we didn't, we should have, but we will do it now. Sometimes we read this as two... We read: Your kingdom come... and then: Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, as though it is just the will on earth...no, it is both. Your kingdom come *and* your will be done, *both* on earth as it is in heaven; and you are right, Darrell; I mean, that was Jesus' first sermon—the kingdom of God is at hand; it is here; it is breaking in. We see that all through John's gospel, where the miracles in John are always called *signs*; they are arrows that are pointing to how close the kingdom is. Not every person in Palestine got healed during the years of Jesus' ministry, but every time he did heal somebody, it was like an arrow pointing to the nearness of God's kingdom; it is breaking in...it is coming.

So, we cannot make paradise on earth. We cannot build the kingdom of God here. But in Matthew 6 and in Luke 11, where Jesus teaches the Lord's Prayer, what he is saying is, you know, we carry two passports with us, Darrell. I got a brand new passport just recently. I am a citizen of the United States, but the invisible passport we carry says I am a citizen of the kingdom of God, too...both...

### **DARRELL DELANEY**

Dual citizens.

### **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Dual citizenship, and Paul talks about that also in Philippians, that we are dual citizens, of this world, and at the same time, of the kingdom of God; and so, in our lives here, we want to show that... You know, we said in the Lord's Prayer, what is a kingdom? God's kingdom is that area...that zone of influence...where God's will calls the shots; and so, when we live in a way that it makes clear in my life God is calling the shots, that is our witness on earth as it is in heaven that we are citizens of God's kingdom.

### **DARRELL DELANEY**

The beautiful thing is that in heaven they are not confused about that, and in the book of Revelation he shows the vision happening in real time of how God's worship is happening at the exact real time of when God's worship is happening, and if we live as worshippers of God, here, then we are actually agents of the kingdom.

### **SCOTT HOEZEE**

In another question related to that Lord's Prayer series, kind of related to the end phrase which is actually not, as we pointed out in the Lord's Prayer series: For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen. That was not actually in the Bible. Jesus did not say that; that has been added by the tradition of the Church, but a listener named Keith, that led to him wondering about some things about scripture itself. What parts of scripture do we look at? Keith mentioned that some people think that we shouldn't study the Old Testament, only the New Testament; and even in the New Testament, you know, some people think Paul is more important than the other apostles. Or we have red-letter bibles. Are we supposed to find more authority is Jesus' words than in other people's words? You know, how do we think about scripture on this earth for now? I think that it is actually a good question.

### **DARRELL DELANEY**

I just wanted to say first and foremost, Keith has been listening for years, as he wrote in his question; so, thank you, Keith, for listening; thank you for being a part of our show and being a part of wanting to grow in your walk with Jesus. You mentioned there is this quote that he said: *Under the blood*. I think it is interesting because some traditions believe that when they say something is under the blood, the idea is that out of the essence of Romans Chapter 8: (verse 1) There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The blood...if it is under the blood, it means that Christ has paid for it and atoned for anything that would bring

shame, guilt or condemnation to you; but in this situation, I think that it is being used in an oversimplification of okay, you can do whatever you want because it is under the blood, and that is exactly in contradiction of what Romans 6 teaches, that: <sup>(verse 1)</sup> we will not continue sinning that grace may increase because Christ has paid the way. So, hopefully that context isn't overly simplified in the use of it as it is under the blood.

### **SCOTT HOEZEE**

And insofar as this question also talked about, you know, how do we think about the Old Testament; how do we think about Jesus' words as opposed to other people's words? I think it is fair to say, Darrell, that we believe, you know, as Paul wrote to Timothy, that *all* scripture is God breathed; and by the way, when Paul wrote that to Timothy, he wasn't talking about his own writings. He didn't know his own writings were going to be considered scripture. He was talking about the Hebrew Bible—the Old Testament. So, *all* scripture is God breathed; it is all authoritative; and you know, sometimes those red-letter Bibles make it look like: Oh, well; these are the more important parts. No; we don't think there are more important and less important parts of scripture. Kind of in our Reformed tradition, we believe it is all God breathed—it is all inspired—it is all authoritative, Old Testament and New, right? As somebody once said, something along the lines of: In the Old Testament, we have Christ hidden, and in the New Testament, we have Christ revealed, but it is all one message; it is all one plan of salvation; and it is all equally authoritative.

### **DARRELL DELANEY**

God has his full and final revelation in his Word, and we don't need to pit parts of the Word against each other. All of it is going to help us if we look in it and we are careful to listen and see what God is saying; but as we continue in this episode, we want to address other questions that other people have had. So, stay tuned.  
*Segment 2*

### **SCOTT HOEZEE**

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and Darrell, this is one of our annual programs where we consider the questions that our listeners have sent in across the past year; again, on e-mail or through our Facebook, or a regular letter in the mail. You have asked questions, you have raised issues, you have made suggestions for future *Groundwork* series, and we always encourage that and appreciate that. In recent times, we have had a couple different series. We had a series on the book of Joshua, and a series on the book of Revelation; and in the second part of this listener-question program, we are going to look at a couple questions that emerged from each of those series.

### **DARRELL DELANEY**

So, there is one that is in response to the book of Joshua series: "God Keeps His Promises and Provides for His People," and a listener named Brent wants to know exactly how much time has elapsed between the promise and the fulfillment of the promise; and he knows that it says *generations* with an *S*, but he is trying to figure out how much time that is.

### **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Yes; and promise and fulfillment is a major, major, major part of scripture. In fact, at my seminary when I am helping our students get ready for their big oral comprehensive exam before they graduate, I tell them: You know, we often ask you questions about the Bible that tie in with promise and fulfillment, so be sure you review that stuff, because it is very, very important.

In scripture, God is always promising things, and then helping bring them to fulfillment. God promised to Abram in Genesis 12 that he would become a mighty nation, and that through that nation all nations of the earth would one day be blessed; that is a big promise; and then God carries out that in all of scripture. The thing to remember...so, Brent asks a little bit about how much time between promise and fulfillment, but one of the things I think we need to remember, Darrell, is that promise and fulfillment in scripture happens on a rolling basis. It is never one-and-done thing, right? The ultimate fulfillment of all of God's promises hasn't happened even yet.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

Right.

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

That will only come when Christ returns; but we get a whole series of mini fulfillments all along the way.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

I think the first thing is for us to understand in light of that, God is standing outside of our time. He is eternal. That is what it means, the he does see everything now: Past, present, and future; all of humanity, all of history; and so, promise and fulfillment for God means something different than it means for us, who live in real time, and we are bound by this time. The fact that God is the one who is the one making the promise is the real emphasis here, because if you look at Hebrews Chapter 11, it just shows the Hall of Fame of faith and people who believe, but it also mentions that <sup>(verse 8ff)</sup> Abram never received the fulfillment of his promise, but he believed in the one who would promise. So, I think it is most important for us to understand who is promising, and sometimes time and temporal things that tick-tick clock on the wall is not how God is actually looking at it.

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Exactly; and we have also said when we have been in the prophets...so, this question spun out of the Joshua series...but when we have looked at prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, we talk about how prophecy isn't just *foretelling* the future, it is *forthtelling* the truth of God, and when the prophets make promises or when they repeat the promises of God that God revealed to someone like Isaiah, what we see is that there are multiple horizons of the fulfillment. There is going to be an ultimate, ultimate, ultimate fulfillment, sure. So, you know, when Isaiah promises a Christ, well, ultimately that is going to be Jesus, but there are many anointed ones, even Cyrus, who released the Babylonian captives, you know, Cyrus was called a christ, because God anointed Cyrus, king of Persia, to do this task of letting God's people return to Israel—to the Holy Land. So, we look for multiple horizons of fulfillment, not just a one-and-done thing. That is good news, because it reminds us, Darrell, that God is constantly active in our lives, in the Church. We are living in between times, right? We are in the already and the not yet, but we get lots of little fulfillments all along the way to encourage our faith.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

What is the beautiful thing about that, Scott, is that God could be making promises to us that may not even manifest until our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren's lifetimes, should the Lord tarry his return; and so, the God who is making the promises is the faithful one, and that is who we focus on.

I think, too, there is another question in the book of Revelation that we need to talk about; and Kurt, who listened, he just simply e-mailed "Pre-mil?" with a question mark in response to our *Revelation: A Comfort for a Believer* series; and I believe he is referring to pre-millennialism, and I think we just need to break that down and talk about the millennial views, if we can.

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Yes; in Revelation Chapter 20, you know, we do have this notice that John of Patmos is talking about an angel coming down and seizing the dragon, who is the devil or Satan; and you know, we read: <sup>3</sup>He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.

And then there is another reference to thousand years; so, a millennium. How do we think about the *Millennium*? There are three schools of thought, Darrell: premillennialism; postmillennialism; and something called amillennialism; and it does go to how you interpret the book of Revelation. Pre-millennials believe that that thousand years is still to come; they kind of break down Jesus' second coming to stages; and after Jesus' initial second coming, he is going to sit on a literal throne in Jerusalem for a thousand years before the final end comes; and so, they are premillennial, and they think that the thousand years John refers to in Revelation is still to come; the clock won't start ticking until Jesus comes back initially and sits on a throne in Jerusalem.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

As you can tell, too, postmillennialism is the opposite of that. So, the thousand-year reign will come first, and *then* the end will come with Jesus' second coming is what is believed there; and I think between the two views, we have seen that there have been a lot of Hollywood movies and a lot of things that have attached themselves to.

The *Left Behind* series is based on this notion\*, and sometimes people can read those books or they can get caught up in some media or sermons or pastors teaching this, and they can get a little bit afraid about it; but I think that the book of Revelation is designed to give us hope and comfort; and I think it is really important for us to know what we are to respond with, as you talk about amillennialism.

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Right; postmillennials—the Seventh Day Adventist tradition is a postmillennial. They believe Christ had made a secret second coming sometime in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and that was the *end* of the thousand years. So, we are on the other side of the thousand years now; but the Reformed tradition...and this was reflected all through our Revelation series here on *Groundwork*...we are amillennial; and that means we take the Millennium metaphorically—symbolically. The thousand years is the entire time of history until Christ comes again; and when Christ comes again, it will be a one-and-done; he will return once and for all. We are already, as it were, living in this millennial time, where Christ has defeated the devil, but the devil is not completely gone yet. It is, again, as we talked about earlier in this program, we live between the times, in the already and the not yet; and so, amillennial traditions, which represents a lot of the Church...not all of it...but a lot of the Reformed and Protestant traditions, and I think the Roman Catholic tradition as well...we take that Millennium in the book of Revelation symbolically. We do not think it is still to come; we don't think it has already happened and is done. We are in the middle of it, and we will be in the middle of it until Christ comes again. That is just sort of the distinction there.

But, as we close this episode, we will take the remaining time we have to discuss some of the other issues our listeners have identified as very pressing for their faith right now; and how do we maintain hope in this fragmented, broken world? We will talk about that next, so stay tuned.

*Segment 3*

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

And I am Scott Hoezee; and again, Darrell, in a periodic survey of our listeners, we asked you to tell us some of the most pressing issues for your faith right now, and three individuals shared issues that probably resonate with all of us. One person noted that, boy, you know, society seems to be falling apart—society seems really fragmented and fallen and evil. How do we deal with the world around us? A second listener said: How do we stay focused on what God wants us to do when there are so many other pressing claims for our loyalty? And how do we remember, a third listener said, the reality that Jesus is preeminent? How do we hang onto that hope when we cannot see any evidence of it around us? How do we hang onto the hope that Christ is on the throne, and he is still above all things?

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

I know that first and foremost with the growing dissatisfaction that is happening, and with all the bad things that seem to be going on, first and foremost, we hear you; we resonate with that, because the world is broken, and there are wars, there are rumors of wars; there are challenges of all kinds; there are divisions; there is famine, and all these things that are happening; but as we talked about in the first segment, the kingdom of God is here, but it is not yet *fully* here. So, it is actually, in-breaking of God's kingdom into this broken situation, and there is an overlap, a venn diagram, if you will, where God's Word is coming in and his power is coming in, and the brokenness of this world is not fully dispelled. So, we can see in the midst of brokenness, hopefulness; in the midst of challenges, we can still have faith in God who is working out the

solution, but it just takes a little longer for some of us; and so, we are learning patience, we are learning hope, and we are learning endurance together in this situation that is complex.

**SCOTT HOEZEE**

Yes; and I think we need to remember, too, Darrell, that sometimes...and I think we all experience this once in a while, you know...sometimes when we look at the state of our world, we look at the nation in which we live, or the society of which we are a part, and we kind of despair; and maybe sometimes it almost seems surprising to us. I mean, wow, shouldn't the world be better...or shouldn't, you know... Sometimes we are even tempted to think: Well, we ought to have a Christian nation; we ought to have a, you know, Christian society; but I think it is important to remember that we shouldn't panic when we see that, in fact, culture is not Christian. Jesus told us that was going to happen: The world will hate you because it hated me first...

**DARRELL DELANEY**

Right.

**SCOTT HOEZEE**

Right? The world will persecute you; it will put me to death eventually. So, we shouldn't get knocked off stride with our faith when we notice how bad things are. Jesus told us they were going to be bad, and Jesus told us with things like the Beatitudes, you gotta learn to fly upside down, right? You gotta learn to live with being out of step with society, because the Church is called to live a countercultural life.

**DARRELL DELANEY**

Yes.

**SCOTT HOEZEE**

We shouldn't expect the culture to affirm our faith or reflect our faith, we should expect that there is going to be a difference—there is going to be a gap between society and the Church, and that is okay. We can witness in that gap, we can call people out of their darkness into the Church; of course, we want that to happen, but we shouldn't, you know, think that our faith...that something is wrong because the world isn't better than it is.

**DARRELL DELANEY**

God is working...

**SCOTT HOEZEE**

Exactly.

**DARRELL DELANEY**

Even though we cannot see it; even though it doesn't happen in the timeframe we think it should happen, it doesn't mean that God isn't working. As far as the person who talked about us keeping focused on what God has called us to do, one thing to think about is that it can be easy to pigeonhole what we are called to do and try to put up "blindness" to say we need to focus these things; but I think that if we follow Jesus' example, we will see that he went around doing good, as Acts 10:38 said he did; and also, that he was a restorer of shalom and an agent of transformation. So, as long as what we are called to do is doing that in a corporate way, I think that we'll be on the right path.

**SCOTT HOEZEE**

And you know, we think of Psalm 46:2, you know, about how we have to keep our faith even though the nations rage; though the mountains fall into the heart of the sea; even though everything is shaken; that Psalm, I think, was probably the most preached on psalm after 9/11 in 2001, after the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington DC; so many pastors preached on Psalm 46, that we keep our eyes on God, our Rock, our Refuge, the One who is stable when everything else around us is not stable. And how do we focus on that, Darrell? How do we discern God's desire for us? How do we...as the third listener said...how do we

keep focused that Jesus is on the throne? I think, Darrell, this is where spiritual practices come in: The disciplines of devotions, of scripture reading, of scripture study, of prayer; maybe of fasting. We need to do what we can to keep ourselves in the Word. Here on *Groundwork*, we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. We say it every program, but indeed, Darrell, that is what we all need to do: keep digging into God's Word and lay the foundation for our lives, a foundation that, as Jesus said in Matthew 7, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, you know, don't build your house on the sand, because when the storms come, it washes away. Build on the right foundation, and that is what God's Word gives to us.

### **DARRELL DELANEY**

And that foundation, Scott, says that we not only listen to the Word, but we put it into practice. So, we live out this scripture that we are reading; we live out the scripture that we are studying; and it gives us the fortitude—the spiritual fortitude—to take the wind that blows and different challenges of this world; but also, God has given us a community of believers...

### **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Right.

### **DARRELL DELANEY**

So, if I am isolated in an individual way, away from other believers who could encourage me, and I encourage them, the Bible says in Hebrews 10:25, that we don't forsake the assembling of ourselves, because we can encourage each other, and say: Hey, hang in there; you are going to be... Or I have been praying for you, where have you been? It is good to see you again. Because this will also give us the hope that we need.

### **SCOTT HOEZEE**

We pray for each other in the community of faith, right? Sometimes we have to let other people believe for us because I am in a season of doubt, or something horrible happened that has just gutted my faith. It is hard for me to sing on some Sundays; other people sing for me. It is hard for me to pray some Sundays; other people pray for me; and then, I will get my turn; I will pray for you when you are in that same season, you know. Encourage one another, Paul says, all through the New Testament; encourage one another, because you need one another. Bear one another's burdens. I think those are the ways we stay focused on God, on God's will for our life, on God's sovereignty, that Jesus is still on the throne.

### **DARRELL DELANEY**

I think it is very important for us to remember who is in complete control of every situation. That is the prayer that I pray every day, knowing that God is the one who can help us and give us strength; thanks be to God.

### **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney. Join us again next time as we continue to dig deeply into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives.

We have a website, [groundworkonline.com](http://groundworkonline.com). Go there, share what *Groundwork* means to you, or as we have seen in this program, ask us questions or make suggestions for what you would like to hear next on *Groundwork*.

### **DARRELL DELANEY**

*Groundwork* is a listener supported program produced by ReFrame Ministries. Visit [reframeministries.org](http://reframeministries.org) for more information.

**\*Clarification:** When host Darrell Delaney says, "The *Left Behind* series is based on this notion," he means it's based on the concept of a literal millennium. The *Left Behind* series is a series of Christian fiction books written using the premillennial interpretation of Revelation.

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