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Why Did Jesus Leave Earth?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about why Jesus left earth and how it's possible that two Christian leaders, who both have the Holy Spirit, can have a contradicting witness about whether or not one can lose one's salvation.

* Why did the historical Jesus supposedly leave earth? (The Jesus of the Gospels doesn't seem to know this when questioned.)

* How is it possible that two Christian teachers, who both have the Holy Spirit, can have a contradicting witness about whether or not one can lose one's salvation?

Transcript

(upbeat music) (bell dings) - I'm Amy Hall, I'm here with Greg Coquel, and you're listening to Stand to Reasons, #straskpodcast. Welcome, Greg. - Welcome, Amy.

- And welcome listeners, we're glad you're here and we're glad you send in your questions. We couldn't do this show without you, so thank you for that. - All right, Greg, let's start with a question from Tom.

- Okay. - Why did the historical Jesus supposedly leave Earth? Jesus says, quote, "To prepare a place for you," or quote, "You should be happy for me that I'm leaving." In Hebrews, Jesus goes to present the sacrifice to God and sit at the right hand. The Jesus of the gospels does not know this even when questioned.

- Okay, I guess I'm mystified by that last comment. Jesus didn't know that he was going to leave the Earth and sit at the right hand of the Father. - I think that's what he's saying, or he didn't know about presenting the sacrifice or he didn't know exactly why he was leaving.

- Well, I don't know why anybody would say that. Jesus kept his own counsel on a lot of things. He didn't tell things that he didn't need to talk about.

And there were lots of things that people didn't understand at the moment, even when he did talk to the Jews and the disciples about the death of resurrection, for example, which he began to speak more clearly about towards the end of his ministry. The disciples were still mystified by what that meant because they did not countenance the idea that the Messiah who they believed Jesus to be would ever be killed, okay? Now, it seems that Jesus could have cleared that up. Wait, wait, wait, wait.

You guys don't understand. Your theology has been wrong all along. Let me tell you exactly what I mean.

I mean that in a few months I am going to be killed. I'll be dead and then they'll stick me in a tomb. Don't worry, three days later, I will come out and everything will be fine.

Now, we could have done that, but he didn't. I presume he had reasons for not doing that. He did give information and I think the reason that he might have given the information that they didn't entirely understand then is that when it actually happened, they'll remember that he predicted this.

And then they remembered that he said, you know, things like that. So I don't take Jesus' silence on different issues to be Jesus' ignorance about things. Why did Jesus rise into heaven? Theologically, I don't know.

I've never thought about that. Why did Jesus have to leave, okay? Well, he said, I have to go so that the Holy Spirit can come. Okay, well, the Holy Spirit was there in a fashion.

In fact, he breathed the Holy Spirit on the disciples in the upper room at one point. Or maybe it was after the resurrection he did that, but that wasn't the baptism in the spirit that was a function of the inauguration of the New Covenant at Pentecost. And I'm not exactly sure all that was going on there either.

But in Jesus' mind, he was leaving the earth to do some things that he wasn't going to be doing on the earth, but elsewhere. And the Holy Spirit was then going to be sent to take his place. I will not leave you as orphans, okay? So there we've got the little mechanics, okay? Jesus is here for now, then he's going to go away.

But he's going to send another comforter, one just like me. And in subsequent theology, we learn, well, this is God in a different form in the spirit that now indwells us in virtue of the particulars of the New Covenant and then does all kinds of other things. Washes regenerate us, gifts us, binds us together in the body of Christ, does a lot of, empowers all these Christians so that the individual Christians taken as a whole in the church will be able to do much greater things than Jesus ever did, which is something that Jesus had talked about as well.

So I'm just looking at kind of the bare particulars here. Why did it have to be that way and why did Jesus go away and he couldn't kind of send the spirit and you could have

two of them, both of the persons of the Trinity there at the same. I don't know and he never talks about it, but I'm not going to presume his ignorance.

I'm going away and there's some angels up there waiting for me, I'm just going to flood up into the sky. I'll see what happens when I get there, but I guess not because they hear, no, it was all part of a preordained plan that God had and we have this characterization of Jesus sitting at the right hand of power. Now, I don't think this is a physical description.

I don't think there's a throne somewhere out there and there is like the shekinah glory of the father sitting there and then Jesus is sitting on his right hand. I don't think that's what's happening. We do have a vision of Stephen where he does see Jesus rising to stand, but I still think this is analogical.

I think he saw something, what he described or what was described in the text, but I think it's still analogical. I don't think Jesus is thrown somewhere. I don't know all of what is going on and most of us don't because Jesus didn't reveal that.

What he revealed is plenty hard enough for us to figure out. So I wouldn't draw the conclusion that Jesus didn't know because he didn't talk about it. And I can't answer why that happened.

I don't know, but it seemed that it was deliberate. And the angel said, the one who just left is going to come back just the way you saw him leaving in due time. Meanwhile, you get work to do.

And that's the Acts chapter one and off they went to do their work. And we're still doing that work because the work isn't done yet. - And we certainly see other places where Jesus doesn't tell people things on purpose.

So like when he sends away a demon, he doesn't allow the demon to say who Jesus is or he tells people, don't tell people what I've done. And he had reasons for that. He didn't want to be forced into a situation where his crucifixion wouldn't be at the right time or people would try and force him to be king or whatever it was.

There was a way he wanted to reveal these things. And so the fact that he didn't say it doesn't mean anything. But I want to say here, Tom says, Jesus said to prepare a place for you.

And then he says Hebrew says he presents a sacrifice to God, sits his right hand. Well, all these things are related. So if Hebrews talks about how the temple was a shadow of what was to come.

It was there to show us the true thing that would be happening in the real temple, not made by human hands. So we see the sacrifices made in the temple on earth. But what's

really going to happen is Jesus is going to be our sacrifice before the Father and he's going to cleanse the temple in heaven, whatever that means, his sacrifice will bring about our forgiveness.

So if Jesus is raised to the right hand of the Father and he's there acting as our priest. And constantly making intercession for us. He says in Hebrew.

Yes, constantly making intercession. He's our priest before the Father. He's brought his own blood into the temple and acted as our sacrifice, presented that before the Father.

All of that is preparing our place. That's exactly what he's doing. He's going up there, cleansing us, interceding for us, preparing our place so that we can go to be with the Father.

So there's nothing contradictory about these different things he said here. Well, he does talk about dwelling places. The King James uses my Father's house or many mansions.

So there seems to be a certain locus of sorts that he's referring to as opposed to just providing a means of sacrifice. How do you characterize that? Well, I think that it's still entailed because we can't go there unless Jesus goes as our priest before us. So he's preparing a place, whatever aspect of preparing that place is, it's all related to the work he's doing before the Father, even now, as our priest.

So I think maybe these things seem like they're different things to Tom. Maybe he's not aware of how they all fit together. All right, let's go on to a question from Rhino.

Rhino. Rhino. R-Y-N-O.

OK. Not like the Rhino. OK.

Couple of different rhinos. Now they think about it. Once an acronym, but go ahead.

OK, so I'm just going to-- I can't think of the word-- offer a little clarification here. In this question, he's going to say something about William Lane Craig's view. And I'm not sure this is his view.

Right. So I'm going to use his name. But it could really be anybody, any leader that you know of that has this view.

And it may not be William Lane Craig. So here's the question. How can a salted Christian, like Greg Cokol believed, and once saved, always saved? And William Lane Craig also salted, believe you can lose your salvation.

I'm certain both of them have the Holy Spirit living in them. So how can it be possible for them to have a contradicting witness? Well, my question is, how could it not be possible? I don't know what Bill Craig's view is on this particular issue. I do know he's Armenian.

But-- He's a Mullenist. But I guess that would be a greater-- Mullenist is a way of cashing out the Armenian project. But he is definitely not reformed, not a Calvinist.

In any way, shape, or form. He would completely disavow that. But you could have people who are Armenian with regards to how election and salvation works and still believe that once you are regenerated, that act of regeneration that you chose in a libertarian Armenian way, so to speak, becomes irrevers-- irreversed-- Irreversible.

Irreversible. Can I say that? Irreversible. Thank you.

And JP Moreland holds the view. So there is, even though there's an Armenian, in a sense, path to salvation, there is security in the salvation itself because that can't be reversed. So you have these different categories.

I don't know where Bill fits. But the broader question is, really, how can two Christians who are reflective thoughtfully on the details of scripture and having the same Holy Spirit disagree? And the answer is because we're human beings. How could there not be that? Does Rhino think that if two people have the spirit, that the spirit is going to dictate their beliefs completely so they're utterly coincident? Every single thing that one born again Christian believes, the other one believes exactly the same way-- primary, secondary, tertiary, you know, distantly relevant theological issues.

There's no reason to believe that, except a misread of a passage in John. I think it's 15 or 16 or maybe 14. This is the Upper Room discourse.

I've talked about this before. Maybe we have on this show here, Amy. But when Jesus promises the Holy Spirit, he says here in 15, when the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, proceeds from the Father, he will testify also because you have been with me from the beginning.

So there's a statement there. There's a couple other statements that are made. One of the statements, which is harder for me to find, says that he will lead you to all truth.

He will lead you to all truth. Oh, here it is, chapter 16, verse 13. But when he, the Spirit of Truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

Now, this does raise a question. If we have the Holy Spirit who is going to guide us into all truth, then why is it that those who have the Holy Spirit disagree on matters of truth? By the way, one could ask, why is it that we have any more books of Scripture? This is the Upper Room discourse. Jesus is giving the promise that the Holy Spirit would guide to all truth.

If the Holy Spirit is directly and immediately guiding to all truth, all Christians, why any more Scripture? Why does anything need to be written after the Gospels? Or after John 16, for goodness sake? Because now it's the job of the Holy Spirit, not the work of God's

subsequently written word, like from John and from Peter and from Paul and from Luke. So, hmm, hmm, if we're reading the text that way, there's something wrong with the way we're reading it. Obviously, there's something wrong, because if we take that value, face value, it means that no Scripture is required.

And secondarily, why don't we all agree, which is kind of the question? The answer is, and some people are going to push back on this, which I understand, but I just want you to think about it. The answer is, we've misunderstood this passage. He is not talking about every Christian.

He is talking to the disciples who are being given apostolic authority to speak for God. And this, by the way, is why we have the, what's called the analogy of faith. That is, that we approach the Scripture and the different writers with the basic assumption that being inspired by God, they are not disagreeing with each other.

They all coincide. Now, where there appears to be a disagreement, now we have to work at understanding and interpreting more precisely, but they're not disagreeing with each other. And if we hold that, of course, we're underlining the authority of Scripture.

So with that authority in mind, which is the authority we're bringing to this text to ask the question to begin with, so I'm presuming that for the sake of discussion. We have to have authors that are speaking with authority. Jesus also said, I will bring to remembrance all that I have taught you.

Okay, well, wait a minute. He's talking to them about the three years that they spent together, and he's going to bring that all to remembrance so they can write it down and they could do what they need to do with it. But they're authorized by God, the Holy Spirit is giving them this gift.

He's not giving that gift to everyone. How do I know that? Because he obviously hasn't. Even people who disagree on this particular verse and the meaning of it is a demonstration that the Holy Spirit is not committed to giving each one of us all truth.

Okay, that's our job to figure it out. I'm not saying the Holy Spirit doesn't help, but he doesn't authorize our interpretation. What authorizes our interpretation is the words themselves and discovering the meaning of the words in their context and their flow of thought, et cetera.

Well, wait a minute, there's other things, the upper room discourse that don't apply just to the disciples that apply to all of us. And I said, yeah, you're right. So what we have to do is we have to be discerning and look carefully when Jesus is speaking, the upper room discourse, is he speaking to the disciples as apostles or is he speaking to the disciples as Christians? Okay, and that's not always hard to determine, but this one's easy because if he's speaking to disciples as Christians and all Christians would be led to all truth, then

obviously Jesus got it wrong because we have these differences of opinion.

Even people that love the Lord and our friends with each other and we still have strong disagreements. And Bill Craig, I mean, the way the question is worded, wondering why me and Bill disagree? Well, that's why. So we all have to go to the text.

We have to make our case with the text, but that's the only other thing I can think of. Why would anyone think that all Christians would agree when they obviously don't simply because they have the same spirit? I get this question, a surprising amount of times, actually. People are really confused why Christians disagree.

What I found interesting in this question was, he says at the end, is how is it possible for them to have a contradicting witness? Which seems to me that it is what you're saying, Greg, that his understanding of how we come to our, to know what the scripture is saying is by some sort of witness from the Holy Spirit. So I appreciate everything you said about, we have to actually work at hermeneutics to understand how to interpret things. It's not that we get our interpretation simply by praying and then we receive some sort of message from God.

We have the message, as you pointed out, and it's written down, it's objective, and it's our job to read it and to use good hermeneutics, which is the interpretation, interpretational skills to understand it. Now, the question of why we disagree, I think more generally, there are a few reasons why Christians disagree on things. I've thought about this before, because like I said, people ask me about this.

First of all, I think we're all sinful, so we tend to see what we want to see. And that applies to everybody. And we don't know which of our positions are being affected by this, but surely to some extent, all of us have to deal with this temptation to match what we're reading to what we want to read.

- Confirmational bias. And this should be a great incentive to not sin, because, and I've said this before, to apologize, when your obedience enables you to see things more clearly, as soon as you start sinning, you are going to try to twist certain ideas, certain doctrines, certain passages to match your sin. And this is something that should terrify all of us and be a huge incentive to be obedient, because we are clouding our ability to see things correctly.

Now, I don't want to say that the people who disagree with me are bigger sinners than I am. - Right, right. - Don't hear me saying that.

I'm saying we all have to fight this, and this affects everything that we are trying to understand here. Secondly, I think some people have a second authority that they have in addition to scripture, and that could be maybe their denominational position, or like a confession, it could be-- - A philosophical perspective. - It could be a philosophical

perspective, it could be a leader, it could be any sort of thing that they are using to interpret the Bible.

And if the Bible's being interpreted through that other authority, then, and it's under that authority, then you're gonna get some sort of, what's the word I'm looking for? There's gonna be some sort of a twisting, a twisting is the word, I mean, there'll be some-- - Distortion. - Distortion, thank you, great. Thank you, I couldn't think of that word.

The result will be distorted. So, you've got the, our sinfulness, you've got other authorities, and then you've also got, some people aren't as good at hermeneutics as other people. - Right, right, right.

- And that's probably a great deal of this has to do with this. - Well, they don't know, just in a certain sense, they don't read the Bible like they read other books, or other newspaper articles, or the winner is so much of what they do with the second should be done with the first. But you also have, you have 2,000 to 4,000 years of time that has passed, you have multiple different languages.

In the original, you have culture and customs and particulars that we don't completely understand that are being made reference to, there are literary devices that we sometimes miss, so we don't take as literary devices. So all of those are factors. Here's another example, I think this falls into this category, and this is in 1 Corinthians chapter two.

And in this verse I hear it quoted a lot. It says, "Things which I have not seen, and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him." Now, this is a reference that Paul is citing out of Isaiah 64. And people say, "See, look at all, we don't have no idea what God has for us." Well, that may be true, but that's not what's being spoken of here, because the next verse says, "For to us God revealed them." This was a mystery in the past.

Now it's been revealed, okay, but so that's one step, taking it out of context. But then the next step is, "Wait a minute, who's the us?" To us God revealed them through the spirit, for the spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. And we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God, that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the spirit, combining spiritual insights with spiritual words.

And then he contrasts the next verse, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the spirit of God." Okay, no, I think a case we made, and I haven't worked all this out, that something similar is happening here. The Old Testament, there was all these things that were mysteries, and now the apostles have the divine insight to help us to understand what they mean. But when the apostles take these things that they have

spiritual insight on and speak it to unregenerate people, the natural man, they don't accept the things of the spirit of God, they're foolishness to him.

It may not be that this particular passage is saying that God gives the Holy Spirit to everyone to accomplish this the same way, because if that were the case, then we would have a lot more agreement if we have the same spirit. Now, to me, I think the Upper Room discourse citation, John 16, I feel really strong about my reading on that. I'm not entirely sure about the first Corinthians chapter two, but something may be going on like that here as well.

Paul's insight into those passages. - Well, the good news about this is if you have two people you respect who have opposite views on an issue, you're not at a loss. You don't have to throw up your arms and just give up on ever knowing what you should think about it, because the good news is there are ways to evaluate how they came to their conclusions.

You can follow their reasoning, ask, did they stay within the text to make their case? Did they appeal to something else? Ask what their train of thought was, how did they get to this conclusion in the text? And are they considering it in the context of the chapter of the book of the entire Bible? And are they looking at it in light of the genre? These are all principles of hermeneutics, and a great book on this topic is how to read the Bible for all it's worth. So if you're not familiar with these principles, I recommend that book. So are they taking the author's time and culture into account? So you can actually look at the way they reasoned to get to their conclusion, since that is how they're reaching their conclusion, not a specific message from the Holy Spirit.

This is something that we can evaluate. It's publicly accessible to all of us to look at the objective test. - This is the problem of somebody says, well, the spirit showed me or told me whatever, and now you're just left with their subjective claim.

And you can't assess it. Do you see, well, I don't see that here in the text. Well, that's what the Holy Spirit told me.

Okay, now you can't do much for that person. They're not teachable. Teachability is really, really critical at this point.

You mentioned about how sin can cloud our judgment here. Well, lack of teachability can also cloud our judgment. - So my prescription would be if for all of us, there are a few things that we need to keep in mind in light of all of this, if we want to know what the Bible really says, first of all, we need to pray for sanctification and for submission to God.

We need to be willing to give up our interpretations if we find out that some theological position we have doesn't actually match scripture. And we need to pray that there is a part where the Holy Spirit does illuminate the text for us and does apply it to us and

does help us to understand it. So I don't want people to think that the Holy Spirit's not involved in this at all.

- Let me take an observation. Illuminate means to turn the light on. So it's not giving you new information.

It's helping you see the things that are already there. And so spiritual illumination needs to be justified by the words of the text. Anything that you think the Spirit is illuminating.

It's just turning the light on and the light's on. Everybody should be able to see it from the text. - That's a great point.

So we pray that we would be able to see the text clearly in its context. You also have to work to read the context. You have to work to read the entire Bible, the book, the chapter, the paragraph, whatever it is that you're trying to interpret.

And then we just use hermeneutics to our utmost ability so that we can interpret these things with the help of the Holy Spirit, yes, but also with the objective understanding of the text. And in light of our submission to God being willing to give up whatever position that we have that may be wrong. So there's a lot going on here and I love the Bible so I want everybody to understand it.

Hopefully that will be helpful to people. But we are at a time, Greg. At least we got through two questions.

- We did. - Well, thank you for your questions. If you have a question, please send that on Twitter with the hashtag #strsk or you can go to our website.

Just go to our podcast page. You'll see a link to #strsk. And you'll find a link on that page to ask a question.

And as long as you keep it within about two sentences, maybe three sentences, then we will consider it for #strsk. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cockel for Stand to Reason. (bell dings)

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