

# Question Box

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, as we make a restart on our questions, I just want to say a few words of introduction and that arise from the passage that I can read for us tonight.

And as I'm sure you would have guessed what I wanted to focus on was the fascinating incident where Jesus as a child is recorded as staying behind in the temple in Jerusalem, where his parents, which his parents weren't aware of and they couldn't find him, but when they discovered him, he was there speaking to the elders and asking them questions.

And there's just a couple of things that I want to highlight from that, which I think are very important for us to remember on our question box night. Like this, firstly, it just reminds us of the value and the importance of asking questions.

If Jesus as a child wanted to ask questions in order to learn more, then that really is a very clear biblical warrant for us that what we're doing tonight is a wise and biblical thing to do to give people the chance to ask questions in order that we can understand things more clearly.

And I just want to really encourage you in that regard that please never ever feel like you mustn't ask or that's a stupid question or everybody will know this, so I'm not going to say anything.

[ 1 : 2 4 ] Actually when you ask a question, I think it's very often a huge help to other people as well because we all have questions. We're all still trying to learn.

And sometimes there's stuff we've never quite understood. And other times there's things that maybe once we knew and over the years we've forgotten it and a question can help us just to be reminded of these key truths.

So questions are a wonderfully valuable thing and it's a great thing for us to do. But the other thing I want us to highlight though is that as we read of Jesus in the temple, that's just a fascinating aspect of his life and ministry, which is what the Gospels are all focused on.

And all of them, all of the Gospels and indeed the whole of Scripture is teaching us and pointing us to the fact that ultimately it's Jesus who has all the answers.

And that's something that I really want to emphasize and I think Phil would feel exactly the same that as we try to answer these questions tonight, we're not like authoritative figures in terms of these questions.

[ 2 : 3 1 ] And for some questions, it can be hard to know exactly what the right answer is. There can be various options. And there's maybe things that we're not completely sure of, we could very easily get things wrong.

And in many ways, the best thing that we can do in answering these questions is not actually to say, oh, this is the answer, but to actually point you to the fact that Jesus gives us the answer in this way or that way.

So really, really want to emphasize those two points as we begin that questions are so valuable, but ultimately it's Jesus who's got all the answers. It's such a helpful and healthy thing for us to do as a congregation and both the time in the service just now, the next half an hour or so, where we'll go through the questions.

And then the time afterwards is also really important. And I really want to emphasize that, that if in the discussion just now, if there's anything that I say or Phil says, and you're like, oh, I'm not sure about that, or could you expand on that or tell us a wee bit more, please make a wee note of it either on your phone or if you've got paper or even just in your mind.

And let's chat about it more afterwards because we really want to encourage the kind of fellowship where we would ask questions, share thoughts, share ideas together.

[ 3 : 46 ] Okay, so we have six questions that we're going to work through. We're going to take turns and I am going to start. As I do so, I just want to say a very big thank you to everyone who put questions in.

It's, we really appreciate getting them. So here is question one. Phil, do you want to ask it to me and I'll answer it. Go for it. Okay. Could you explain the phrase, son of righteousness, found in Malachi for the words are quoted in the well-known hymn, Hark the Herald Angels Sing and clearly refer to Jesus.

I sang these words all my life, but I only recently wondered why son as an S-U-N. I used to think it surely should be son, S-O-N, until I found the verse in Malachi. Excellent.

Okay, thank you very much, Phil. So anybody seen that phrase, son of righteousness in Hark the Herald Angels Sing? I've actually seen it printed on sheets of paper S-O-N, hail the son of righteousness, which isn't actually correct because the Carol does originally say son, S-U-N, hail the son of righteousness.

And the questioner is absolutely right. It comes from Malachi, in particular, it comes from Malachi chapter four. That's the whole of Malachi four in the screen. It's quite a short chapter. I'll just read the first few verses so that we find the phrase.

[ 5 : 07 ] For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evil doers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.

But for you here, my name, the son of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings, you shall go out leaping like calves from the stall, etc. So there's the phrase right there.

And the question is just asking if we can explain what that's really referring to. I absolutely love this question because it's a really good example of something that will help us in terms of how we read the Bible, how we read a passage like this.

Because when you see son of righteousness in Hark the Herald Angels sing or whether you see it in a question, you just see that phrase on its own and you think, okay, what might that mean? Why is Jesus being referred to as the son of righteousness?

And it can sometimes be confusing when you just see the words on their own. When you see a phrase like that, when we come to anything that's referred to in the Bible, the key, almost always the key to understanding what it means is the context of where that's come from.

[ 6 : 20 ] So that's a word I've said many, many times, but I always want you to remember context is so crucial for interpreting what a phrase might mean. So if you look a little bit earlier in Malachi 4, you see you've got this language of the day is coming.

So in many ways, this is like the kind of theme that's running through the whole of this chapter, the idea of a day is coming, so it's the future. Now the rest of Malachi, first for the other three chapters, are coming with quite a lot of warnings to the people, particularly because their attitude towards God had become a bit half-hearted.

Malachi comes at the very end of the Old Testament and the people had been pretty half-hearted in their worship, in their devotion, in their generosity. It was all just a bit sort of, it wasn't particularly committed.

And a lot of Malachi is rebuking the people for that. And there was, within that there was injustice and things, you know, and a bit of kind of deception and things like that.

And so Malachi 4 comes really with the warning that in the future, that kind of approach, that kind of mindset is going to be judged.

[ 7 : 40 ] And he uses the language, there's a day of judgment coming for those people who are very half-hearted, very hypocritical in their worship of God. But then you've got this kind of keyword here, but in verse 2, for those who fear my name, there's a different outcome.

The Son of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings. And what I just want you to notice is that it's the same language that's being used. So the language of a day coming is echoed in the language of a sun rising.

And that's really why the language is being used. It's just a metaphor to describe the fact that when that day comes, yes, there will be judgment, but there will also be the dawning of a righteous one who will come to put things right.

And in the chapter there at the bottom, you can see the reference to Elijah the prophet being sent, turning the hearts of the fathers to the children to their fathers, etc., which of course is a reference to John the Baptist.

So the Son of Righteousness, I think, has just been used as a metaphor to speak of Jesus coming as the one who, yes, will bring judgment, but who also is going to bring healing and hope to a broken nation.

[ 8 : 56 ] Interestingly, when you go forward to Luke's Gospel, when John the Baptist has been born, his father speaks about him being the prophet of the Most High, which of course is echoing the language of Malachi, that the messenger being sent before his face to prepare the ways, all that kind of stuff.

And what does Zechariah say? He describes it as a sunrise. And I think he's just echoing that language there. So it all ties together, all very cool.

The Son of Righteousness. So when you sing Hark the Herald, don't think, you know, oh, should that say, son, s-o-n? Instead you should be belting out, hail the Son of Righteousness as though you're just thinking of a beautiful dawn of hope and joy that's come through Jesus.

Okay, that's question one. Question two, Phil, could you explain what are the shields of the earth in Psalm 47?

So Thomas, when you said it like that, felt like I was in an exam. Explain. It's another, again, it's a good question. And it's another question where it reminds us how helpful it is to look at the context.

[ 10 : 15 ] I'll give the answer, I'll give the short answer, is that the shields of earth belonging to God is a picture of God's total victory and rule.

And let me just show you then in Psalm 47 itself. So that phrase, we'll often, when we sing Psalm 47, you'll know that it will end, we end talking about all the shields of the earth belonging to God.

Let me just read the Psalm and then we'll see how it fits in. Clap your hands all you people, shout to God with loud songs of joy. For the Lord the most highest to be feared, a great king over all the earth.

So there we see, that's the kind of theme of the whole Psalm, of the whole Psalm is that God is king, God's Lord, God's in charge.

And then we see that worked out. The rest of the Psalm in some ways shows the progression to God being king. So verses three and four, he has subdued peoples under us, the nations under our feet.

[ 11 : 12 ] He chose a heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves. We already see that God is the unrivaled king. And then verses five to seven kind of go through the coronation.

So God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with a sound of trumpet, sing praise to God, sing praise, sing praises to the king, sing praises. For God is the king of the earth, sing praises with a psalm.

So we've got God's coronation, he's subdued everything under his feet. And then God sits at his throne, God reigns over the nations, God sits on his holy throne, the princes of the people gather as the peoples of the God of Abraham.

For all the shields of the earth belong to God, he is highly exalted. And so as well as the coronation, we then see this picture of all the rulers of the world coming and swearing fealty as it were to God, kneeling at his feet.

And what's interesting is that we know that this isn't true right now. All the rulers of the world aren't bowing down at Jesus' feet, aren't bowing down at God's feet.

[ 12 : 15 ] That's what sin has done. Sin is when we all say, I want to be in charge, I want to be king of my own life, not God. And that's been the pattern of humanity ever since the fall.

But God promised that he would reverse that, that everything would once more be gathered under his feet. And this psalmist is looking back and looking forward.

He's looking back to God's promise to Abraham, that through Abraham's descendant that would happen. So do you notice in verse nine, it says, the princes of the people gather as the peoples of the God of Abraham.

So the psalmist is God promised that through Abraham's descendants, he would bring blessing to all people. And the psalmist is looking back and he's looking forward and thinking, he's looking forward to God fulfilling his promise to Abraham, to bring the nations of the world to the feet of Jesus Christ.

And so no longer is everyone against God, but now Jesus is recognized universally as king overall. And again, we don't see that yet.

[ 13 : 22 ] But the psalmist is in many ways looking forward in faith that God is going to do that. And the shields of the earth comes in here because you can think of it in many ways as like, you know, different shields might have the heraldry, the, you know, different, if you think of medieval times, different kind of families have their own banner or a shield that represents, I don't know, the clan or the tribe or whatever like that.

This is a picture of all of those banners, the army banners, the shields all being put down at Jesus' feet. They're all saying Jesus is king. And the psalm is in some ways, it looks back, it looks forward, and it also invites a response that one day, God has won, one day everyone's going to recognize that Jesus is king.

And then it's encouraging you kind of shout to joy, loud, loud, loud, shouts, come, let's kneel before God now. Because God doesn't, one day everyone will kneel before God.

The invitation of the gospel is that we can come to Him now and ask for mercy and He'll bring us into part of His family, we'll be gathered as the people of the God of Abraham.

That's so, so short answer is that shields of earth tells us what's going to happen when Christ comes again in some ways. Excellent. Good, thank you very much.

[ 14 : 50 ] Well, thank you. What does it mean to say that communion is a sacrament and a why slash how is communion identified as one of the sacraments?

Okay, so we're getting more difficult now, I think the questions. So what do we mean when we say that communion is a sacrament? Well, I think to start off with, I'll say something that probably sounds a little bit controversial.

Sacrament is not the most helpful word in the world. And it's, oh stop it, I'll just say it. It's a word that we could probably actually gladly move on from in terms of our terminology because it's not a biblical word.

Sacrament is actually a Latin word and it speaks of being like dedicated towards something, you've got that sacra sort of devotion side of things.

And it was actually used of like an oath of dedication that was made by a soldier. So that's where the word comes from. The reason it's kind of slotted into a theological language is because the word sacrament was used in the Latin translation of the New Testament to translate some of the Greek language.

[ 16 : 03 ] And so it's just become a familiar part of our terminology, even though like it's not the most ideal word to use. And so we'll see if we can think of like, I don't really have a better word to use.

I want to give you a better concept to think of. Now in terms of asking a question like, you know, what does it mean to say that it's a sacrament, a good place to go is to our catechisms.

So the catechisms are a list of questions and answers which explain theological topics. And so that's just what a catechism is, questions and answers that help us understand stuff.

We primarily rely on the Westminster catechisms. There's two of them, the shorter one and the longer one. The shorter one is just shorter, less questions, shorter answers, longer one, longer answers, longer questions.

And there are really good places to go if you want to find out about things like, about stuff like this. You can download it on your phone, just search Westminster Shorter Catechism in the App Store and you'll be able to find an app with it on.

[ 17 : 09 ] I'm going to just read out a couple of questions from it because this will help us answer the question. What is a sacrament? A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ to his church to signify, seal and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation to strengthen and increase their faith and all other graces to oblige them to obedience, to testify and cherish their love and communion with one another and to distinguish them from those that are without.

Now, that's a quite a dense paragraph so don't worry if you don't take it all in. I just want you to notice the stuff at the start. A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ.

That's the first key thing that we are talking about when we describe a sacrament. It's something that Christ has ordained and instituted. That's why the word ordain in Gaelic is probably better than the word sacrament because it's really describing the fact that Jesus ordained these things.

He said, do this. And the purpose of them is to signify and seal to those who are within the covenant of grace. The short way of saying that is that the sacraments are signs of God's covenant promises.

So they're signs of God's covenant promises and we'll say a little bit more about that in a second. I'm going to go to the next question to bring this together, hopefully. This asks, what are the parts of the sacraments?

[ 18 : 34 ] And this is helpful as well, that there's two parts. There's the outward sign. In other words, there's just the thing that you use, whether that's water for baptism or bread and wine for communion.

And then there's the thing you use and then there's the thing that gets signified. And so in baptism, there's the symbolism of cleansing and of being united to Jesus.

In the Lord's support, there's the symbolism of Jesus's broken body and shed blood. So you've got the thing that you use, that's the sign, and then you've got the thing that's signified.

So that's really what a sacrament is. It is something that is instituted by Jesus as a sign of His covenant's promises. It involves using an everyday thing, which is pointing to a spiritual reality being signified.

And so in order for something to be a sacrament, it has to qualify in all of these areas. So it has to be something that Christ has instituted. It has to be something that symbolizes God's, that's related to God's covenant promises and it has to involve a thing that's pointing to a greater thing that symbolizes.

[ 19 : 47 ] And because of that, as the next question you can see there indicates, there are only two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's support, because they're the only two that fit those qualifications in terms of what we read about in the New Testament.

So you've got the sign, that you've got the Institute by Christ related to the signs of the covenant and it has the two parts. In terms of the Lord's supper specifically, it's very, very clear that if that's the criteria for what a sacrament is, the Lord's supper qualifies because when Jesus institutes the Lord's supper, he says that this cup that's poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

And so he's making a very, very clear connection to God's covenant promises and he's also tying it back to Passover, which in the Old Testament was one of the covenant signs.

So that's really why that's what we mean when we say it's a sacrament. It's just something that Jesus has instituted and it's something that is pointing to the great covenant promises that he's made and the Lord's supper qualifies for that criteria.

What I want to just close by saying is that the fact that all that's the case, that Jesus has appointed these things and the fact that we participate in them tells us two crucial things.

[ 21 : 16 ] It tells us that participating in the sacraments pleases God because he wants us to do it. So we are pleasing God by doing it.

He absolutely delights to see us being baptized and to see us sharing in the Lord's supper for everyone who's a believer.

That's what God delights in. So it pleases God, but it also benefits us. And I think that's a really important thing to remember that participating in a sacrament is something that really benefits us.

It's a channel through which God can be kind to us. A channel through which God can be kind and the old fashioned way of saying that was that it was a means of grace.

Just a channel through which God can pour out his blessings upon us as his people. Okay, if anyone has any questions about that, I don't think I explained that very well.

[ 22 : 16 ] So if you have more questions, please just ask afterwards. Changing tack completely, Phil, question four, does it matter what we wear to church? There you go.

In the short answer, yes and no, the Bible isn't prescriptive about what we should wear, but the Bible does give us guidelines of how we can dress to serve others.

Let me just expand on that a bit. It's important when looking at a question like this that we distinguish between preferences and commands.

Some people will grow up in cultures or communities where on Sunday you always wear your Sunday best. Other people will grow up in traditions where you can just come to church in shorts and t-shirt and that's absolutely fine.

It's very easy to take our traditions or our preferences and say that rather than this is a can, that you can do this, that you should do this or you must do this.

[ 23 : 17 ] It's very easy to do that. If we especially like, I really like this shirt and it would be great if I had to wear always wear this shirt, but there we go. But the danger of it is that we make something a command that the Bible doesn't or we even emphasize it such that people think if I'm to be a real Christian, if I'm really going to be part of this church family, I have to dress in a certain way.

So either say, if either to command you have to dress smartly to be a Christian or to feel accepted in this church family, you need to dress more like a hipster.

I've seen that in other churches as well. Both isn't always being a Pharisee. Both is legalism. You could be a suit wearing Pharisee or a hipster Pharisee. Both is adding to God's requirements and both has a danger of saying there's something more that is necessary to potentially be a Christian or be right with God.

So it is important. We have to be careful about what we're communicating. To expand more on what we wear though, it's easy to also fall into extremes.

So one extreme or there could be extremes. One extreme you could say, well, you have to dress smartly. And that's something that we probably will have heard at some point.

[ 24 : 34 ] You have to dress smartly on a Sunday. And you might have heard the argument, well, if you're going to visit the Queen, I guess now the King, you would wear your best clothes. So surely you would do the same if you're on a Sunday, if we meet with God.

I guess there are two things that I would say to that. Well, first of all, there's nothing wrong with dressing smartly. So if you enjoy dressing smartly, there's nothing wrong with that. But in terms of you must like seeing the Queen.

Well, first of all, the Bible tells us that God cares most about what's on the inside. There we go. So what we see in Hosea chapter 6, God says, for I desire love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

And similarly in Psalm 51, now David writes, for you will not delight in sacrifice, so why would give it? You would not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

So what God cares most about when we come to meet with God's people, when we come to hear His word, to worship, God cares most what our hearts are doing. So if we're spending loads of time on Sunday morning worrying about what we're going to wear, either smart or unsmart, then, and that's stopping us, making sure we're not, I don't know, arguing with others as we get ready for church.

[ 25 : 58 ] What's most important is how our hearts are at. But that's not just a Sunday thing. Our hearts are important throughout the week. And this is where the Jeremiah 7 quote comes in, because Israel had not, Israel not only made the mistake in the Old Testament of thinking, as long as we make loads of sacrifices, God will be happy.

It doesn't matter where our hearts are at. They also were, I guess you could say, Sabbath only believers sometimes. So throughout the week, so Jeremiah says, will you steal and murder and commit adultery?

Swear falsely, make offerings to Baal. Go after other gods that you've not known. And then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, we're delivered only to go on doing all these abominations.

Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers for you? So in other words, he's saying, if the rest of your week, you're doing, you're going completely against what God says, and then you're only making sure your hearts are right one day of a week.

He says, that's despicable. You're making it as if this is your den of robbers, and you run back in here, and you hide, and you think you're all fine. Jesus quotes the same thing to the people. The point is, is that our hearts are what matter most to God, and our hearts matter all the time, every day of the week.

[ 27 : 17 ] So in terms of dress, God cares much more about what we're like on the inside, rather than the rest of the week. That doesn't mean, though, that we just must have fallen to the other extreme, though, and say, we can wear absolutely whatever we want.

What we wear doesn't matter, because the Bible does say quite a bit about what we wear, and maybe we can, if you want to talk about more specific passages, later on we can, whether that's, I don't know, Paul referencing wearing pearls, or having fancy hairdo, or wearing hats, we can look at those passages in particular.

Some really important guidelines, though, the Bible does give, are in general about where we gather, applied to how we dress. So the Corinthians, the Corinthians church was in a bit of a mess, and they were pretty selfish often when they met together.

One thing Paul reminds them, I'll just highlight a few things, he says, even if it's okay, various things are okay, the important thing is to do good for your neighbour, and to build others up.

You see that again when he talks to them later, let all things be done for building up, and then later on he says, the heart of it is doing all to the glory of God, not giving a fence to others, not seeking your own advantage, but that many may be saved.

[ 28 : 43 ] There's other passages we can turn to, but if what we need to be thinking about is, how can I serve others in what I wear, whether that's in welcoming people, or in building up my brothers and sisters in Christ.

And there's lots of ways that we could elaborate in that, but time is gone, I think. So I've got, we can talk about more later, but I guess in short, God, the Bible isn't proscribed about what we wear, God cares most about what's on the inside, and let's think about what we wear in order to how to serve others.

Excellent. Let's move this on. Okay, two questions to go.

Where does the concept of baptism replacing circumcision actually come from? So I'm getting all the hard questions, I think. So, concept of baptism replacing circumcision.

So this comes from the fact that in the Old Testament you've got two big signs of God's covenant. You had circumcision. I'm just going to squiggle it because I can't remember where to spell it.

[ 29 : 59 ] And you've got Passover. And many, many, many theologians, including me, would say that circumcision is replaced by baptism, and would say that Passover is replaced by the Lord's Supper.

Now, for the Passover Lord's Supper one, it's very easy because we just saw a few minutes ago that when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he did it at Passover, and when he did it, he spoke about God's covenant.

And it's all just, it's completely clear that Passover is being replaced by the Lord's Supper. That's very, very clear. That's why we don't have Passover as Christians, we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

There's no doubt about that one. This one though, the circumcision being replaced by baptism, not quite as clear, and different people have come down on different sides of that view.



And the connection here is a big part of the argument as to whether or not we should baptize infants, because those who would say we should only baptize believers would be hesitant to push the connection between circumcision and baptism too far, because those who say we should baptize infants will say infants were circumcised, infants should be baptised.

[ 31 : 21 ] So it's all part of that big, wider discussion. So is there like a biblical basis to say that circumcision is replaced by baptism? Well, in terms of trying to create, trying to come to any conclusions from scripture, there's two main ways that we can do that.

One is if you have like a specific text explicitly saying this is it, and you've got that with the Lord's Supper we saw a while ago, Jesus says this is my covenant.

It's very, very clear. With, so you're thinking, okay, is there a specific proof text with baptism replacing circumcision?

That's one way of doing it. And then the other way of doing it is to look at the kind of the way the whole of scripture fits together, and to see if there's like a cumulative argument running all the way across scripture if you piece the bits together.

And so that's the two ways that you can come to any conclusion, like a specific proof text or how does it all fit together? With the circumcision baptism question, some people would argue that there is a proof text and it comes in Colossians 2, 11 to 12, where it says, in him you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism in which you would also race with him through faith in the powerful working of the Holy Spirit who raised him from the dead.

[ 32 : 55 ] Now that is not explicitly saying circumcision is replaced by baptism in as many words, but the argument is that Paul makes a very strong connection between the two.

And as he's talking about the change that's taken place in the Colossians, he uses the language of circumcision and the language of baptism very, very closely. So that is like half a proof text, I would say.

It's not as definitive as what you'd maybe have regarding the Lord's Supper, but at the same time there is a connection there, I would say.

The bigger thing is really the cumulative argument. That's what I'm saying, how you piece everything together across the page of scripture. So you're going to just have to like earn your pizza over the next three minutes while I try to explain all this because there's lots of pieces to fit together.

When we talk about the big cumulative effect of everything fitted together across scripture, we're thinking about the big story of the Bible. And the big story of the Bible is held together by one key concept, and that's the concept of covenant.

[ 34 : 01 ] So we would argue that the whole Bible, the whole of God's plan is based in the framework of covenant. That's why the Bible is split into two halves called Old Covenant and New Covenant. I wish that we called them Old Covenant and New Covenant rather than Old Testament and New Testament because I think that will be a lot clearer for us.

So that concept of covenant is the overarching framework for understanding the whole of the Bible. When we talk about covenant, we're talking about a relationship between God and His people.

It's summed up in the words, I will be my God, you will be my people. And within that covenant, there are promises from God and there are expectations that are needed and there's also a sign.

You look at God's covenantal dealings with His people, there's a sign of the covenant. As we said in the Old Testament, one of the main, for the people, you had Passover, you had circumcision, you also got the rainbow and others.

The idea of a covenant sign is very, very important. So circumcision was a key covenant sign in the Old Testament.

- [ 35 : 12 ] God comes to Abraham, he gives Abraham the command, gives Abraham the covenant promises, he makes his covenant with him and then he gives the commandment that for circumcision on all male infants, eight days old, they are to be circumcised and all of this ties in with the covenant.

And so this is the sign of the covenant between me and you, there you go, it's right there, so I underlined the wrong bit there. So very, very clear, very explicit, circumcision shall be the sign of the covenant between me and you.

So that's definitely straightforward enough. Circumcision tied in with cleanliness. So this is where we have to piece things together.

Circumcision ties in with cleanliness, that the uncircumcised were unclean. You can see an example of that in Isaiah, talks about Chernobyl coming to you, the uncircumcised and the unclean.

So to be uncircumcised meant that you could not be part of God's people, you were unclean and so circumcision had to be undertaken in order to be made part of the covenant community.

- [ 36 : 20 ] Obviously, circumcision is just something that's done once, so it is a one-off initiation into the covenant community. That happened with adults like Abraham and others who joined the Israelites and it happened with their children as infants.

Circumcision, sign of the covenant, talking about cleanliness and it of course involved blood.

In the New Covenant, in the New Testament, when we look at baptism, there's a very clear emphasis on being washed. So baptism is all about washing.

Water symbolises our cleansing from sin. You see that prophesied, sorry wrong button, prophesied in Ezekiel 3 talking about sprinkling clean water on you, cleansing you, putting a new spirit in you, etc.

You see the emphasis on that in Acts 22, rise and be baptised and wash away your sins. So baptism has been emphasised in terms of water and cleansing.

- [ 37 : 32 ] Baptism is also tied to God's covenant promises. You see that in Peter's words in Acts 2, he says, repent and be baptised with you. In the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promise is for you and for your children.

That's covenant language. God's promises are for him and for their children. So again, you've got this emphasis on cleansing.

You've got this one-off thing that happens in order to bring people into God's covenant community. And attached to that is the fact that the New Testament is very, very clear that circumcision does not continue, but it's also very clear that baptism is to be commanded.

And so you put it together like this, and if you think in terms of the Lord's Supper, you've got Passover, which is something that you repeat again and again, which is something that is a memorial of God's salvation.

It's celebrated over a meal, and that all is fulfilled in the Lord's Supper. That fits in very, very, very, very well. I think this similar pattern though does apply to baptism and circumcision.

- [ 38 : 50 ] You've got circumcision, and it's a one-off thing that only happens once. It's identifying you as God's people, and it highlights cleansing, and that is fulfilled in baptism.

Now, not everybody agrees with that, and that's okay. I do understand that not everybody agrees with that, but that's where the idea comes from.

That's where we think about that, the fact that you can see in Passover through to the Lord's Supper, there seems to be a clear correspondence. Circumcision going through to baptism, that seems to be a clear correspondence as well.

Just the last thing to say on that is that I guess just both of them speak so amazingly powerfully of what Jesus has done for us, because you think of baptism, the great cleansing that he provides, and the fact that he brings us into his covenant community, and you think of the Lord's Supper, the broken body, and the shed blood of Jesus.

All of these things fit together so that you can be saved, and so that we can rejoice as being part of God's amazing family, and so that we can be blessed by God through these wonderful provisions that he's provided in baptism and in the Lord's Supper.

[ 40 : 35 ] That's where the whole idea came from. If you don't agree with it, it's totally okay, and I'm more than happy to chat through it. I think it's actually very cool how it all fits together. Last question, Phil.

What practical things do you think we could be doing as Christians and as a church family to help people in our community during this cost of living crisis?

We don't have as much time as really this question deserves, so this would be a great one for us to hear thoughts from everyone afterwards. I think one of the great things that I thought about was inviting each other around for food.

What do people need in a cost of living crisis? They're often lacking heating, food, and friendship, and inviting someone around for a meal gives them all those things, a warm place, builds a relationship, and food in their belly and you can send them home with something more.

I think that's a great way that we can serve people. Some people don't say if they're in need. I think the other thing we can be doing is just making sure that we're in people's lives and involved in their lives so that either we can notice if we think they're in need and we can preempt and try to help them, so that they feel comfortable enough to ask us as individuals.

[ 41 : 54 ] Us being in people's lives is probably the best thing that we can do to start thinking about that. Thomas, do you have any thoughts? I think that's just such an important point and just as you said that, Philip, reminded me of, I remember hearing someone speaking about poverty and they were saying really the problem they face in poverty is not actually not having enough money or enough stuff, it's actually not having any friends and feeling that sense of shame that comes with struggling.

So I think what you said there is so, so important being involved in people's lives. I think there's great things for us to do as a church, I think having people around our houses is so important, I also think it's really good for us to think about how we can get involved in other things that the community is doing.

So if the community is, when it's doing the shop, if it's doing warm spaces, if it's more widely on the island, things like the food bank or whatever, I think it's so brilliant for us to get involved in those things and it's always really important maybe to remember that helping people is not just about us doing stuff as a church, it's also about us as a church getting involved in good stuff that other people are getting on with.

And I think as well, the one other thing I'd say is just, I think it's probably very important for us as a church to set a good example in terms of just making sure that we're careful with what we do and just so that we set a good example that as we try to save energy and all of these things.

And that's part of what we're doing with the renovation, it's these heaters here, they use half the power that the previous heaters had used. So that's really helpful and if we get rid of our drafts and things like that, all that will help as well.

[ 43 : 37 ] So we want to set a good example and if we're really cold then we can just burn the petrol that spilled out the back. Great, well that is way past seven o'clock so I'm sorry that I went on too long about baptism and circumcision but that's all very interesting I think.

Thank you so much for listening, thank you so much for the questions and we really do hope that it's been helpful, I like the variety in the questions. Please stick more in the question box, we'd love to do this regularly so if you have a question you can stick it in the question box that's the side there or you can just text it to me or email it to me, I won't embarrass you by saying who asked or anything like that and it would be wonderful if we could do this every couple of months or so.

If not for the questions for the pizza which we shall be enjoying very, very shortly. Let me pray and then we'll sing together. Father we thank you for this time, together we thank you for just the opportunity to think through some of these questions, help us to grow in our knowledge of you, to grow in our understanding but most of all to grow in our love for you and for one another.

Thank you for being so good to us and in a few minutes when we share some food together we thank you for that and pray your blessing on our food and on our time together.

In Jesus' name, amen. Okay we're going to close with Psalm 72, singing from verse 17 to 19, these are just the wonderful words that emphasise that Jesus is king as we said, he is the one with all the answers.

[ 45 : 08 ] So let's stand and sing together. His name forever shall endure, last like the Son it shall.

And shall be blessed in him, unblessed, all nation shall him call.

Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel, for he alone doth wanderers work in glory that exels, and blessed be his glorious name to all eternity.

The whole earth let his glory fail, amen so let it be.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all and all God's people say, amen. Great, thank you all so much.

[ 46 : 55 ] Please just take a seat at the back or take some time to chat together and in a few minutes so we'll get pizza and stuff. There's tea and coffee as well so you can get a cup of tea while you wait and that'll be perfect.