Are the Essene Gospels Real?

Are the Essene gospels (Gospel of Peace) real? How can you witness to someone who believes these are truer than the Bible? I have a father who says he believes in Jesus, but not the Bible. He says a loving God will not condemn man as long as he does mostly good. He also rejects that Christ is the only way. I know we are saved by grace not works and that Jesus is the way, but how do I explain and share the truth without arguing? My referring to the Bible only aggravates him since he rejects it as one of religion and man's creation.

There are certainly many ancient "Gospels" that never made it into the Bible.

You can find out more about these on sites like the following: wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/index.htm and www.gnosis.org/naghamm/nhl.html.

A search on the latter site for the "Gospel of Peace" produced no matches and I've actually never heard of this one. Regardless, however, the real questions we must ask are:

1. Who wrote these documents?
2. When were they written?
3. Are they historically reliable or trustworthy sources of information about Jesus and the early church?

Many of these documents were written by groups (like the Gnostics) who were later declared heretical by church councils and synods. They were written AFTER the time of the New Testament Gospels – sometimes by hundreds of years, sometimes by decades. And with the exception of certain portions of the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, they're generally regarded as late, legendary, and historically unreliable sources of information about Jesus and His early followers.

If your father doesn't believe that the Bible is reliable, you

might see if he's willing to read some books which give evidence that it is. A very good general introduction is "A General Introduction to the Bible: Revised and Expanded" by Norman Geisler and William Nix. A book on the Old Testament is "The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable & Relevant?" by Walter Kaiser. And F.F. Bruce wrote, "The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?" Many other good books exist, but if your father would be willing to carefully read any of these, it would be a great start.

Regardless of whether he's willing to read such books or not, however, the best thing you can do is pray for him and model Christlike love toward him. The Lord can work wonderfully to soften men's hearts toward Christ and the Bible. Speak a good word for the Lord as you have opportunity, but mainly just pray for him and show him God's love. It's a powerful combination.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

"Is the Genesis Story of 'The Sons of God' True?"

Pertaining to the old days when the watchers went astray and married women and bore giants—are these stories of any truth?

In the days of Noah, when a man in years was nearing his death, say a just man, are there any hints as to what awaited them in the afterlife of that period?

Is there something, or has there ever been something,

commented on in scripture which disturbs the dead in their rest?

Thank you for writing Probe Ministries. My own understanding of Genesis 6:1-4 leads me to believe that "the sons of God" mentioned here were indeed fallen angels. Whether or not the offspring of their union with the daughters of men were the giants referred to in v. 4 is difficult to say. The text may indicate that at least some of these giants existed prior to the sexual union of the sons of God with the daughters of men. For my part, I certainly believe these stories are true. It is quite possible that the sons of God in Genesis 6 are the angels referred to by both Jude (v. 6) and Peter (2 Pet. 2:4).

There is not a great deal of biblical revelation concerning the afterlife of the righteous in the days of Noah. But here is something to consider. In Genesis 5:21-24 we have the story of Enoch. Verse 24 states, "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." Although this verse does not give us much information, it certainly suggests an afterlife in the presence of God for the just and righteous who, like Enoch, walked with God. [Note: also see Probe Answers Our E-Mail: Is There a Specific Reference to Heaven or Hell in the OT?]

Finally, although I'm not entirely sure what you are asking about in your third question, there is an account in 1 Samuel 28 about King Saul and a medium, in which Saul asks the medium to call up the prophet Samuel from the dead. In this case, God allowed Samuel to return to deliver to Saul a message of judgment against both he and Israel. When Samuel appears, he asks Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" (v. 15). Thus, this may be the sort of example you were looking for. Of course, it's important to point out that this is an exceptional event. Normally, the dead are not permitted to return to the land of the living after death (see Luke 16:19-31). However, in particular cases the sovereign Lord may, for His own purposes, permit such a thing (as in the case of Samuel).

God bless you,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“How Did John the Baptist Get the Idea to Baptize People?”

Where did John the Baptist get the idea to dunk people in water and call it baptism? It can’t be the same as our baptism today, depicting the death, burial, and resurrection; that hadn’t happened yet. He preached baptism for the remittance of sin. But where did the idea come from?

Thanks for your question. D.S. Dockery has a good discussion of this issue in his article on “Baptism” in the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* [eds. Joel Green and Scot McNight (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 55-58].

Although the Jews practiced a form of proselyte baptism, “there is no clear evidence prior to A.D. 70 that proselytes underwent baptism as a requirement of conversion” (Ibid., 56). Dockery presents the following arguments against the view that Jewish proselyte baptism served as the model for John’s baptism (ibid., 56):

1. There is no clear reference to Jewish proselyte baptism in the OT, Philo, or Josephus.
2. Jewish proselyte baptism was self-administered; John’s baptism was administered by John.
3. There are grammatical differences between how the term “baptism” is used in the NT and how it is used in texts mentioning Jewish proselyte baptism.

4. John baptized *Jews*, conditioned on their repentance; Jewish proselyte baptism was only for Gentiles.

But if John did not get this idea from Jewish proselyte baptism, where did he get it? Dockery thinks a more likely borrowing occurred from the Qumran community. He does not, however, commit John to having been an Essene. In support of his thesis, Dockery offers the following arguments (Ibid., 57):

1. Both the Qumran community and John stressed the importance of repentance in relation to baptism.
2. Both viewed their ministries in terms of Isaiah 40:3.
3. Both baptized Jewish people.

However, there was one important distinction between the Qumran community and John regarding baptism: the Qumran rite was self-administered and practiced frequently, while John's baptism was administered by John and was a one-time rite of initiation.

Thus, Dockery believes John got his idea for water baptism from the Qumran community. Of course, it's important to note that if John originally received this idea from Qumran, he nonetheless revised and adapted it to fit his own unique purpose and calling as the one who was preparing the Jewish nation to receive her Messiah. Also, it's important to remember that this is simply one scholar's expert opinion. I happen to think it a good one, but as he himself observes, "…the background of John's baptism remains fiercely debated" (Ibid., 56).

God bless you,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“Does Calvinism Make People into Choiceless Puppets?”

When I look at the doctrine of predestination from the Calvinistic perspective I seem to come to the same final conclusion. It appears to me that in the Calvinistic approach, man is only an observer. Which would mean that my actions, thoughts, hopes, dreams, relationships, etc., are all meaningless. I call man an observer because, according to Calvin, ALL is predetermined.

There is no “choice.” There is double predestination. Life would end up being deterministic and fatalistic. I am merely a linear program executing my own destruction. What’s the use in doing anything? To me love then becomes meaningless. More importantly, how do I know for sure that I am really one of the “chosen”? Since every part of my being is totally deprived, how do I know if I really believe what I need to believe since my intellect is deprived also? I have talked to some Calvinists about this. They seem to ignore the philosophical problems I pose and move on without ever answering my questions. I get the old “That’s the way it is,” answer. It appears to me that if you follow Calvin’s view to its logical extreme, man becomes only an observer who can affect nothing. My problem arises when I conclude that if this is the case, then God sends a person to Hell for sins that God determined and orchestrated for the observer to “commit.” Why would God hold me responsible for a sin that He “programmed” me to commit? Perhaps I am misunderstanding Calvinism but this is the way I see it. Please correct me if I am mistaken. Thank you for you time. Sorry about the length of my question. I am in search of knowledge. I have changed my mind many times on this issue. HELP!

You ask a very important question. Unfortunately, it cannot be adequately answered in an e-mail (not by me, at any rate). I will attempt to sketch out a few lines of thought for your consideration, but let me also recommend a couple books that might help you think through some of these issues in a little more detail. On the side of what might be called "theistic determinism" you may want to look at Jonathan Edwards' *Freedom of the Will*. On the other hand, Norman Geisler's *Chosen but Free* presents a position which some might call "moderate Calvinism," insofar as he does not embrace all five points of Dortian Calvinism and argues for genuine, self-determining, human freedom and responsibility. There are also some good articles in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* on "Calvinism," "Predestination," and "Freedom, Free Will, and Determinism". In my response, I will simply try to set forth a few passages from the Bible which seem to shed some light on this difficult and controversial issue.

In the first place, there are certainly verses which teach that God "works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11). Without doubt, then, God is sovereign and is providentially guiding history to its predetermined end. But as W.S. Reid (himself a Calvinist) correctly observes in his article on "Predestination" in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, "At this point the question arises of the possibility of individual freedom and responsibility if God is absolutely sovereign. How can these things be? Yet the Scriptures repeatedly assert both. Joseph's remarks to his brothers and Peter's statement concerning Christ's crucifixion highlight this fact (Gen. 45:4ff.; Acts 2:23). Man, in carrying out God's plan, even unintentionally, does so responsibly and freely" (871). This statement makes it plain that at least some Calvinists do indeed make room for a degree of genuine human freedom and responsibility, while at the same time affirming the full and unmitigated sovereignty of God. Although it may certainly be a mystery (at least from man's perspective) how both of these things can be simultaneously

true, I agree with Reid that the Bible does indeed “repeatedly assert both.”

But doesn’t the Fall of man affect human freedom? Indeed it does! Before the Fall, man’s will was perfectly free both to obey and disobey God. However, after the Fall the freedom to obey was lost (whether partially or completely need not concern us here). Nevertheless, through His gift of salvation (including both regeneration and sanctification), God is restoring this original freedom in His people (2 Cor. 3:16-18). In addition, however, it must also be kept in mind that even unregenerate men are acting freely when they sin. They freely CHOOSE to sin because their nature is now depraved, fallen and sinful. But when someone becomes a new creature in Christ, the freedom to do good and obey God is, to some degree, restored. And through the process of sanctification, God is progressively restoring this freedom in His children more and more.

Again, as Norman Geisler points out in his article on “Freedom, Free Will, and Determinism” in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, even fallen man retains a degree of genuine human freedom. This is taught in many passages of Scripture (e.g. Matt. 23:37; John 7:17; 1 Cor. 9:17; 1 Pet. 5:2; Philem. 14). Thus, even if it is not fully explicable (for man at any rate), the Bible clearly teaches both Divine Sovereignty and a degree of genuine human freedom and responsibility. Indeed, in some passages, both ideas appear virtually side by side. For instance, in Prov. 16:9 we read, “The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.” Passages such as this may teach that man has a measure of self-determination, while at the same time indicating that what man freely chooses is also (on some level) directed by God.

Finally, the Scriptures clearly indicate that God is graciously working in His people “both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). I don’t think that this work

of God should be viewed as a coercion of our wills. Rather, it seems to me that it would be more properly understood as a persuading and empowering of our wills so that we freely choose to do what God wants us to do. We may not have chosen to do such things apart from this work of God in our lives, but it is nonetheless WE OURSELVES who choose them in response to this gracious work. In a similar way, Satan is described as "working in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2) with the result that fallen, unregenerate men "want to do the desires" of the devil (John 8:44). But of course even here such men freely choose to follow Satan in his disobedience and rebellion against God (even if unconsciously). In addition, one must also keep in mind that even Satan's sin and rebellion against God is part of the plan and purposes of God (though freely chosen on Satan's part). And while Satan can only carry out his malicious intentions to the extent that God permits (see Job 1-2 and 2 Cor. 12:7-9), they are nonetheless Satan's (NOT God's) malicious intentions.

Thus, the biblical position (as I see it) affirms BOTH Divine Sovereignty AND some degree of genuine human freedom and responsibility. There is, I will certainly grant, a mystery here, but (at least in my opinion) no contradiction. Man is finite in his understanding and limited in his actions by time and space, but God is infinite in His understanding and not limited in His actions by time and space. It is therefore not unreasonable to think that what man may be incapable of comprehending (e.g. Divine Sovereignty and human freedom operating simultaneously and harmoniously) might nonetheless still be true. I therefore think that we are safest to stick closely to the express affirmations of Scripture, even if we cannot formulate a mathematically precise explanation of the relationship between Divine Sovereignty and human freedom. The Scriptures seem to affirm both and we must be content with this. This, at any rate, is my opinion on the matter.

Wishing you God's richest blessings!

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“How Can I Respond to the Argument that Christ as the Only Way is Too Intolerant?”

An issue that often comes up in talks about Christianity is tolerance. Can you help me respond to the argument, “Christ as the only way to Heaven is too intolerant”? Is Islam tolerant? Do Muslims believe Christians will go to heaven?

Concerning the claim that it is intolerant to assert that Jesus is the only way to Heaven, I think we must first point out that this is what Jesus Himself actually claimed in John 14:6: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.” In other words, Christians are merely telling people what Jesus claimed; we are not asserting this simply on our own authority.

Second, we must try to help people to view Jesus’ claim as something which is either true or false. By focusing on the issue of truth, we help to dispel some of the negative emotional baggage which such a claim has for many people in our pluralistic society.

Third, we may want to use an analogy. For instance, is it intolerant to claim that 2+2=4? Is it narrow-minded, or naive, not to believe that (at least for some people) 2+2 may equal 3? Or 5? Or is it rather the case that 2+2=4 regardless of

whether anyone believes this or not? See my point? Jesus' claim to be the only way is either true or false. If it's true, it is no more intolerant to assert its truthfulness than it is to assert that 2+2=4. Sometimes there really is only ONE correct answer, after all.

Concerning the Islamic position on Christians in the afterlife, I doubt whether one can be completely dogmatic here. Suffice it to say that the general Islamic view regarding one's final judgment before God can NEVER be known with certainty before it takes place. Even the most devout Muslims will acknowledge that they cannot be sure of their own entrance into Paradise (dying in a *Jihad*, a holy war, notwithstanding). And if they are not sure about themselves, I imagine they are even less sure about Christians. In fact, the Qur'an offers no forgiveness for one who commits the sin of *shirk*, which is to associate any partner with God. Thus, many Muslims would equate the Christian view of Jesus with shirk, in which case they would hold that Christians could never be admitted into Paradise. Having said that, however, there are probably some Muslims who would acknowledge the possibility of Christians being admitted into Paradise. But they would likely be quick to add that Christians would greatly improve their chances by converting to Islam!

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

"Did Christ's Sinlessness

Begin Only After His Baptism?”

I recently heard someone state that Jesus did what all children do: lie, steal, etc. When I confronted him on this, he stated that the sinless life of Christ didn’t begin until after His baptism. Is there a particular individual (i.e., Aquinas, etc) or a particular group that espoused this belief? I want to bring this up with the person again.

Thanks for your question. It’s difficult to know where this person got this information. They obviously didn’t get it from any of our canonical gospels (or any other canonical text). It could be that this person imbibed such ideas from reading something like the (fictional) Infancy Gospel of Thomas—which does portray the young Jesus as quite mischievous, temperamental, and even deadly! But no scholar of any persuasion regards this gospel as giving us historically reliable information about the young Jesus.

Bottom line: the person who made this statement needs to give some account of how they know this. Where did they get this information? How reliable is their source of information? Why do they believe their view is correct? If they don’t have good grounds for saying or believing such things (and they most certainly don’t), then they need to be shown the error of their ways. The Bible affirms that Jesus was without sin (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5; Heb. 4:15; etc.). It does not say that He was sinless from His baptism on.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

Michael Gleghorn

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Baylor University, B.A., 1990 (Psychology)
Awarded Membership in the Golden Key National Honor Society

Dallas Theological Seminary, Th.M. *cum laude*, 1997
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Christway Academy, Duncanville, TX
Prior to coming on staff with Probe he taught the following courses: U.S History I and II, World Geography, World History, Old Testament Theology, and Christian Philosophy and Competing Worldviews.

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PROBE PUBLICATIONS

Ancient Evidence for Jesus from Non-Christian Sources
Astrology: Do the Heavens Declare the Destiny of Man?
Evaluating Miracle Claims
Philosophical Taoism: A Christian Appraisal
Putting the Brakes on Human Genetic Engineering
Probing the Shroud of Turin
Reiki
Taoism and Christianity
The Worldview of Edgar Cayce
UFOs and Alien Beings
Yoga and Christianity: Are They Compatible?
Was Jesus Really Born of a Virgin?
Wicca: A Biblical Critique
Evaluating Miracle Claims
Communicating with the Dead
The Urantia Book
Redeeming the Da Vinci Code
The Self-Understanding of Jesus
History and the Christian Faith
The Law of Rewards
Why We Shouldn't Hate Philosophy
C.S. Lewis and the Riddle of Joy
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe
Crime and Punishment
Did Christianity Borrow from Pagan Religions?
Problems and Promises of Petitionary Prayer
Did Jesus Really Perform Miracles?

“Did Egypt Once Worship the One True God?”

Recently I heard somewhere, that there was an early period of time when Egypt worshipped our one true God. The person who said this, said it may have occurred immediately after the Exodus. Can you give me any support or documentation for this idea?

Thanks for your question. Most likely, the person who made this comment was referring to Amenhotep IV (Akhenaton), the “heretic” pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty, who began to rule about 1380 B.C. He moved his capital from Thebes to a city he called Akhetaten (i.e. Tell el-Amarna). G. Herbert Livingston writes, “The new pharaoh replaced the high god Amun of Thebes with Aten (Aton), the sun disk, and replaced his throne name with Akhnaton (Ikhnaton)” (*The Pentateuch in its Cultural Environment*; 40).

Although some scholars refer to Akhenaton as Egypt’s first monotheistic pharaoh, it’s important to understand that his “monotheism” was definitely NOT the same as that of the Hebrews. The god Aton was essentially identified with the physical disk of the sun; the God of the Bible is not to be identified with anything in His creation (see Exodus 20:1-6). Livingston writes, “Aton was purely a nature entity and, curiously, the pharaoh continued to regard himself as a god, too” (119). Thus, Akhenaton did NOT worship the one true God. He was not a biblical monotheist.

However, your source is correct about the time period in which these events occurred. As previously noted, Akhenaton began to reign about 1380 B.C. Although there is some room for scholarly disagreement, the Exodus likely took place around 1446-1436 B.C. Thus, Akhenaton would have become pharaoh shortly after this time.

Almost any book on ancient Egyptian history will mention Akhenaton. I took some of the information above from the following source: G. Herbert Livingston, *The Pentateuch in its Cultural Environment* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987).

Hope this helps.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

"Can a True Believer Commit the Unforgiveable Sin?"

Can a true believer turn away from God at some point and eventually commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? I don't believe a true Christian would be capable of that no matter how far they strayed because one saved, always saved, but I need verses to support my opinion to share with someone else.

Thank you for your question. The "unpardonable sin" of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the three synoptic Gospels: Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-29, and Luke 12:10. Historically, these verses have aroused a great deal of anxiety and fear, especially in those with a sensitive

conscience. But what do these sayings mean?

In my opinion, the two best positions are the following:

1. This sin is committed when someone willfully attributes the work of God the Holy Spirit to Satan.
2. This sin is simply willful and persistent rejection of, and lack of faith in, the person and work of Christ.

If the first option is correct, some would hold that it is not even possible to commit this sin today. In this view, this sin could only have been committed while Christ was physically present on earth and performing miraculous feats through the power of the Holy Spirit. Others would hold that the sin can be committed today; nevertheless, there is a pretty large consensus among evangelical Christians that a true believer could never commit this sin. After all, Peter says that all true believers "are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5). And Paul tells the Philippian believers that he is "confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

Although I may certainly be wrong, I honestly prefer the second view. Please notice that if this view is correct, a true believer could not possibly commit this sin by definition. While I could list many reasons why I prefer this view, let me mention just a few.

First, it is by far the easiest way to make Scriptural revelation self-consistent. For instance, we know that persistent unbelief is an unpardonable sin. But Jesus says that all sins and blasphemies will be forgiven except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:28-29). Logic, then, seems to require that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is persistent unbelief.

Second, notice the progression of ideas in Matthew 12:30-33.

Jesus begins by stating the importance of being rightly related to Him (v. 30). He then describes the unpardonable sin (vv. 31-32). He then seems to present His listeners with a choice: "Either make the tree good…or make the tree bad; for the tree is known by its fruit" (v. 33). Could Jesus be offering those who had spoken against Him in v. 24 (they are the ones He is speaking to – v. 25), an opportunity to repent (i.e. change their minds about His identity) and become rightly related to Him in v. 33? If so, it would seem to indicate that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is persistent unbelief. And the cure is faith, leading to forgiveness.

Third, although Mark's parenthetical explanation in 3:30 could be taken as evidence of the first view; nevertheless, I see in it evidence for the second view as well. After all, if they were saying that Jesus "has an unclean spirit" (v. 30), it certainly indicates that they did not believe Him to be who He actually was (and is). Thus, this statement is consistent with simple unbelief in the person of Christ.

Finally, why doesn't John mention this sin? It certainly seems like it would have been important. But what if he did mention it, but simply described it differently? Look at John 16:8-9. Jesus is speaking of sending the Holy Spirit after His ascension. Notice what He says of the Holy Spirit: "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me…." The Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning the sin of unbelief, or lack of personal faith, in Jesus! Could the persistent rejection of the Holy Spirit's conviction, and the willful refusal to believe in Jesus, thus be blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? That, at any rate, is my opinion. Thus, by definition, it is absolutely impossible for a true believer to commit this terrible sin. It can only be committed by someone who persistently rejects the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, choosing to remain in their unbelief.

Additionally, this ties in very well with what is said in other parts of the New Testament concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. All true believers receive the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:9, 14). The Holy Spirit testifies that believers are God's adopted children (Rom. 8:16). The indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life is said to be permanent (John 14:16-17), a pledge or "down-payment" of an eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14). Indeed, the Holy Spirit is said to "seal" believers "for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30)!

Just a very few of the many good passages on the security of the believer can be found in Rom. 8:28-39; John 10:27-30; and 1 John 5:9-13. But my own favorite is John 6:35-40. Read this passage carefully. Notice v. 37, that the one who comes to Jesus will certainly not be cast out. Notice that Jesus came to do the will of His Father (v. 38). But what was His Father's will? That the Son lose none of those who come to Him (v. 39)! But think about this. If Jesus loses even a single one who truly comes to Him for salvation, then He has not fulfilled the Father's will! But this is impossible for Jesus always does what is pleasing to His Father (John 8:29). Thus, it is impossible that Jesus will lose any who come to Him for salvation. Thus, Christians cannot commit the unpardonable sin.

Hope this helps. God bless you!

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“I Have Some Basic God Questions”

Question #1: In John 1:3 it says, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” Did God made Satan?

Question #2: Where was God when heaven and earth were not yet created?

Question #3: In John 10:30 Jesus said, “I and my Father are one.” Does this mean that Jesus is the Father also?

Question #4: Does this mean that Jesus knew all the events as the same as the Father also?

Question #5: In Ephesians 2:9 it states, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Does this mean “good works” is not necessary?

Question #1: Did God made Satan?

“Satan” means adversary. God created the angel who became Satan (i.e. the Adversary), but God created this angel (and everything else) good (Genesis 1:31). The fall of Satan may be described in Ezekiel 28:11-19. If so, note that before his fall he was created perfect and blameless (vv. 12, 15).

Question #2: Where was God when heaven and earth were not yet created?

Where was God before the creation of heaven and earth? Since God is omnipresent (i.e. present everywhere – See Psalm 139:7-12), He was present “everywhere.” Of course, prior to the creation of the universe, it’s difficult to know precisely what this might mean. However, since God is eternal, He has always existed; since He is omnipresent, He has always existed “everywhere” (whatever this might mean).

Question #3: Does this mean that Jesus is the Father also?

No; Jesus is the incarnate Son of God. The Father and Son are both God, but they are distinct Persons within the Godhead. John 1:1 helps us to see this. Notice that the Word (God the Son) was WITH God (i.e. the Father). This implies a distinction between the Father and the Son. But we also read that the Word WAS God. This implies that the Son, like the Father, is fully God. This obviously leads us into the mystery of the Trinitarian nature of God. God is one in essence, but subsists as three distinct Persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christians do NOT believe in three Gods. They believe in ONE God who subsists as THREE distinct Persons.

Question #4: Does this mean that Jesus knew all the events as the same as the Father also?

While incarnate on the earth, there were some things that were known by the Father, but not the Son (see Mark 13:32). I see this as a temporary and voluntary limitation of the Son's exercise of His Divine attributes while incarnate upon earth. Philippians 2:5-11 indicates that Jesus "emptied Himself" by becoming a Man. He did not give up His Divine attributes (for then He would no longer be God), but He freely consented to a temporary limitation of the exercise of these attributes while incarnate upon earth. As God the Son, He knows everything that the Father knows. Both the Son and the Father are omniscient (i.e. all-knowing).

Question #5: Does this mean "good works" is not necessary?

Good works are not necessary for salvation, for salvation is a *gift* of God (Ephesians 2:8). Nevertheless, good works are important, for as Paul says in Ephesians 2:10, believers are "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (see also Titus 3:8). In other words, we are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ, completely apart from our works. But we are also saved

“for good works” (Ephesians 2:10). Genuine salvation (which comes first) produces the fruit of good works (which come after salvation).

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries