Welcome, as we come back and ask the question now, “Must we go beyond the Bible to answer questions that come up in our day?” Things that the Bible never even dreamed of, like in vitro fertilization, global warming, embryonic stem cell research. Are there rules for divorce that go beyond desertion and unfaithfulness? What about abuse, rugged abuse [of children or spouse]? Life changed, and it has been changing in the decade or the decades that are most immediate to us.

In November of 1998, scientists at the University of Wisconsin were able to successfully isolate and culture human embryonic stem cells. The name “stem cells,” of course, is derived from their similarity to the stem of a plant that gives rise to branches and bark and other parts of the plant. But in the human body there are 210 different kinds of tissue that give rise to a similar pattern of stem cells. So as a human embryo develops, the stem cells can be removed from the blastocyst, cultured, and grown into self replicating cells.

But there is a moral problem. The moral problem is that the embryo must be, or usually is, destroyed. So the embryo came either from 1) in vitro fertilization to produce the embryos; or 2) frozen embryos that were left over from an in vitro fertilization; or 3), embryos gathered from human cloning—which, as you know, has now just been successfully completed and then the experiment was destroyed—or 4) the more ethically preferable source, from the umbilical cord left after the birth of a baby. I should add a fifth one there, and that is if the donor of the stem cell is the recipient of the stem cell. My sister came down with a kind of cancer of the bone marrow where they would take from her own bone and then try to implant that [portion] which would resist the disease. However, [it was] unsuccessful. In just a matter of weeks, she passed away at 58 years of age.
So what are we going to do about all of these new issues for interpreting the Bible? We say the Bible teaches us how to go, how to live, how to think; but, yet, the questions seem to be getting very, very complex. And as a result, many are saying, “We’ve got to either jettison the teaching of the Bible, or project beyond that teaching, or supplement that teaching, or correct that teaching, or replace that teaching.” Now a lot of those or’s [alternatives] I don’t like. So I’m going to put my “oar” in the water and try to steer the ship a little differently (you’ve got to keep the people thinking here, so the humor comes along with it. have you noticed that we learn faster when we smile?).

(We raised our four children, three boys and a girl. Now that we have seven grandchildren and five of which live with us constantly—we all eat at the same table, etc., etc.—I said to Marge, “Were our kids that much fun when they were growing up?” She said, “I told you to pay attention.” So, at any rate, I’m learning a lot. For example, when Sarah was 2, I would feed her her cereal. She was even younger I guess. And I don’t know why it is, but parents and grandparents, as you feed [babies], you always open your [own] mouth. It’s automatic. I don’t know if you’re thinking or trying to direct the child or both or it’s unthinking. We were going along pretty well for 10 minutes and I was getting the Pablum [a brand of soft cereal for infants] down. And all of a sudden she got bored, and she pushed her reject button and out it came! So I “shaved” her [chin with the spoon], and put it back in, and she hit the reject button [again]. She had nothing else to do all day. She had my attention, so why not. And I had a feeling this was going to go on for a long time. So I said ”Come on, you’ve got a Ph.D. Figure this out!” So I said, ”Hey Sarah, Aaaahhh!” I got her to laugh, and it went down. Now that’s teaching. So that’s how it happens, and that’s what we must look at here.)

Some would point (in B1 as we have on our outline for our eleventh lecture here) to civil and ceremonial provisions of the Law that are no longer normative as an example of, “Wouldn’t that give us a good illustration as to what is really operating in our day and in our age too, as well. Therefore doesn’t that give us a criterion of how we can go forward.”

One of the great New Testament evangelical scholars of our day is I. Howard Marshall, kind of an “heir apparent” to F. F. Bruce. He wrote a book called Beyond the Bible, which recently has just emerged [published with] the subtitle Moving from Scripture to Theology. Baker produced it in 2004. There are other articles that are in the same genre, but I think His book more than anything else in 2004 set off this topic. He says, ”The early Christian rereading of the Old Testament took place in light of the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus Christ. And we must read the Old Testament in the same way.” They reread (reread?). “Howard, they reread the Old Testament in light of the New [Testament]?” Now he goes on to say—now adding, really, “insult to injury”—“There must be a Christian understanding of the Old Testament when it comes to the question of how we appropriate it for Christian use.” That seems to say,
“God used to mean ‘this’ for some 1,500 years, but now it means ‘something else’ now that He’s given the New Testament.”

Marshall was careful to say that such a move does not exclude careful exegesis of the earlier text. “But,” he said, “We must insist that it’s not the last word.” “Oh? It’s not the last word?” Well why the rereading, then, of the Old Testament? “We must go on to say that what once was authoritative for the people of God apparently is now no longer authoritative.” And he misunderstands that when God gave Exodus 25–40 on the tabernacle and the feast and the sacrifices in Leviticus 1–27 and Numbers 1–10, God put a blinking [caution] light that said, “All of this is according to the pattern.” He used the word, and I’ve stressed this before, but let’s go back to it again, “This is all, according to the pattern, the copy of the model of what I’ve showed you in the mount.” God said this to Moses in Exodus 25:9, 40. And actually, I think I also gave you 26:30 in the next chapter, and again in 27:8. So we have one, two, three, four times God warns, before He gives all of this legislation, “It is only a model.” But when the real comes in Jesus, the model is suspended. This was the argument of Hebrews. Hebrews says that this is a shadow. He doesn’t use “pattern” or “model.” The Hebrew word is tabnit; it comes from the verb with the root of banah, to build. Banah is the root from which it comes—“to build”—and this was the pattern to copy the model with the T-formation in front of it, making it a noun.

I think that I. Howard Marshall missed that, because he says, “Since these were civil and ceremonial [and they are], we no longer use them [and we don’t], then can’t we use that as a basis for why we reread the text today and go beyond that?” And I said, “No! Because this was not a Kmart “blue light special”; this was a Bible “yellow light caution.” That’s a caution, caution, caution. This is temporary, this is only the mock-up, you don’t have the real. This is not the same thing as when the Lord Himself comes. So that was at the head of all this legislation, at the head of that. [Meanwhile, the moral law, based on God’s character, still remains in force].

But they go on to argue B too. But these texts make the same point here. They all use the big word [which indicates that they just as we] have a “built-in obsolescence”—built-in obsolescent cars, obsolescent refrigerators. These days when you buy something, you have to quick use it, because tomorrow they’ll have a new thing out. You’ve got a camera, a digital camera, [which] does this and does that, and [but] out they come with other things.

I had a birthday last Friday and my daughter really thinks I need to “get up” on [with] the new age. I have no idea how they do these things, but she gave me (what’s this thing called?) an iPod. It has all sorts of things in here, but it doesn’t tell me how to work it. And there are pictures of the farm and of the family and the animals; there are phone messages here, there are complete symphonies and all kinds of music on the thing, and it’s [got] four gigabytes, whoever they are. But at any rate, I appreciate it, and she even got it by going
on eBay; eBay for an iPod. So you really have to know your initials today in order to even figure it out. That doesn’t mean I know what the thing is, but I’ve got to carry it, because she bought it especially for me. God bless her!

Thirdly, “what about going outside of Scripture for answers to these types of questions?” Not, I say, if we wish to have the authority and the voice of Scripture behind what we’re doing. Therein lies the great problem of answers to “Must we go beyond?” Yeah, if you don’t want the voice of Scripture; if you don’t want the authority of the Word of God to stand behind what we’re doing.

Well then, the question [is], “What about the early Christians so called ‘rereading’ of the text [that’s from I Howard Marshall] of the old covenant in light of the new covenant? Does what they call 'the rereading' say, 'we too can read the old in a revised way?’” See, what I would do is to cut off the first part of that. I don’t think the Christians reread the Old Testament. Too frequently today we’re being taught, “Only teach the Old Testament if you can find the New Testament saying over again or better what’s in the Old Testament.” That leads to a canon within a canon. It leads to a narrowing down [or reductionism]. So we have New Testament Christians only, who have deleted 77 percent of what God said to us. I see that as a terrific mark [of poor judgment]. I am in constant conversation with a number [of scholars on some of these issues]. I have another book in the press with Zondervan. This one is on New Testament Citations of the Old Testament, in which [some claim that] there is a large argument that “we should never teach anything from the Old Testament except Christ. And therefore we can get that only when we join the Old Testament passage with the New Testament passage.” But that, again, is a canon within a canon, and it is narrowing it down.

Such rereadings are dangerous to the plain, the natural, the literal meaning of the text. People say, “Well I can find everything I need in the New Testament [and the Old Testament is not for us today].” And I say, “Okay, go marry your sister,” because there are no New Testament texts [about this], see. And I get mean on this, and I think of other kinds of things that they can do too; “Go and have relations with an animal,” which, by the way, is not far off if you’re reading your daily blogs these days! The bloggers are talking about this as “another expression of human sexuality.” It’s just plain “good old” bestiality, but there is not a hint of a scrap of a word in the New Testament against it. So no wonder we’re getting into trouble. And it’s not altogether clear that New Testament Christians reread the Old Testament to give it new values. Jesus, when He challenged the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, challenged them on the basis of what the text said. “Wasn’t it necessary that I should die and come back again and rise again from the dead?” (Luke 24).

I’ve had more fun over the years going to Psalm 16, a Psalm of David, where David is talking about the enemies who are hard after him. He said, “You will not leave your holy one, you will not suffer your holy one to see destruction.”
And, of course, on the day of Pentecost, Peter picked up that Psalm [16] and preached on that and said, “David, being a prophet” (I thought He was a King, but He was also a prophet), “David, being a prophet, foresaw [he uses the word pre and see; he “saw ahead’] and spoke concerning the resurrection of Christ when he wrote these words.” And I show that [in this text] (I was in an ETS meeting in a room filled with teachers and scholars from all over. And they withstood me, to my face, as a single man—some women too. And they just said, “No!” [David didn’t write about Jesus’ resurrection]. I said, “But the text says so! The text said David was a prophet, he foresaw, and he spoke about the resurrection of Christ.” “No, it’s only when the New Testament says that, that we can say that.” So what did the Holy Spirit do, stutter for 39 books? No, no! He spoke what He wanted to get across. I know I’m “carrying coals to Newcastle,” but most of my problem comes from some of my reformed [Christian] brothers and sisters, and I want them to reform [change their minds]).

At any rate, number three—it is dangerous to refer to “the new people of God.” He [Marshall] says that he made this comment here that “there is a new people of God.” Why refer to a new people of God since there is only one people of God in both Testaments? Well others argue that “Jesus’ teaching was given in the liminal imagery of that day.” That was Marshall’s, I. Howard Marshall’s, word—Liminal. I looked it up—means threshold (it wasn’t in my vocabulary). So it was the “threshold imagery” of that day. But now that we’re [in a] post-Easter [era], we can go beyond that threshold, beyond the liminal [aspect of the Jesus’ story]. But the text, however, again, will fill us in as a guide in the process of revelation. Jesus said “The disciples, who were with Him from the beginning, will take what is mine,” that is, doctrine, “and give it in the New Testament.”

Who are the people that are trying to help us on this particular whole problem? Do we think that we should answer people who say, “Can I have in-vitro fertilization?” Yes! I think we need to answer them, but there are principal ways that come from what we have in the Bible that will help us with illustrations on answering these kinds of questions. For example, I think the donor and the recipient should be the same couple that are there, rather than an outside donor. I think, also, that if they’re going take these sperm and the egg and fertilize them in a Petri dish, then, “How many eggs are you going to fertilize, and what will you do with the eggs that are leftover?” You say, “Why?” I say, “Because, in my view, as far as I can see in the biblical principles, as soon as you have the uniting of the two coming together, you have an individual, and you have a cell. But if you’re just going to choose one and chuck 20 of the other fertilized eggs away, I think you’re involved in a real theological problem.”

Look at Stanley Porter, for example, up at McMaster Seminary in Canada (we’ve got to get the Canadians in here and see if we can get some [use some
of the wisdom out of the “Canucks”). This would be Stanley Porter, who is the academic dean at McMaster’s Seminary. He says, “I will tell you how to go beyond, it’s like we have ‘dynamic equivalence’ [in translations of the Bible]. When you go to translate, sometimes you can’t find a word in the target language that is [exactly the] one word that brings over the word that’s in the language you’re translating from. So what we do is we try to get an [comparable] expression of one or two words that would be the equivalent dynamically. Even though they don’t function in their root or stem meaning in the same way” [as the original language literal word did].

He said, “That will serve as a great illustration of how we move from, ‘the colonel taught in the text we have,’ to the dynamic equivalent.” So he said, “But we must ensure that we retain the same purpose in theology that was laid out in the original text.” Not bad, but I still don't think he has given us any criteria [on this situation of answering new questions not directly addressed in the Bible]; he has given us an illustration, an analogy. But what are the criteria by which you move from one to the other?

**Kevin Vanhoozer, [formerly]** at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School [and now at Wheaton College] (who also taught for a number of years at Edinburgh University in their seminary there for the Church of Scotland, a Presbyterian school), Kevin Vanhoozer traced three historic ways of going beyond the text, then he gave his own [preference]. His was a continuing canon, and he said that, “The interpreters, as they go and answer these questions, we can answer the question in terms of the whole canon of the Bible” (by the way, there's only one “n” in the middle of this canon, I tell my students, “You put two “n's” [in that word canon] and you got shot in my course”).

But this [canon] means a reed or [similar to] a yardstick that was laid down, and that reed was a measuring device. So when we talk about the canon, we want to know what are the extents of the books that really belong to the collection called the Bible. Well he says, “Read the whole canon, and if we can’t get it in the part, maybe the whole Bible will tell us what it says.” Now he’s moved away from that in the article he’s written for the book that I’m on. Now he is talking about a drama. I must tell you, I’ve read the thing through [some] 50 pages. I’ve got to read it again, because I can’t figure it out. But this I can: he says that, “What belongs to the whole can give us [this is almost a kind of trajectory too, as well] in which we can get a better meaning.” “But,” I ask, “How can the whole give me what I can’t get in the part?” This seems to me to also leave us without any criteria. It’s telling us, “Yeah, yeah, go on and answer these modern questions.” But I don’t know whether I’m answering them off the page or not.

With [this] whole business of this kind of trajectory, I also have another problem. Page 91 of the [text] book, I talk about the Roman Catholic scholar C. F. DeVine, who spoke not of going beyond the Bible, but of (they were back
in the 1950s, talking about) the consequent sense. “Is there a sense that is a consequence of our work that we have done in theology?” Well that’s pretty good; that’s close to where [or what] we are in our talking. But DeVine was making a point where he said that “the text may have consequent extension into later times, cultures, and settings, but the point of tension arises when we go beyond.” His point was, “can I,” and I think the question I am going to put to Kevin Vanhoozer [in our book] is, “Is this a different meaning that I get from the canon? Is it a separate meaning that I get from the canon, which I could not get from the part?” So the part of the verse or the passage won’t give it to me. But if I go through the whole bible, I will get a trajectory, a consequent sense, or a whole canon sense. Yes, but is that whole canon sense, is that consequent sense, different? Is it separate [from what we learn from the Bible’s part]? If it is different and separate, it’s non-biblical. So I want to know, “What’s the quality of that which is the whole canon that is not found in the parts themselves?”

William Webb also comes up for [participates in these same] discussions here. Webb’s concept was one in which he called it a redemptive historical trajectory, which was assisted by the Holy Spirit. Now he throws [adds] the Holy Spirit in there, but I think he doesn’t show how the Holy Spirit functions. Remember, in my teaching on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, I have seen Him in this process of interpretation as an illuminator, as one who helps me apply the text. He enlightens [me] so that I read the text and understand what it says. Then the Holy Spirit says, “That’s you Kaiser; you’re the ‘reekin’ deacon’ I’m talking about.” And then applies it back to my heart; that’s the issue there.

Nevertheless, that’s where William J. Webb is trying to go. He says that the Holy Spirit takes us on a trajectory beyond the biblical cultural bound letter of the text. He says, “The letter is static.” He says, “The letter is frozen. But we’ve got to get beyond that letterism,” and he tries to use the verse in Romans [actually found in II Corinthians 3:6]—letter versus the spirit. But Paul, when he used that, it shows that Webb doesn’t get it either. Because what he’s talking about there is gramma. The Greek expression here gramma is “letter.” He doesn’t say the difference between that and pneuma—“spirit,” the pneumatic meaning here. So Paul does contrast spirit and letter. Spirit is the word here and, of course, both of these means same thing. But if he really was saying, “Well, it’s what’s written in the Bible,” then he should’ve said graphe. Graphe is “written.” But Paul doesn’t say the Spirit is against “what is written”; he says it is taking what is written and getting back to letterism, where people start counting letters. This is like how some people take 666 [as the number] for the Antichrist, which, of course, is in Revelation 13, and try to figure it out (My wife’s grandfather figured Kaiser was 666. So it was hard on our marriage). But at any rate, you can take all these things and figure out the value of letters and try to see if Saddam Hussein equals 666. That’s letterism [according to the value of letters in his name]. But that is not what Paul is talking about. Paul would never say graphe is different than pneuma.
He would always say gramma is (our word “grammar” comes from this word here).

But it really is just taking the Bible in pieces and not taking it holistically. So the “redemptive trajectory” that pointed beyond the text was a movement that took us outside [the text], which gave us a different and separate meeting from what the text says. And when it gives us a separate and different meaning, we have no authority. This is where the church is desperately lacking this [in our] day!

That’s why I tell all my students, I say, “You rascals! I poured my heart and life into you. Preach the word [of God]! Stop giving these little stories and going to the pop psychology books: ‘two things on this, five things on this, how to be successful in this.’ Excuse me, ‘[It is mostly] baloney!’ Feed the word, feed the word! And if you don’t do it, I’m going to do like they do to the African-American churches—come in and say, “Help them Jesus, help them!” They just say it right out loud there. I don’t know if you know that, but they will do that. If you are doing well, they say “Amen, Amen! Uh-huh, that’s right.” But if you are not doing well, it’s, “Help him, Jesus, help him!” And that gets to the point real fast. But they don’t do that in evangelical white churches. They sit there and take the whole thing, and say, “That was good” (sarcastically)

Merely associating the trajectory with the Holy Spirit is insufficient grounds for actual guidance. “How am I supposed to do this?” Vanhoozer wisely critiqued Webb for that, but I would critique Vanhoozer too. Is that which comes out of the canon different and separate? Well you say, “What are you going to do?” Yeah, but if this which comes out is the principle, if we are going to say, “Here is what the exegesis of the text says, and from this I’m going to get principles [from the text],” then it seems to me that this has a grounding back here in the text. And that’s my contribution to this particular discussion, and in the chapter, that’s where I go on to try to make the point.

I got this [idea of principalization] way back, from Bernard Ramm. Ramm—I cut my teeth on it [Ramm's work] in 1950—he also raised the question: He said, “If we can’t spiritualize the Bible or really devotionally interpret it, how do we make it live for our people?” Well that “live for the people” is going beyond. Our answer is "to principlize." Now he misspelled it and said "palize." He’s in heaven now, so it won’t bother him. He goes on to say, “If we isolate the great moral, ethical, and spiritual principles [now there he did spell it right] in the passage, we are not foisting a new meaning on the passage. We are distilling off what is already there implicitly or explicitly, by principalizing [a-l] we are able to obtain devotional and spiritual truths from Scripture and at the same time avoid the accusation of eisegesis [reading in] or double sense [interpretation].” Ramm went on to assert, "The Bible is a book of principles, more than a catalog of specific, minute instructions." “Yea, Good, good!”
He saw two reasons for using principles: (1) if the word of God had been too specific then it would’ve been so provincial and so time bound it would have lost all relevancy for all times; (2), it’s better for the Bible to have majored in principles so that the spirituality in that would be neither mechanical nor hypocritical. So I picked up this definition of Ramm, only spelling it with “[principle],” and I’ve said—this was in my Exegetical Theology, [published in] 1981—“To ‘principlize’ is to state the author’s propositions, arguments, narratives, and illustrations in timeless abiding truths, with special focus on application of those truth to the current needs of the Church. Contemporary applications will often be suggested by analogous applications made by the original writer of the scriptural text.”

David K. Clark of Bethel Seminary, in the book “To Know and Love God,” he critiqued principlizing. I should tell you the other side of the story. He said there are three things wrong with it: He said, (1) “Sometimes what we call trans-cultural principles are in fact, only our own cultural bias.” Sometimes, yes. [Of course that may happen]. (2) “Principlizing tends to put everything in terms of didactic truth.” Yes. (3) “Treating such principles as God’s will could lead to substituting these principles for the original canonical statements.” Yes. “But Mr. Clark,” I respond back, “Those [critiques] are the risks to all interpretation. You did not tell me anything new. So I will be careful about that. And by the way, you too. You be careful as well in what you do. How we attempt to go beyond the text is important.

My conclusions [are these]: Is it not correct to say that God speaks to us from Scripture from two levels: a surface meaning—from the writer’s point of view—and a deeper meaning—given by the Holy Spirit? I don’t think so! I wouldn’t want to say that God originally gave a word that was a surface [meaning], but somehow He locked in there “mystery”—Hyponoia—underneath the text. What kind of revelation is that? What kind of disclosure is that? Why go to all that trouble? Why not wait? Since no one is going to get the message anyway (Selah).

Then second: we must, instead, principilize the Bible, which does not foist a new meaning on the text but instills what is already there in the principles that can be applied to different situations.

This is another portion, chapter 8, another book [in one of my resent books], “What does the Lord Require?” by Baker, “Biblical Ethics: Abortion and Stem Cell Research.” Talking about abortion, the most controversial and divisive topic of our day. [It is] still the most frequently performed surgery on adults in America. Number one. It is the number one money maker. It is claimed that one in every three babies conceived in the United States of America are deliberately aborted. We must have been two and three, all of us. But one out of three [is aborted]. Of course, abortion is not a recent phenomenon. It goes back to the ancient world. The Sumerians, the Babylonians, Assyrians,
Hittites, all considered abortion a serious crime. Pagans [considered it a crime]. It was in this same tradition that the famous Hippocratic oath that medical doctors, up until recently, [all] recited at graduation, that “I will not give a woman a pessary to produce an abortion.” Every doctor, up until 25-30 years ago, repeated that at their graduation from Hippocrates.

Another example, [which took] a very strong stand in antiquity, came in the 12th Century Middle Assyrian law code. Without mincing any words, the Assyrians of old said that “if a woman has had a miscarriage by her own act, when they have prosecuted and convicted her, they shall impale her on stakes without burying her. If she died in having the miscarriage (that is, the abortion), then they shall impale her on stakes without burying her.”

It was the Greek culture, however, that condoned the practice. Plato had argued that ill-conceived embryos should not be brought to birth. Aristotle thought that the deformed children should be left to die. And in Sparta, they had a way of taking care of them [such babies]. But the Jewish culture rejected abortion. Even in the Japanese culture to this day, there’s one word they call it: “thinning out.” Just like you “thin out” [rice in] the rice paddies, and you make it so that the plants [earth] don’t get overcrowded. So they did in that particular day too.

So objections can be made to three of the four or five sources for human embryonic stem cell research. However, even where we have done embryonic stem cell search, we’ve not been able to guide the thing. We just can’t control that so far, and therefore it has led in a number of recorded deaths. However, where we’ve used the adult stem cell research, it has had amazing results, or used it in terms also of using the [cells] off of the umbilical cord.

So after I do that [in this new book on ethics], then I am trying to lay out for astors [and laypersons], texts which they can use after giving them seven to eight pages of ethical direction. I take them to a sermon, Psalm 139:13-16: “The majestic omnipotence of our God in the formation of our bodies,” and then preached on [God’s] characteristics [by asking], “What are the characteristics of God’s omnipotence in shaping our body?” [In] verse 13, “God created my inmost being”; 13-14, “God shaped me in my mother’s womb”; 15-16, “God saw my embryo and loved me”; and at the end of verse 16, “God ordained all the days before I experienced day one.” So I go on and talk about that: God knew my frame, God knew my embryo, my unformed body (the Hebrew word there is golmi, “my embryo”), and God ordained all my days. Then I also discuss Exodus 21–22, the two men that are fighting. The wife of one apparently intervenes; she gets slagged and [immediately] goes into labor. The baby is born; no harm to her or to the baby. That’s okay. Now some have tried to call that a miscarriage. There is a Hebrew word for miscarriage, they are country mile away. But if the baby dies or the mother, then it is a capital offense, “life for life.” Those are some of the ways in which we’ve tried
to take this topic [relevant for our day].

We’ve given some reflection questions here. What’s wrong with setting a trajectory? What principles do you draw from Paul’s use of Moses’ teaching of “a farmer should not muzzle an ox?” And what important theological implications should come from saying the “consequent or beyond sense” in a text [where there] is not one [hint that this modern topic was implied as for the modern question] that was part of the word given originally but it’s separate and it is different?