



BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

AND INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE HOLY WORD OF GOD

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BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

"Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' He said 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?'" (Gen. 4:9).

After Cain had murdered his brother, Abel, the Lord confronted him with a question, asking about the whereabouts of Abel. Like His earlier confrontation with Cain's father, Adam, in the Garden asking, "Where are you?," God's purpose was to offer an opportunity for confession and repentance. Although Adam was ashamed of what he had done, when confronted, he didn't deny eating the fruit of the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil," but he did attempt to deflect the responsibility to "the woman that [God] gave to be with [him]" (see Gen. 2:15-17).

Cain's response to God's question revealed a heart attitude that was hardened in rebellion and bitterness towards God. Cain's answer was both dishonest and insolent. First, he told an outright lie by claiming not to know where Abel was, and second, he demonstrated his lack of respect for the Lord with his sarcastic question, "Am I my brother's keeper?," which was a claim of innocence. His claim of ignorance was an attempt to hide his sin behind a façade of deceit and his claim of innocence was an arrogant mockery of the human life he had taken, who was created in the image of God.

Of course, like with his father before him, the Lord knew full well what Cain had done even before He spoke with him. He made this very clear when He said to Cain, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground" (Gen. 4:10). This was an opportunity for Cain to turn his heart away

from his wicked attitude and to the Lord where he could receive mercy from the Righteous One. Sadly, Cain refused to take advantage of this opportunity and hardened his heart towards God. The Lord judged Cain for his crime of murder by cursing the ground so that it no longer produced for him. This forced Cain to give up the farming he was so proud of, and he complained obstinately saying; "My punishment is greater than I can bear" (see Gen. 4:10-13). Even though he showed a fear of what other men might do to him, he demonstrated no fear of God, instead implying that the Lord should protect him (Gen. 4:14-15).

Four thousand years later, during His earthly ministry, the Lord admonished His disciples to "not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). Also in the New Testament, we find both Cain and Abel mentioned. Abel as an example of a faithful man who suffered persecution (Heb. 11:4), and Cain as an example of a man who followed the way of the "wicked one," murdering God's servant, "Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous" (I John 3:12; cf. Jude 11). Today the majority of the world is still on this broad path of destruction that Cain chose to follow. Their only hope of escaping judgment at the end of the road is through Jesus Christ. The unsaved are characterized as having "no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 1:8; cf. Ps. 36:1). It is also true that, as believers who have trusted Christ, we all too often hesitate to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ because of fear; not the fear of God, but the fear of men. The blood of

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"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." II Timothy 3:16



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righteous Abel cried out to the Lord “from the ground” as the first martyr. And, though he died around 6,000 years ago, “he being dead still speaks” today of our need to stand strong in the Lord and to share Christ with the lost humanity around us that is on the road to everlasting condemnation in the Lake of Fire. Jesus Christ is the only hope of salvation.

Because Christ is Alive!

W. Edward Bedore

Dr. W. Edward Bedore, Editor
BBI Bulletin, BABQ

QUESTION: Scripture says that God has given all a measure of faith (Rom. 12:3). Our question is: Why do some people seem to have more faith than others? Does it have to do with a person’s will, or has God given us different measures of faith?

ANSWER: To answer this question, I think that it is important that we define Biblical faith. The basic idea of faith is to trust based on what one believes. To trust in something or someone means to rely or depend on that thing or person in some way. We might say that faith is to believe, to place confidence or trust in something or someone for a specific purpose. We all exercise faith in some way every day. We go to work trusting that our employer will give us a paycheck at the end of the week. We make appointments believing the other party will be at the place and time that we agreed on. And the list could go on and on.

Biblical faith refers to faith or trust in God based on what He has revealed in Scripture. Simply put, it is to rely on God, trusting Him to be faithful and true to His Word, the Bible. The question of Biblical faith is not about the strength or amount of one’s faith or their level of intelligence and knowledge, it is about the object

of one’s faith. If Jesus Christ is not the focal point of faith, it is not Biblical faith.

I believe that in Romans 12:3 Paul was saying that no member of the Body of Christ should ever be puffed up over their level of faith because God has given each member the same measure of faith. In other words, it is speaking of every member of the Body of Christ being given the capacity to believe, but not all choose to exercise their faith by actually trusting the Lord in all areas of their lives. The personal decisions that believers make are heavily influenced to the extent that their thinking has been “transformed by the renewing of (their) mind” (see Rom. 12:1-2), which takes place through the study of the Scriptures with an open heart towards God’s will (see Col. 1:9-11). However, because each member is at a different stage of spiritual maturity, how faith in God is being demonstrated is difficult and, at times, even impossible for others to discern. Only God knows the true condition of the heart (II Cor. 5:12; 10:7; I Sam. 16:7).

While it is important for believers to live their lives by faith, a person must first personally receive Jesus Christ as their Savior by faith. Only those who come to Him acknowledging their sinful, condemned, and lost condition, trusting in Him alone to save them, are redeemed through His shed blood and become members of the Body of Christ. They must believe the gospel, “...how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Cor. 15:3-4).

QUESTION: I hope you can throw some light on a subject I have wondered about for a long time. Why did God choose to preserve the account of Judah and Tamar in the Holy Scriptures for us?

ANSWER: Judah was Jacob’s fourth son. He was born to his first wife, Leah. The account of Judah and Tamar is found in Genesis chapter 38.

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It seems to have been inserted here as a parenthesis to fill us in on Judah's family line, or tribe, from which the royal family of Israel came. David was from the tribe of Judah, so, consequently, was Israel's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. In this story, we find that Judah married a Canaanite woman by whom he had three sons, Er, Onan, and Shelah (Gen. 38:1-5). When his first-born, Er, was old enough Judah married him off to Tamar (Gen. 38:6). But, evidently Er was exceptionally "*wicked in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord slew him*" (Gen. 38:7). Er's wickedness can probably be at least partially attributed to the influence of his Canaanite mother and grandparents and their idolatry. Because Er left no son to be his heir, Judah commanded his second born son, Onan, to marry Er's widow, Tamar. His first son by her was to be considered as Er's son and heir (Gen. 38:8). This was a common custom in those days, and later was allowed under the Law of Moses (see Deut. 25:5-10; Ruth 4:9-10). It was this practice of levirate marriage that the Sadducees unsuccessfully tried to use to discredit the Lord Jesus Christ in regards to His teaching on the resurrection when they asked about the seven brothers who successively had one wife (cf. Matt. 22:23-33).

Onan married Tamar but did not want to raise up a son in his older brother's name. Presumably, this was because as Er's heir this son would have received the first-born's share of Judah's estate. But, if Er had no heir, Onan would receive the double portion usually given to the first-born, so Onan made sure that Tamar did not become pregnant by him. He selfishly refused to carry out his responsibility. "*And the thing which he did displeased the Lord: wherefore He slew him also*" (Gen. 38:9-10). At this time, Judah sent Tamar back to her father with a false promise that he would have his youngest son marry her when he was old enough (Gen. 38:11).

Later, after Judah's wife had died and his third son was grown, Tamar finally realized that Judah had deceived her in this matter. Being

sent back to her father's house to live out her life as a childless widow was shameful in the culture of their day. If Judah would not see to it that his third son, Shelah, would give her a son to take away her reproach, Tamar decided to see to it that Judah would do it himself. To this end, when she knew that he was passing through the area, she disguised herself as a prostitute and positioned herself where she knew he would find her as he traveled to Timnath (Gen. 38:12-14). When he saw her, Judah did as she expected and went into her. He left his signet, his bracelets, and his staff as a pledge that he would later send the goat that he had promised in payment for her services. Her plan worked and she conceived by him and they both went their way (Gen. 38:15-19). When Judah attempted to reclaim his property by sending the promised goat to her, she was nowhere to be found (Gen. 38:20-23).

Three months later Judah found out that Tamar was pregnant, and thought to have her burned to death because she had "*played the harlot*" (Gen. 38:24). But, when she was brought out to be put to death, she had Judah's signet, bracelets, and staff with her. She had them shown to Judah saying that she was carrying the child of the man who owned them. Recognizing them as his own, Judah realized what had happened and why Tamar did it. He was convicted of his own guilt and acknowledged that she had acted more righteously than he had (Gen. 38:26). Tamar was attempting to get what she thought was rightfully hers, a son to carry on her deceased husband's name and to take care of her in her old age. But Judah's actions were the result of disobedience to the Lord and lust. To make matters worse, the Hebrew word used in verses 21 and 22 indicates that Tamar had dressed and acted like a Canaanite temple prostitute. Since he would have thought she was a temple prostitute when he went into her, Judah was willfully indulging in the idolatrous and perverted religion of Canaan, which was an early form of Baal worship.

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Tamar had twin boys by Judah who were named Pharez and Zarah (Gen. 38:27-30). Pharez, who was born first, after a struggle in Tamar's womb, is the one through whom the line of Judah is traced down to the Lord Jesus Christ (Gen. 46:12; Ruth 4:12; Matt. 1:1-3ff.). Tamar was the great-great-great-great grandmother of Salmon who married Rahab the harlot from Jericho (Josh. 2:1-21; 6:20-23; Matt. 1:5). Salmon and Rahab had Boaz who married Ruth (Ruth 4:13a). In turn, Boaz and Ruth had Obed who "begat Jesse and Jesse begat David the king" (Ruth 4:13-22; Matt. 1:5-6). The genealogy from Pharez to David is particularly given in Ruth 4:18-22 for the purpose of establishing the absolute historical accuracy of the genealogy of King David. This is important because it is through the Davidic Covenant that Jesus Christ has the legal right to the throne of Israel. He is the "Righteous Branch" of David who will one day "execute judgment and justice in the earth" (Jer. 23:5-6).

In connection with this are the two genealogies of the Lord Jesus that are given in Matthew and Luke. Matthew traces Christ's lineage from David through his son Solomon to show that the Lord Jesus was the "legal heir" to David's throne as Joseph's adopted Son (Matt. 1:1-17ff.). But because Christ was virgin born, He was not physically related to Joseph. To prove His right to the throne by birth, Luke traced His genealogy through Joseph's father-in-law, Heli, backwards through David's son Nathan, who was Solomon's full brother. Thus, through His mother, Mary, Christ is David's physical heir as well as his legal heir to the throne of Israel.

INTERESTING BIBLE FACTS

"The Singing Turtle"

In the "Song of Solomon" we read about springtime when "the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land" (Song. 2:12, KJV). The singing turtle referred to in this passage is not a reptile but a "turtledove." An American playwright titled one of his works "the Voice of the Turtle." Ronald Reagan starred in the movie version.¹

¹Lang, Stephen J., 1,001 Things You Always Wanted to Know About the Bible," Nelson Pub., Nashville, TN 1999.

COMMON SAYINGS FROM THE BIBLE

"His Knees Were Knocking"

This saying makes us think of someone who is shaking with fear so bad that their knees are bouncing off each other. It comes from the prophetic book of Daniel where it says of the Babylonian King, Belshazzar, that when he saw the hand writing on the wall, his "countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one another" (see Dan. 5:1-6). The king had good reason to fear as he did because the writing on the wall was a pronouncement of his doom and that very night he was put to death (see Dan. 5:7-31).

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