



BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

AND INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE HOLY WORD OF GOD

BEREAN BIBLE INSTITUTE, INC.

PO BOX 587, SLINGER, WI 53086

VOLUME 4

DECEMBER 2013

ISSUE 8

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The Birth of Jesus

At this time of year it is customary for special attention to be given to the birth of Jesus Christ in the town of Bethlehem in Judea. However, we do not really know when the Lord Jesus was born. Tradition puts his birth in the year A.D.1, but the Biblical and historical evidence is that He was actually born in 6 or 5 B.C., and absolutely no later than 4 B.C. We know this because King Herod was ruling over Judea as a vassal of Rome at the time Christ was born. The indisputable evidence that Herod was alive when the Lord Jesus was born is found in the Gospel Record of Matthew. There we are told that when the Wise Men from the East came to Jerusalem looking for the one who was "*born King of the Jews,*" King Herod "*was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him*" (see Matt. 2:1-3). The Biblical record tells us that later Herod attempted to kill the Baby Jesus by having all of the male children in the area two years old and younger brutally murdered (see Matt. 2:4-18). The historical evidence concerning this Herod, who is known as Herod the Great, is that he died in 4 B.C. The Herod Jesus encountered later during His earthly ministry was Herod Antipas, one of Herod the Great's surviving sons. Antipas' office was not that of a true king, but he served Rome as a "tetrarch" with authority over the territories of Galilee and Perea (see Matt. 14:1; Lk. 3:1).

So, is it important that we know the actual year that the Lord Jesus Christ was born? Not really, but it is vitally important to know that He was born sometime around the beginning of the first century A.D. It is also important to know

that He was the virgin born Son of God who lived a perfect life of righteousness. During the Christmas season, gift giving becomes a priority in much of the world. They focus so much on the buying, giving, and receiving of gifts that the Gift that the holiday is supposed to honor is obscured and even blotted out in the minds of many, if not most, of those who are caught up in the festivities of the season. This is unfortunate, but understandable, because the vast majority of people in America, and the world for that matter, are lost and have no idea of the magnitude and importance of the Gift that God has given to mankind in the Person of His Son. Even many of those who have a religious bent and use the title of Christian to describe themselves really have little if any appreciation for God's Gift of Jesus Christ. And, as unbelievers, we shouldn't expect them to. It is only true believers, those who have received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior who can truly bring honor and glory to the name of our Lord. Under grace we are given freedom as to how to worship and praise our Blessed Redeemer. Some choose not to observe special days like Christmas, while others do (Rom. 14:5-6), choosing to use the opportunity for sweet fellowship with family and friends as they honor the One who was born for the Cross.

Regardless of what year, or the day and month for that matter, our Lord was born, or how others misuse and abuse the holidays, each of us can certainly bow our hearts and minds to God in thankfulness and deep appreciation for His Great Gift to us, the Gift of His own Son, the Lord of Glory, to be our Savior. We can and should do this on Christmas Day and every other day as well.

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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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Because of its popularity, Christmas time often offers opportunities for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the lost. We may not know the exact day, month, or year Christ was born, but we do know He was born at exactly the right time so that at the appointed time He would be available to die on the Cross for the sins of the world. *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”* (Rom. 5:6). *“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift”* (II Cor. 9:15).

Because Christ Lives!

W. Edward Bedore

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

(All questions answered by the Editor unless otherwise noted)

QUESTION: Why did God allow Saul to use a witch to bring up Samuel (I Sam. 28:3-20)?

ANSWER: While Saul resorted to the use of sorcery in a desperate attempt to contact the departed Samuel, it was not the witch and her sorcery that brought Samuel up to speak with Saul, it was God. All the witch could have done was make contact with a demon who would have claimed to be Samuel. But, the Lord God interrupted her séance when He sent Samuel with a message for Saul. The witch was afraid when Samuel actually showed up (I Sam. 28:11-12). Spiritualists, mediums, fortune-tellers, etc. still deceive people the same way today. They claim to receive messages from the dead through séances, automatic writing, channeling, and so-forth, but they are actually either committing hoaxes or communicating with demons. The name for communicating with the dead is “necromancy” and it is strictly forbidden in Scripture (Lev. 19:31; 20:27; Deut. 18:10-12). The Lord intervened in this case because of the seriousness of King Saul’s rebellion against Him. He used it pronounce judgment on Saul and

reveal that He would not give him a victory in the coming battle because of his sin (I Sam. 28:15-19; cf. I Sam. 13:8-14; 15:1-23ff.). This was a special situation because of the prophetic significance of the removal of Saul and his descendants as the royal line of Israel. David and his family line would replace him and would become the channel through which the Messiah would come.

QUESTION: Is the soul of man immortal?

ANSWER: (This question was answered in the March 2012 issue of the BABQ. Because we continue to receive inquiries on this important topic, we will reprint our answer.) I do not know of a verse that explicitly says that man has an immortal soul, but it is taught in Scripture that human beings continue in a state of conscious existence after experiencing physical death. In other words, they are never annihilated or eradicated but are immortal. Where the Scriptures speak of God alone having immortality, it is in the context of Him having eternal life and supreme authority over all things. He is self-existing and His life reaches as far back into eternity as it reaches forward into eternity. In other words, His life is without beginning and without end. On the other hand, a human is a created being whose life will never end, but does have a definite beginning. The life that the natural man has is not the same kind of life that God has. It is devoid of spiritual vitality and is ruled by the flesh. When a person believes in Jesus Christ as their Savior, they are imparted with eternal life and become spiritually alive (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1-5; Titus 3:5-7). That believers are said to have been given eternal life tells us that they will always be alive. Eternal life, by definition, can have no interruptions, it lasts for eternity. The body may die, and even be destroyed, but the soul and spirit live on and will someday be reunited with the body at the resurrection.

That unbelievers continue to exist in a conscious state of being in Hades (see Lk. 16:19-21) tells us that they do not cease to exist at physical

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death. We are also told that those who take the Mark of the Beast will suffer “forever and ever” (Rev. 14:11; see Rev. 20:11-15 for the eventual fate of all unbelievers). The martyred saints of the Tribulation being under the altar of God in Heaven crying out to Him as they await the resurrection when Christ returns to earth also shows that the soul lives on after physical death (see Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-10, 14; 15:2).

A more thorough exposition of this subject and associated issues concerning what happens when we die are available in my book, “The State and Place of the Dead,” available from BBI (Editor).

QUESTION: What is the means of torture of the unsaved in Hades?

ANSWER: The most direct answer to what kind of punishment is found in Luke 16. The rich man, who found himself in Hell (Sheol/Hades) after he died, complained that he thirsted greatly because of the flames of torment that he was in. He longed for even a drop of water to cool his tongue (Lk. 16:23-24). He also had concern about his five brothers who were still living who he feared would end up in the same place of torment that he was in (Lk. 16:27-28). From these verses we understand that some sort of physical pain associated with fire is experienced by those in Sheol/Hades as well as the mental anguish of regret brought on by memories of events and people; events of wickedness perpetuated and people who will also be condemned because they are walking in the same evil ways. The final judgment, which will come at the end of time, of all the unsaved at the Great White Throne concludes with them all being thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 10:11-15), which is said to be a place of “outer darkness” (Matt. 8:12; 25:30), a “furnace of fire” (Matt. 13:42), “everlasting punishment” (Matt. 25:46), “the mist of darkness” (II Pet. 2:17), “the hurt of the second death” (Rev. 2:11), and “a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Rev. 19:20; 20:10; 21:8). The darkness indicates “isolation” or “complete aloneness,”

and the fire speaks of “great discomfort,” both of which will last forever. Perhaps the greatest torment of all for the lost will be being perpetually isolated in spiritual darkness and physical pain along with memories of the choices they made in life that resulted in them being in their dreadful condition. If only they had turned to the Lord in faith while they had the chance.

QUESTION: Where do we go when we die?

ANSWER: In the present Dispensation of Grace that we are living in, when a person places their faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, that person is forgiven and redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7). They are also justified or declared righteous in God’s sight (Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1-2). The Gospel is that, according to the Scriptures Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose from the dead (I Cor. 15:3-4). When we hear the Gospel message of salvation and put our trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit who serves as an earnest, or guarantee, of God’s promise to redeem us as His own purchased possession (Eph. 1:13-14; I Cor. 6:20). Salvation is not something we deserve or can boast about earning. It is a gift given by grace through faith (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6).

Believers who die today go directly to heaven to be in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ (II Cor. 5:6-8). They will remain there until the time of the Rapture when every member of the Body of Christ will receive a glorified body like that of the resurrected Lord Jesus (I Cor. 15:20-23; 49-54; I Thess. 4:13-18). Following this they will receive whatever rewards they have earned in their service to the Lord (I Cor. 3:11-15), after which they will live in heaven forever.

When the unsaved die, they go to Sheol/Hades that is in the center of the earth, where they will stay until the time of the Great White Throne Judgment. Then they will be judged accordingly for their sinful works and sentenced to the Lake of Fire where they will remain forever (Rev. 20:11-15).



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QUESTION FOR THE READER: WHO AM I?

I was a tax collector who lived in Jericho the first time I saw Jesus. Who am I?

Answer to the November Who Am I Question for the Reader:

GOLIATH'S SON (An unnamed son of Goliath the Giant who was killed by David's nephew Jonathan, see II Sam. 21:20-21). (I was born with twelve fingers and twelve toes. I am the son of a famous person in the Bible. Who am I?)

INTERESTING BIBLE FACTS

"The Great Agnostic and A Tale of the Christ"

One of Robert Ingersoll's life missions was to shake peoples' belief in the Bible and Christianity. Known as "The Great Agnostic," he wrote several books that accused the Scriptures of being unreliable and Christianity of being superstitious nonsense. Inadvertently, however, he was influential in causing the popular novel, "Ben Hur: A Tale of the Christ" to be written. After a discussion with Ingersoll on their mutual animosity towards the Bible and Christianity, retired Civil War general Lew Wallace decided to do a study of the life of Jesus Christ and then write a book disproving the claims of the Bible and exposing Christianity as false. However, through his research on the historical background of the Bible and the reading of the Scriptures themselves, General Wallace became convinced that the Bible was true and Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead as Savior and Lord. Instead of refuting Christianity, he became a Bible believing Christian himself and wrote the popular pro-Christian novel "Ben Hur." Although its subtitle is "A Tale of the Christ," the Lord Jesus is not the main character. However, His

influence on Ben Hur and others that He is periodically pictured as crossing paths with during His earthly ministry is accented to provide a historical and spiritual backdrop to the plot.

COMMON SAYINGS FROM THE BIBLE

"At Wit's End"

To be "at wits end" is to be so severely perplexed, to be so troubled and confused as to be unable to think of what to do next. To be so troubled and confused as to be unable to think clearly about or decide on a course of action. The Psalmist wrote of Israel under the chastening of God as being in such great distress that *"their soul is melted because of trouble"* causing them to, *"reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end"* (Ps. 107:26-27). In the next verse we find the proclamation of hope for a dispersed and despairing Israel, *"When they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses"* (Ps. 107:28). While this Psalm is prophetic in content and looks forward to Israel's restoration in the Millennial Kingdom, the underlying spiritual principle is applicable to our present Dispensation of Grace. When in distress, God's people need to turn to Him that He might give comfort to the soul in all circumstances and situations. Our instructions for today are to, *"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ"* (Phil. 4:6-7).

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BEREAN BIBLE INSTITUTE
116 Kettle Moraine Drive S.
PO Box 587
Slinger, Wisconsin 53086

Phone: (262) 644-5504
Fax: (262) 644-5507
E-mail: bbi@bereanbibleinstitute.org
Web: www.bereanbibleinstitute.org

President & Executive Editor: Robert E. Nix, Ph.D.
Managing Editor: W. Edward Bedore, Th.D.
Layout: Jessica Sadler