



BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

AND INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE HOLY WORD OF GOD

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Is It Too Late?

In relation to the sad depths of moral decline our nation has fallen into, it is asked, "Is it too late for America?" The post-modern culture that has engulfed our nation is alarming to see. It is a culture that is deeply mired in the philosophy of relativism. The majority of Americans seem to embrace the idea that absolute truth does not exist, but that all truth is relative, varying according to each individual, place, time, and extenuating circumstances. This approach to life is also called Situation Ethics and Moral Relativism. It is a humanistic/pragmatic philosophy of how to establish the standards of right and wrong that govern a society. The Bible refers to it as, "*every man doing what is right in his own eyes*" (see Judg. 17:6,21,25, Deut. 12:8ff). When men and women decide to follow this course for their lives, they can declare whatever they want to do to be good and any prohibitions against their desires to be bad, making wrong right and right wrong. Adam and Eve fell for this lie in the Garden of Eden. In disobedience to God, they decided to make their own rules and do as they liked. Of course, their decision to eat the forbidden fruit did not change the truth that they would die if they did. Sin engulfed Adam's race and all of the suffering and death since stems from it. Truth is real and actions have consequences, whether the sons and daughters of Adam want to believe it or not.

Whether it is too late for America or not isn't nearly as important as the question to individuals, "Do you know where you will go when you die?" Throughout history, nations and individuals have come and gone. The difference is that lost nations do not go to Heaven or Hell as such, but individuals do. Jesus Christ did not come into the world to save favored nations or to preserve preferred cultures. He "*came into the world to save sinners*" (I Tim. 1:15). This is a fact believers should keep in the forefront of their thinking. This absolute, rock-solid, and unchanging truth is part of the bedrock of the Gospel of the Grace of God that brings salvation to all who trust in Christ as Savior. Whether it is too late for America or not, if you are able to read these words, it is not too late for you. Put your trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and be saved today (Acts 16:31; see Rom. 3:22-24; 10:9-10; I Cor. 1:18, 21; Eph. 2:8-9). When a nation falls, something else will take its place, but when individuals die in their sins, their fate is sealed for all time. There is only "*One God and One Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus*" (I Tim. 2:5). If you are one of the redeemed, pray for the lost and share the Gospel with them.

Because Christ Lives,

W. Edward Bedore

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

(All questions answered by the Editor unless otherwise noted)

"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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QUESTION: Are the meetings of Paul with the leaders in Jerusalem found in Acts fifteen and Galatians chapter two the same meeting or two different events? I know that some think two meetings are in view, but most seem to believe they are one and the same meeting. One pastor that I asked about this said there were just too many similarities to ignore, so both accounts must refer to the same meeting. What do you think?

ANSWER: Yes, there are some similarities, but there are also some major differences between these passages that must be considered. First of all, it must be noted that there is a big difference between things being "similar" and things being the "same." Similar speaks of "resemblance with differences," same means "without differences." When comparing two things, the differences in them are as important as the similarities. Differences distinguish the ways things are not alike, which reveals that the things being compared are not exactly alike, or the same. On the other hand, things that are found to be the same provide evidence towards their being the same thing. It only takes one major difference between two things to make them different and thus not identical. That being said, let's look at these two passages like Bereans, comparing Scripture with Scripture, taking note of the similarities and the differences.

There are several similarities. Both meetings were held in Jerusalem (see Acts 15:2,4; Gal. 2:1). Paul, Barnabus, James, and Peter are all mentioned by name as being at both meetings (see Acts 15:2,7, 12,13,22; Gal. 2:1,9). The general subject of both meetings was the message Paul preached among the Gentiles, with circumcision being the main point of discussion (Acts 15:1-2; 5-29; Gal. 2:1-10). In both meetings Paul's message and ministry was recognized and endorsed by those Paul met with in Jerusalem with it being decided that circumcision is not a requirement for Gentile believers (Acts 15:24; Gal. 2:2-4,9).

These similarities taken by themselves seem to offer strong evidence for the meetings being one and the same. But, they do not stand alone because there are other factors that must be considered before we can come to a conclusion.

In the meeting described in Galatians, Paul insists that he met privately with select leaders "*who were of reputation*" whom he identified as James, Peter, and John (Gal. 2:2,9). In the meeting described in Acts, we are distinctly told that when Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem "*they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them*" (Acts 15:4). Then, after some believing Pharisees raised the question of the necessity of circumcision and keeping the Mosaic Law, "*the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter*" (Acts 15:5-6). This is certainly a major difference between the two meetings. The stated results of these two meetings are also different. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul says that as a result of that meeting when James, Peter, and John understood the grace that had been given to Paul, they gave him and Barnabas "*the right hand of fellowship*" in acknowledging their ministry to the uncircumcised (Gentiles) and restricting their own to the circumcision (Israel) (see Gal. 2:6-9). The "*only*" thing they asked of them was to "*remember the poor,*" something Paul "*was eager to do*" (Gal. 2:10). The result of the Acts 15 Jerusalem conference was a decree by letter from "*the apostles, the elders, and the brethren*" confirming Paul's message of Grace to the Gentiles along with instructions for them to "*abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality*" (see Acts 15:23-29). Again we see major differences between these two meetings. Rather than in Acts 15, Paul's private meeting with James, Peter, and John that

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is mentioned in Galatians 2 most likely took place during his and Barnabas' trip to Jerusalem to deliver a gift for famine relief to the brethren living in Judea (see Acts 11:27-30; 12:25).

Following is a quick review of the two meetings. Galatians 2 was a private meeting with three men that resulted in an agreement that was sealed with a handshake with the only stipulation being that Paul should remember the poor in his ministry. Acts 15 was a public meeting involving all the apostles and elders as well as a number of other brethren. The result was a written document that was endorsed by the apostles, the elders, and the brethren in Judea recognizing Paul's ministry and instructing Gentile converts to abstain from eating things offered to idols, from eating blood and things strangled, and sexual immorality. The differences are too many and too big to ignore. It seems to me that the only conclusion that can be reached based on the Biblical evidence is that two different meetings are described in these two passages of Scripture.

INTERESTING BIBLE FACTS

"The Bug Bible"

An English translation of the Bible printed in 1551 by John Daye became known as "The Bug Bible" because of its rendering of Psalm 91:5. The first half of the verse reads: *"So that thou shalt not be afraid for any bugs by night...."*. While its meaning has changed over time, in the 1500's the principle meaning of "bug" was goblin, a ghost, bogey, or a specter. This sense of the word has been carried over until today in terms like bugbear, bugaboo, and bogeyman. Two earlier English translations, the Coverdale (1535) and the Matthew (1537) Bibles also used the word "bug" in Psalm 91:5. The King James translators rendered this verse: *"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night...."*.

COMMON SAYINGS FROM THE BIBLE

"He's a Know-it-all"

During a time of intense suffering, the man Job had a lengthy debate with three of his friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) about the cause. His friends insisted it was because of some secret sin that Job would not admit. Job denied their allegations, insisting that he was suffering unfairly and that if he could only have a personal audience with God to plead his case, he could get things straightened out. When both sides finally fell silent, a younger man (Elihu) who had been listening spoke up. He accused both sides of misunderstanding the whole affair in a long discourse (see Job 32-37). He did not offer any opinions as to the cause of Job's suffering but instead approached the situation by showing that both Job's and his friends' view of God was wrong. In his arguments, he shows God to be sovereign, gracious, just, and great, insisting that He does not necessarily allow and/or cause suffering to punish sin, but has His own reasons which may include hindering sin and enhancing spiritual maturity. Then, having had his say, Elihu also fell silent.

Job needed to hear what Elihu had to say, but he seemed to resist the truth of his words. Job was right in that he wasn't the vile sinner his friends accused him of being, but his attitude was wrong. In defending himself, by implication he was accusing God of treating him unjustly for allowing him to suffer. He was becoming bitter and spiraling down into a spiritually unhealthy attitude of defiance and self-righteousness; a defiance and self-righteousness based on his assumption that he knew better about what God should or should not do than God did. When God finally spoke with Job, He didn't answer any of the questions that Job had for Him.

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Instead, He asked Job a series of almost eighty questions about the Creation that Job had no answer for. Questions meant to expose and destroy Job's "know-it-all" attitude. Earlier, Job had challenged God to either speak to him so he could defend himself or to answer the questions he had for Him (see Job 13:22). Now God was taking him up on his challenge in a way Job did not expect. In effect, the Lord God of Creation was saying to Job, let's see how much you really know to see if you are qualified to question My motives, purposes, and ways (Job 38:1-3ff.). Overwhelmed by this interrogation, Job's response was to repent as he realized his unworthiness to question God and God's worthiness to be trusted, exalted, and worshipped (see Job 42:1-5). He was humbled before the Lord. One of the questions that the Lord God asked Job was "have you comprehended the breadth of the earth? Tell me if you know all this" (Job 38:18). From this verse we get the saying "He's a know-it-all," which is often said of those who disdain advice or instruction from others and/or claim to know everything about everything. It is God alone who needs no counsel from any other and actually knows all things.

"Money Talks"

Solomon wrote; "A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things" (Eccl. 10:19). This verse speaks to us of self-serving rulers who seek after good times and personal gain. When a king lacks spiritual discernment, he will gather advisors around

him who reflect his deficiency. A good leader will work towards building and strengthening a nation and will follow the advice of those who have the same outlook. Poor leaders use the resources of the nation to build and strengthen their authority, using public funds to advance their selfish purposes, personal gain and political advantage. This kind of king (national leader) and his court will demonstrate an attitude of arrogant extravagance while ignoring the responsibilities of their office and the real needs of the people, who are the ones that end up paying for their indulgent and ruinous leadership.

The statement "but money answereth all things" expresses the worldly philosophy of the kind of leaders who think that the answer to everything is more money for them to spend. When we say "money talks," we are saying "wealth is power" or that "money can buy anything." A related saying is "follow the money" which means that if you search out to see who has benefitted from a business transaction, political deal, or whatever, you will find out what the real motivation was. The concept is that whoever is controlling the purse strings is able to influence the outcome according to their own personal agenda.

QUESTION FOR THE READER: WHO AM I?

I persecuted Christians until I was blind, it was on a road trip that God changed my mind. Who am I?

Answer to the March Question for the Reader: Who Am I?
MOSES (See Ex. 2:11-15; 3:1-12ff.; 14:1-3; Deut. 32:48-52).

(I killed a man in a land, then ran, and was sent back to that land to deliver many men, to a land I never saw. Who am I?)

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