

# BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

*And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God*

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ISSUE 8

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*"What Is Interfaith Dialogue?"*

The word "faith" as used in the context of interfaith dialogue refers to the body of beliefs, or doctrines, that are held by a particular religious group, movement, system, etc. In interfaith dialogue, the main focus is usually on what the different faith groups have in common with the goal of increasing the appreciation of and acceptance of each other's values among all faiths. In short, the basic purpose of interfaith dialogue is to promote ecumenicalism by encouraging those of differing religious systems and moral values to fellowship, worship and engage in ministry together.

This brings us to the question, "Can Bible believing Christians take part in interfaith dialogue as a means of evangelism?" The simple answer is no, they cannot. I say this for two reasons. First, to effectively share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with anyone, religious or otherwise, you must, from Scripture, show them that they are sinners and their religion, or whatever they are trusting in, is totally unable to save them. This truth, which in effect renounces all religions, is the complete opposite of the goal of interfaith dialogue, which is to build respect for and acceptance of all religious systems as valid ways of knowing and developing a relationship with God. Only through personal faith in Jesus Christ alone can any man or woman be forgiven of their sins (and all have sinned), and be reconciled to God. The Gospel is, in fact, offensive to the lost.

Second, interfaith dialogue, by its very nature, denies the absolute infallibility and complete authority of the Bible for faith (what we are to believe) and practice (how we are to live). It is a tool of Satan by which he attempts to, and all too often succeeds, cause Christians to compromise the Gospel of Jesus Christ and ruin their testimony. Being known as an overall nice guy who accepts everyone's point of view on spiritual things may be a good testimony in the eyes of the world, but it is not acceptable to God. Those who have been redeemed through faith in Jesus Christ, believing that He died for their sins, was buried and rose again the third day (see I Cor. 15:3-4) are called to demonstrate that reality in how they live their lives. They are also called on, as ambassadors of Christ, to share the truth of the Gospel with the lost, whoever they are and whatever they believe. To recognize the religious beliefs of the various religions of the world as valid ways to God is to invalidate the Message of the Cross, which declares that it is only through Jesus Christ that any lost sinner can come to God. *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God... For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"* (I Cor. 1:18,21).

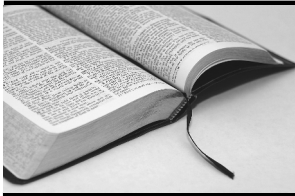
Because Christ Lives!

*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*



## BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

*And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God*

**QUESTION: I am confused by something I recently heard. Does God only judge a person's works? Or does He judge the person for his or her works? Did the death of Christ automatically cause the sins of everybody to be forgiven? Or are only those who believe forgiven?**

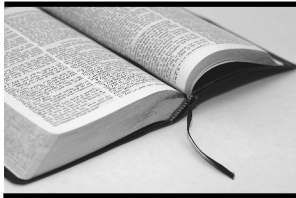
**ANSWER:** This is a question that surfaces from time to time and we have answered it before in the BABQ. Because it is important to the understanding not only of God's just nature and character, but to the Gospel message itself, we will deal with it again here. Christ's death was sufficient to provide the forgiveness of sins for all of mankind, but only those who believe are forgiven. Christ is said to be *"the Savior of all men,"* meaning He made the forgiveness of sins that results in salvation available to all through faith in Christ. But, His forgiveness and salvation is only applied to a specific group of sinners, *"specially of those who believe"* (I Tim. 4:10). In other words, to be forgiven of their sins, an individual must first trust in Jesus Christ. This becomes clear when we keep in mind that each one of us is personally responsible for his/her own actions. That is, we are all accountable for our works. Overall the Bible teaches that God evaluates, or judges, every person's works, both in thought and deed, and rewards each person accordingly. So then, a person is judged by the quality and quantity of his/her works and is appropriately rewarded for what they have done. The Psalmist emphasizes to this with the following words: *"Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbors, but mischief is in their hearts. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert"* (Ps. 28:3-4). Note that verse four is composed of a series of repetitions that say the same thing four times using different words. He is appealing to the Lord to recompense his enemies according to their doings, which he refers to as *"their deeds,"* the *"wickedness*

*of their endeavours,"* the *"work of their hands,"* and *"their desert* (what they deserve)." With a little thought it becomes evident that before a person can be judged and sentenced for their sins, it must first be determined what sins he/she has committed and the degree of punishment the sinner deserves for committing those sins.

This principal by which God judges man according to his works will be employed at Jesus Christ's Second Coming; *"For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works"* (Matt. 16:27). At that time He will judge the nations for their treatment of Israel during the Tribulation (see Matt. 25:31-46). This is obviously a judgment of men based on their works, what they have done or have failed to do. The result will be everlasting punishment (vvs. 41, 46a) or eternal life (vvs. 34, 46b). We must ask, if their sins were already forgiven, why are the misdeeds, the sins of the goat nations (vvs. 41-45a) brought up and why are they condemned to everlasting punishment for their works?

Also, at the final judgment of the unsaved at the Great White Throne, we read *"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God...and the dead were judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works...and they were judged every man according to their works..."* (Rev. 20:12-13; see verses 11-15). When we look carefully at this passage of Scripture, we will see that while the *"works"* of those involved are part of the equation, the Great White Throne Judgment will be a judgment of the unsaved dead who have been raised for a final pronouncement of condemnation and sentencing. Each and every unsaved individual will be judged out of the things written in the books, based on what they have done, i.e., their works. Again, please carefully take note of what the Word of God says of this judgment. *"...and they were judged every man according to their works..."*.

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Since they are said to be “*judged out of the things written in the books*” that will be opened for the occasion “*according to their works,*” it seems quite certain that those books contain a record of every individual's works. Their works will be judged as to the degree of punishment their works have earned them and they will be accordingly condemned to the Second Death of the everlasting torments of “*the Lake of Fire*” forever and ever (Rev. 20:10, 15). This vivid account of the final judgment of the unsaved dead, when taken at face value, tells us that those who die in unbelief, die in their sins. They are not forgiven of their sins, but they must personally pay the penalty that sin demands, the Second Death, which is eternal separation from God in the Hell known as the Lake of Fire.

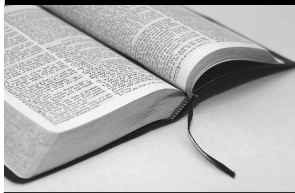
The words of the Prophet Enoch, as quoted by Jude are clear on the subject. Speaking of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the Throne of His Glory Judgment, the Bible says, “*And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh; with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince (convict), all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and all of their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him*” (Jude 14-15). On what basis can the Lord “*execute judgment*” on the ungodly (sinners) for “*their ungodly deeds (sins) which they have ungodly committed*” in unbelief if their sins have already been forgiven them through the shedding of His blood? If the ungodly are automatically forgiven of their sins by the cross whether or not they have believed the Gospel, would not the Lord Jesus have to act as their intercessor rather than their judge? After all, if believers have need for our Lord and Savior to be actively interceding on their behalf (Rom. 8:33-34), how much more the unbeliever? But, of course, if that were true, everybody would be automatically saved by His blood, wouldn't they? But the Bible does not teach such a thing as universal salvation,

nor does it teach any kind of universal forgiveness of sins irrespective of personal faith. Instead it tells us that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, “*to be a propitiation through faith in His blood*” (Rom. 3:25). Those, and only those, who have believed the Gospel of salvation receive forgiveness of sins through the sufficiency of Jesus Christ's shed blood. In turn, those who are forgiven are justified, eternally saved (Rom. 5:1, 9-10), and redeemed (Eph. 1:7).

The teaching that every person's sins are automatically forgiven through the death of Christ is not only a false doctrine, it is a dangerous doctrine. For one thing, it perverts the Gospel of Grace in that it promotes the lie that “*no one is a sinner in need of forgiveness,*” because “*all are already forgiven.*” Some that promote this error say they do believe that those who die in unbelief will go into the Lake of Fire for eternity. But, this is illogical as well as completely unbiblical. Some who believe this say that they do not believe in Universal Reconciliation, but the teaching of universal forgiveness itself logically leads to the doctrine of Universal Reconciliation (the eventual salvation of everyone). Or they must believe that the Lake of Fire will forever be occupied with people whose sins have been forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ. Both options are unthinkable violations of the nature of God and His justice.

As we have already seen, to teach the idea of the universal forgiveness of the sins of mankind, one has to deny the clear teaching of Scripture. This truth is further amplified by the words of the Apostle Paul. When testifying to King Agrippa about the ministry the Lord Jesus Christ had commissioned him to carry out, the Apostle Paul said that he was sent to the Gentiles “*to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me*” (Acts 26:17-18). According to these words

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of the Lord Jesus Himself, as part of the Grace Commission He gave to the Apostle Paul, the lost are not forgiven of their sins, but are in need of receiving forgiveness of their sins through faith in Christ. The Word of God is clear, it is only through personal faith in the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ, that any lost sinner can be forgiven of their sins. It does make a difference what a person believes, the difference between Heaven and Hell. *"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23). [A booklet on this subject is available from BBI.]

## INTERESTING BIBLE FACTS

*"Dem Dry Bones"*

Ezekiel, a priest and prophet of the Lord (Ezek. 1:1-3; 2:1-5), was given several important prophecies of the Last Days which included visions that were illustrative of the future events revealed to him. One of the most *interesting* was that of a valley filled with dried out bones. As the prophet looked at the vision, God asked him, *"Can these bones live?"* Ezekiel answered, *"O Lord God, Thou knowest,"* and the Lord then instructed him to preach to the dry bones, saying to them, *"O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord."* Ezekiel obediently did so and *"the bones came together bone to bone"*, were fleshed out and lived again. This prophecy, found in Ezekiel 37:1-4, pictures Israel in the Last Days who, being spiritually dead, will turn back to the Lord, be spiritually revived and physically delivered from her enemies and returned to her ancient homeland to serve as *"the priests of the Lord"* (Isa. 61:6) in the Millennial Kingdom. This

remarkable prophecy, that could possibly be fulfilled in the not so distant future, is the basis of the old spiritual, "Dem Bones, Dem Bones, Dem Dry Bones."

## QUESTION FOR THE READER

Which carol do these words belong to?

**"Christ by highest heav'n adored, Christ the everlasting Lord! Late in time behold Him come Offspring of a Virgin's womb. Veiled in flesh the Godhead see Hail the incarnate Deity, Pleased as man with man to dwell Jesus, our Emmanuel."**

- Joy to the World
- Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
- We Three Kings

**"All Thy works with joy surround Thee, earth and heaven reflect Thy rays, Stars and angels sing around Thee, center of unbroken praise. Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea, Singing bird and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in Thee."**

- Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
- Mary's Boy Child
- Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

## ANSWER TO THE NOVEMBER QUESTION:

(When Aaron put his rod inside the tabernacle, what grew on it?) : **ALMONDS**

"And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds." –Numbers 17:8

*Merry Christmas!*

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