

BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

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ISSUE 4

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"Is Truth a Matter of Size?"

A question that I have been asked many times over the years is; "If the Grace Message¹ is true, why is the Grace Movement so small?" What is implied by this question is that if the Grace Message is true it would be more popular and widely embraced. Those asking usually point out the fact that there are many more churches that do not preach and teach the distinctiveness of the Grace Message revealed uniquely to the Apostle Paul than there are that do, on average, they are much larger. This is certainly an accurate assessment of the situation but, we must ask, is popularity a valid way of determining Bible truth? Absolutely not.

If we try to decide what is true and what is not true by looking at what is the most popular with people, we run into several serious problems. One is that popularity is mostly based on personal preferences, emotions, and/or tradition. A great many "professing Christians" choose their beliefs based on what appeals to them intellectually, hoping to appear scholarly and wise. Another group, one with substantial numbers we might add, gravitate to that which "feels right" to them. Usually they have a limited knowledge of Scripture and think nothing of forcing a contrived, and often outlandish, meaning onto selected verses taken out of context. And then there is a group, the largest group of all it seems, that is held captive by ritualism, tradition, and what they see as their religious duty. Blindly following what "always has been" they are reluctant to actually read the Bible

themselves to see what it really says. Often they are afraid that they will be ostracized by family and friends if they even question any of the religious traditions, practices or beliefs of their church. Of course, there are also other reasons that people reject the Grace Message but these three, or a variation of them, are the most common, especially among those with only a nominal grasp of true Bible knowledge. However, there is still another reason that many turn away from the Grace Message, a reason that is very troubling to my heart and soul. Many, if not most, of those I have been referring to have denied the Message of Grace and its distinctive doctrines as being exclusively revealed to the Apostle Paul, without truly understanding it. There are various reasons for this, but usually a lack of knowledge coupled with an unwillingness to personally study God's Word on more than a superficial level is involved. However, this is not the problem with the other group that I mentioned above. They are those that have put the time and effort into the study of God's Word that is required to see for themselves that it is in fact a distinct message for this present day and age, the Dispensation of Grace, that began with the conversion of God's great enemy, Saul of Tarsus, who became the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 7:54-8:3; 9:1-6ff; cf. Acts 22:1-15; 26:9-18). Some have even taught, preached, and vigorously defended Paul's message and apostleship before turning from it and eventually fighting against it.

We don't have the space here to list all of the charges that are leveled against the Grace Message

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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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in an attempt to discredit and refute it from Scripture. However, I think that the Grace Movement's lack of popularity as evidence that it is not true must be challenged as an unbiblical concept.

Nowhere in the Bible do we find truth being determined by what is popular with the majority. When there were only two people in existence, they both chose against truth and ate the forbidden "*fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*" (see Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-19). Fifteen hundred years later, during which the human population had greatly multiplied, the Lord destroyed all of the people because of how wicked the human race had become. Only Noah and his family were saved (see Gen. 6:5-13ff; cf. Rom. 1:18-32; I Pet. 3:20). After the flood, the descendants of Noah's three sons multiplied and rebelled against the Lord and began building the Tower of Babel instead of dispersing over the entire earth as God had commanded (see Gen. 9:1; 10:8-10; 11:1-9). Then out of all the nations the Lord called one man, Abram/Abraham, to be the father of His chosen nation (see Gen. 12:1-3). After growing into a multitude during their four-hundred year captivity, Moses led Israel out of Egypt to the border of the Promised Land, but only two were found to be faithful and the rest were condemned to die in the wilderness (see Num. chap. 13 and 14). And so it was throughout Israel's history with the times of the kings ending with the people of Israel being dispersed among the nations, with only a remnant ever returning to the Promised Land, as it is to this very day.

Early in Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, multitudes followed Him because of the miracles He performed, but many later forsook Him because He spoke the hard truth to them (see John 6:59-69). At the height of His popularity thousands followed Him, but there were only "*about an hundred and twenty*" to be found in Jerusalem shortly before "*the Day of Pentecost was fully come*" (Acts 1:13-15; 2:1).

And, while there were "*about three thousand souls*" that believed in response to Peter's preaching on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41), it was a relatively small group when we consider that most were dispersed Jews "*out of every nation under heaven*" (Acts 2:5-12). They split up into much smaller numbers after the feast was over and returned to their respective places of habitation. The fact is that Bible truth is not now, and never has been something that can be determined by popular consensus, it is found only in the written Word of God, the Bible. It is to be read, it is to be studied, it is to be believed.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (II Tim. 2:15). "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 Tim. 3:16-17).

Because Christ Lives!

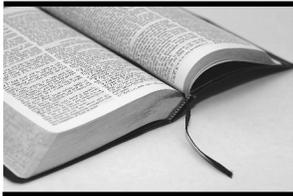
W. Edward Bedore

Dr. W. Edward Bedore, Editor, *BBI Bulletin*, *BABQ*
(All questions answered by the Editor unless otherwise noted)

QUESTION: Esther 8:17 says that "...many of the people of the land became Jews..." The Bible doesn't actually say that these people converted to Judaism, does it? I have read many commentaries and am still scratching my head on this verse. What is your understanding of it?

ANSWER: You are correct, the Bible does not explicitly say that "*the people of the land*" who "*became Jews*" formally converted to Judaism. This statement can be interpreted in two ways. I believe that the context best supports the understanding that many of the people within the Persian Empire did become

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Jewish proselytes after Haman's plot to exterminate the Jews was thwarted and Mordeci the Jew became the most powerful man in the Empire next to the king. It was a common practice in those days for a pagan people who had been defeated to embrace the god(s) of those who were victorious over them, as in their thinking, the god(s) of the victors must be the more powerful god(s). Of course, if this was the case, the question is left open as to how faithful to the Living God of Israel these converts to Judaism may or may not have been.

The second view is that those who "*became Jews; for the fear of the Lord fell upon them*" only pretended to be Jews in order to escape any harm that the Jews might do to them. This is a plausible scenario seeing that a decree was sent by Mordeci, by the king's authority, permitting the Jews "*to avenge themselves on their enemies*" by utterly destroying them (see Esth. 8:3-17). That the Jews did according to this decree and killed thousands of their enemies (see Esth. 9:1-16) adds weight to this understanding. The weakness of this interpretation is that the Jews then, just as they do now, lived in close-knit communities. Because being Jewish affects every aspect of life, they knew each other as well as who the non-Jews in their area were. You could not fool them by simply showing up at a synagogue and saying "I am a Jew." Not even by going to another part of the country could a Gentile get by as a Jew within Jewish society because he would have to have a thorough working knowledge of all Jewish customs, feasts, rituals, etc. to do so.

INTERESTING BIBLE FACTS

"Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 225)"

Thought to be the first Christian theologian to write in Latin, this move on his part demonstrates, and no doubt contributed to, the shift from Greek to Latin as the official "church language" that was taking place at this time. He was the first to use the

Latin *Novum Testamentum*, which means "New Testament," that is used today. He is also credited with coining the term "Trinity" in reference to the One God who is at the same time three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

"The First Printed Bible"

Johannes Gutenberg is credited with inventing printing using movable metal type, which made printing much easier, faster, and economical. The first book he printed with this new method was the Bible in Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation (published 1456). This was the official "church version" of the Bible in the official "church language" of the day.

The first Bible printed in the original languages of Hebrew and Greek was the Complutensian Polyglot, published in Spain in 1522. Only six hundred copies of this six-volume set were printed. Its name comes from the fact that the scholars who worked on this project met in Complutum, Spain, a city near Madrid, at Complutense University. Polyglot means "book", particularly one containing versions of the same text in more than one language. Each page of the Complutensian Polyglot Old Testament had three parallel columns of text consisting of the original Hebrew, the Greek Septuagint translation and the Latin Vulgate translation. The New Testament consisted of two parallel columns, the original Greek and the Latin Vulgate.

"John Hus (1374 – 1415) and the Reformation"

More than a century before Martin Luther sparked the Reformation by posting his ninety-five thesis on the door of the Wittenburg Church in Germany, John Hus was preaching reform in Bohemia (Czechoslovakia). Hus was a priest and professor who fearlessly exposed and criticized the corruption in the Roman Catholic Church. He believed and taught that not bishops, popes, or "the

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church," but the Bible alone was the first and final authority for establishing Christian beliefs. His strong denunciation and opposition to the sale of indulgences by the church and his teaching that any Church doctrine contrary to the Bible could be disobeyed particularly riled the Church against him. Promised safety and a chance to present his views, he was called before the Council of Constance. But, when he arrived he was promptly arrested. Hus was not permitted to defend his beliefs, but instead was charged with at least sixty-five bogus accusations, condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake. Nevertheless, some of the writings of Hus that survived were later read by Martin Luther and influenced his thinking and understanding of the Bible, much as the works of John Wycliffe (c. 1329-1384) had influenced Hus.

COMMON SAYINGS FROM THE BIBLE

"Far Be It From Me"

In its popular use, this phrase is usually said by someone in regards to something they are not very likely to do, or to have done. However, in a negative sense, it is at times said when just the opposite is true, in which case it is used as a denial of having done something that, in actuality, they are most likely to do, or did do. In its positive sense it is derived from the book Job where we read; "...far be it from God, that He should do wickedness..." (Job 34:10). In this passage, Elihu is defending the absolute righteousness of the Almighty Creator against even any hint that God

ever has, is, or ever will treat anyone unjustly. In effect he is saying, "God does not, and cannot sin, as He always does, and only does that which is right."

"Clear as Crystal"

In the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, we read of the New Jerusalem that descends out of Heaven; "having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (Rev. 21:11). The light emitted from the New Jerusalem will be perfectly clear and sparkling because its source is the Glory of God. In common usage today is the term "crystal clear," which is derived from this verse. It is usually used in reference to coming to understand something that was not clear before. We often hear it said "it's crystal clear to me now," or "he made it crystal clear to me," etc.

QUESTION FOR THE READER

"What type of insect did John the Baptist eat in the desert?"

ANSWER TO THE MAY QUESTION:
(Who came to see Jesus at night?)

Nicodemus

John 3:1-3 "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with Him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

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