

BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

BEREAN BIBLE INSTITUTE, INC.

MARCH 2017

PO BOX 587, SLINGER, WI 53086

VOLUME 8

(Published eight times yearly: Feb., Mar., May, June, Aug., Sep., Nov., Dec.)

ISSUE 2

BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

"Which is More Reasonable, Universal Reconciliation or Everlasting Torment?"

The thinking behind the idea of Universal Reconciliation is that if God is the loving God that Scripture reveals Him to be, then all persons will be saved to satisfy His love for every individual. Along with that idea is the argument that a truly loving God would not sentence anyone to a final destiny of never-ending torment. This whole concept is wrong on several counts. We will briefly look at what I believe are three of the most important.

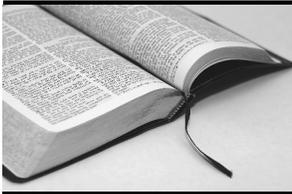
First of all, the position held by Universalists is based on their reasoned conclusions rather than what is plainly stated in Scripture. Like almost all false teachers, they start with a Biblical truth and then twist its meaning so that it seems to support their teaching. In the case of Universalists, they rightfully point out that "God is love" (I John 4:8) and that He sent His Son because He "so loved the world" (John 3:16). Of course, they have no trouble finding passages of Scripture to support the fact that because of God's great love for all men and women Christ died for all, because it is true and there are many verses that say so. But, ignoring passages of Scripture that teach otherwise, they conclude that because God loves the whole world of lost sinners, He will, in fact He must, they claim, eventually save all sinners. Some go so far as to say that even Satan and his demonic hordes of fallen angels will in the end be redeemed. All this in spite of clear passages of Scripture that tell us that the lost will suffer the torment of God's

righteous judgment forever (Rev. 14:9-11; 19:20; 20:10-15; 21:8; Matt. 8:12; 13:42; 25:30, 41, 46; II Pet. 2:17; Jude 7; also see Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:33; II Thes. 2:7-12).

The second way that they twist the Scriptures is to deny that the Scriptures actually say what they say. Universalists deny that, when used of the judgment of sinners, the Greek words translated eternal, forever, and everlasting in regards to God's punishment of unbelievers do not really mean eternal, forever, or everlasting at all. They go to great lengths using erroneous methods in doing word studies in order to disavow the meaning of these words. This is what they have done in their attempt to erase the truth that those who die in their sins will suffer everlasting torment from the pages of Scripture. In doing so they blatantly set aside the proper rules of Bible interpretation and completely ignore the context these words are found in. A simple reading of the Bible makes it plain that a judgment of everlasting duration is in view. This is especially so when we take note that the same Greek word is used of "everlasting punishment" and "life eternal" in the same verse (see Matt. 25:46). If the punishment of the unsaved is of a limited duration, then so is the life given as an eternal gift to the saved. On the other hand, if the gift of life given to the believer is without end, the punishment of the unsaved must be eternal as well. Only this last scenario is worthy of any consideration at all as it cannot be denied that believers are given eternal life as a gift, so the corresponding punishment that is earned by the unsaved will also be everlasting.

(continued on page 2)

"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

(BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS continued from page 1)

Their third serious error is to teach that those who die apart from faith in Jesus Christ are able to pay the penalty for their own sins so that they can finally be saved. Faced with the unescapable truth that those who die in their sins do go into the Lake of Fire (Hell), they are forced to find a way of escape for them. To this end, they say that their time in Hell is only temporary and they will be released to enjoy the eternal blessings of redemption after they have been purified by the fires of Hell. In other words, after rejecting the Savior and the sin cleansing and redeeming power of the blood of His cross in this life, they will suffer for their own sins in order to be cleansed of their unrighteousness, reconciled to God, justified and redeemed. This false gospel denies the reality of Hell and turns it into the equivalent of the mythical Purgatory of Roman Catholicism. It sidesteps the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and makes man his own redeemer. The teaching of Universal Reconciliation offers a **false hope** to men and women of going to Heaven without having Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. It is a diabolical doctrine of demonic origin that is designed by the Devil to undermine the Gospel of the Grace of God by denying the necessity of the cross and personal faith in Jesus Christ. God's Word is clear on this; the righteousness of God (justification) is only imputed *"through faith in Jesus Christ"* and *"redemption"* is found only *"in Jesus Christ"* (see Rom. 3:22-25). At the final judgment, those whose names are not found written in *"the book of life"*, those who died in unbelief, will be *"cast into the Lake of Fire"* (Rev. 20:11-15), which is a place of everlasting torment (Rev. 20:10; cf. Rev. 14:9-11).

Because Christ Lives!

W. Edward Bedore

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

(All questions answered by the Editor unless otherwise noted)

QUESTION: What happened to Enoch and Elijah? Some do not think that they could have been taken into Heaven, the abode of God, to be in the very presence of God when they were taken up because the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ had not taken place yet. Also, I have read that the Lord Jesus' statement that, "no man has ascended into heaven" except "He Himself" (John 3:13) shows us that Enoch and Elijah did not actually go into Heaven. It is also pointed out, in accord with the Word, rightly divided, that because the promises made to the Old Testament believers were earthly and those made to the Body of Christ alone are heavenly, there is no reason to believe that Enoch and Elijah were taken to Heaven. Considering the fact that all men (and women) "have sinned" (Rom. 3:23) and "it is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb. 9:27), if Enoch and Elijah are not in Heaven, what exactly did happen to them and where are they today?

ANSWER: First of all, we have to keep in mind that this is not a subject that we can be dogmatic about. We are simply not given enough information in Scripture to make a definitive statement about what happened to Elijah and Enoch and their current whereabouts. Any conclusions that one might come to must involve speculation at some level. At the same time, we must also remember that the Bible has more to say about Elijah and his future than it does about Enoch. Because of their special treatment by God when He took them out of this world, these two men are thought by quite a few Bible students to be the two special witnesses of God who will preach in Jerusalem during the first three and a half years of the Tribulation (see Rev. 11:3-10). These two witnesses will be killed by the anti-Christ at the end of their special forty-two month (1,260 days) ministry (Rev. 11:2-3, 7). Then, after their bodies have lain in a street of Jerusalem for three and a half days while the unbelieving populous of the earth

(continued on page 3)



BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

(BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS continued from page 2)

celebrate their death (Rev. 11:8-10), God will raise them from the dead and call them up into Heaven as their enemies look on (Rev. 11:11-12). The argument of Enoch and Elijah being the two witnesses is centered on their being caught up alive into Heaven without experiencing death. Hebrews 9:27, *"and it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,"* is usually cited as a proof text by those who believe they are the two witnesses. The thinking is that as they were taken to Heaven without dying and *"it is appointed unto men once to die,"* it is logical that they be sent back to earth to carry on a special ministry for the Lord and then to suffer the death they escaped when the Lord took them to Heaven. On the other hand, there are more that believe that the two witnesses will be Moses and Elijah, in great part because of the similarities of the miracles they performed during the days of their respective ministries. Of course, it is almost universally accepted that Elijah will be one of them because the Lord has clearly said in His Word; *"Behold, I will send you (Israel) Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of the Lord"* (Mal. 3:1; 4:5). Adding strength to this understanding of the identity of the two witnesses is the fact that Moses appeared with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration to minister to the Lord Jesus (Matt. 17:1-3).

When we consider the Lord's statement that *"no man has ascended into Heaven"* other than Himself (John 3:13) in context, we see that it does not preclude God taking a person to Heaven if He chooses to. The idea is that no one has or ever can go into Heaven by their own power, merit, etc.; except the Son of God who was sent from Heaven by the Father. In other words, only the Only Begotten Son of God could be the Savior (see John 3:10-17). When we look at what happened to Enoch and Elijah, we find little in Scripture about their being removed from earth and nothing specific said about their present whereabouts. Of Enoch it is

written, *"And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him"* (see Gen. 5:21-24). In Hebrews we are told that, *"by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God"* (Heb. 11:5). The Bible says that God *"translated"* or removed Enoch from earth specifically that he *"should not see death,"* so I believe that he did not die but was taken to heaven for some particular, yet future, purpose.

Of Elijah it is said, *"And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into Heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal...and it came to pass as they still went on and talked, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heaven"* (II Kin. 2:1, 11). There is nothing that I know of in Scripture that says Elijah died then or at some later time. But, it does say that he *"went up by a whirlwind into Heaven."* Rather than speculate, I think it best to accept what Scripture says.

The fact that Christ had not yet died for our sins and rose again does not mean that these two men could not have gone to Heaven to live because God cannot allow sin into Heaven. We have to remember that Satan, who is pure evil, has access to Heaven. No doubt it is a restricted access, but the evil one does present himself before the LORD at times (Job 1:6; 2:1). There is also a sense in which God is always in the presence of sin because He is omnipresent, meaning He is always present everywhere at all times. But, as He told Moses, *"no man shall see Me and live"* (Ex. 33:20). That to come into the fullness of His glorious holy presence would kill anyone tainted by sin does not mean that God could not provide a special place somewhere in Heaven for Enoch and Elijah to stay until He sends them to Jerusalem as prophets at the appointed time. Even before the Great Flood,

(continued on page 4)



BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

(BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS continued from page 3)

“Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with all His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed and of their harsh speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (Jude 14, 15; cf. Rev. 19:11-21). I personally believe that Enoch and Elijah were taken to Heaven and have been in Heaven waiting for the day the Lord will send them to warn the world of the coming judgment at Jesus Christ’s Second Coming.

INTERESTING BIBLE FACTS

“Origen”

Origen, who lived about 185-254 A.D., had a great influence on the early church through his writings and teachings. Although he has been hailed as a great Christian thinker and theologian, many of his views were unorthodox. Probably the most heretical of his teachings is the denial of a physical resurrection, his disbelief in the existence of an eternal Hell, and his doctrine of an eventual universal salvation for all, including Satan and his demons. He also taught the eternity of matter, the preexistence of each individual human soul before their physical conception and birth. In addition to these troubling doctrines, he also promoted Amillennialism (no actual Kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth) and an allegorical system of interpreting the Scripture. These false doctrines and his debased approach to Bible interpretation have plagued the Church down through the centuries to this very day.

The allegorical method of interpretation became entrenched in the Alexandrian school (in Alexandria,

Egypt) of thought. However, because of the struggle with Gnosticism and its perverse beliefs, the teachers of the Antiochan school (in Antioch of Syria) had a great distrust of philosophy and sought the literal meaning of any text of Scripture in light of its grammatical and historical context. This difference in the approach to Bible interpretation undoubtedly influenced the development of the Western (Alexandrian) and Eastern (Antiochan) text types that have come down to us. Those who believe in an allegorical interpretation of Scripture are quite naturally less concerned with getting every jot and tittle right when comparing and copying manuscripts and documents than those seeking a literal meaning, believing that only a literal rendering and understanding of God’s Word will suffice.

QUESTION FOR THE READER

Who was shipwrecked in the New Testament?

Answer to the February question: (In the Gospel According to John, which of the apostles doubts Jesus’s resurrection until he sees Jesus with his own eyes?) **Thomas**. “Now Thomas (also known as Didymus[a]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.’ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’” (John 20:24-29).

Bible Answers to Bible Questions is published by **Berean Bible Institute** of Slinger, Wisconsin. All rights reserved. *Bible Answers to Bible Questions* is sent free of charge to all who request it. **Berean Bible Institute, Inc.** admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.

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.
Associate Editor: Matthew Ritchey, M. BS.
Layout: Jessica Sadler