

BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

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ISSUE 3

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"How Are We to Understand II Chronicles 7:14?"

Most often when this verse of Scripture is invoked, it is used as a rallying cry for the Church to save America from God's judgment. The verse says: *"If My people, who are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven, and forgive their sin, and will heal their land"* (II Chron. 7:14). The effort to claim the promise found in this verse for the Church of today (the Body of Christ) presupposes four things. It is assumed by those who would claim this promise for the Church that it was written about the Body of Christ. It was not, it was written about Israel, God's chosen people. It is also assumed that those identified by the name of the Lord are Christians. This may be so in a sense, but it a specific reference to the nation "Israel," which means, "he shall rule with God."

Another assumption is that God judges a nation because of the sins of the believers in that nation. I know that many, if not most, would deny that, but it is the only logical conclusion we can come to if the words of this verse are taken at face value and applied to believers today. *"If My people...turn from their wicked ways; then will I ...forgive their sin..."* The trouble with this idea is that we are told in the Bible that in this present Dispensation of Grace we are living in believers **are forgiven** of their sins and no charge can be brought against them because God has justified them (see Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1-2, 8-9; 8:33-34; Eph. 1:13-14). And while it is true that believers are told

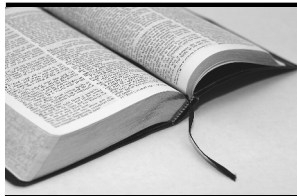
not to be partakers with the unsaved in their wicked ways, it is also made clear that it is the unsaved, *"the children of disobedience"* that *"the wrath of God cometh on"* (Eph. 5:1-7); Col. 3:4-6). So, we must ask; "What does this often quoted verse mean?"

After becoming King of Israel, Solomon built the Temple. When it was finished, Israel had a great feast and brought up the Ark of the Covenant and put it in the Temple. To show that He was pleased, the Lord filled the Temple with the cloud of His glory (II Chron. 5:1-14). At the dedication ceremony, King Solomon blessed the people (II Chron. 6:1-3) and the Lord (II Chron. 6:4-11). Then he offered a prayer of dedication (II Chron. 6:12-42). At the end of Solomon's prayer, the Lord God sent down fire from Heaven that consumed the burnt offering and sacrifices (II Chron. 7:1-3). Solomon offered a great number of oxen and sheep during the seven day dedication and the seven day feast that followed (II Chron. 7:4-11).

Shortly thereafter, *"the Lord appeared to Solomon by night and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and have chosen this place (the Temple in Jerusalem) to Myself for an house of sacrifice"* (II Chron. 2:12). The Lord appeared to Solomon to personally assure him that He has heard his prayer for the people of Israel and would honor it. The Lord said *"If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; if My people who are called by My name...then I will hear from Heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land"* (II Chron. 7:13-14). Solomon

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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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had requested that when Israel, God's chosen people, were suffering drought, pestilence, and the destruction of their crops by locusts, etc., because of their sin and they repented and turned back to the Lord, that He would hear them and forgive them and restore their land (see II Chron. 6:24-31). This is exactly what God promised Solomon He would do. Take note of the fact that in this passage there are three subjects in view; the people of Israel, the land of Israel, and the Temple of Israel.

Solomon's prayer was in accord with Moses' words of warning that are found in Deuteronomy 28 where the national blessings of obedience and the national curses of disobedience are clearly explained to Israel. God had entered into a covenant relationship with Israel and promised to protect and prosper them as long as they obeyed Him. He also promised that He would bring curses on them if they disobeyed Him. Solomon had these covenantal promises in mind when he dedicated the Temple and the Lord confirmed it in His answer by assuring Solomon that He would never forsake Israel, but would restore her in the Promised Land when they repented as a nation (Deut. 30:1-6ff.; etc.).

Because Israel has a national covenant relationship with God, there is a direct relationship between their obedience and prosperity and their disobedience and suffering. Israel's covenant with the Creator of Heaven and Earth is exclusive. No other nation has the right to claim any of the national blessings that God has promised to Israel. The terms of the covenant apply only to Israel as a nation. And the blessings promised can only be claimed by Israel when she turns from her wicked ways as a nation and seeks the Lord. A majority of the Israelite people (commonly known as Jews today) will have to turn en-masse to the Lord, acknowledging Jesus Christ as their Messiah. This national repentance will take place in the future during a time like no other that the Prophet Jeremiah called "...the time of Jacob's (Israel's) trouble..." (see Jer. 30:4-7ff) and then the Lord will make a New Covenant with them (Jer. 31:31-34).

Most refer to this verse in hopes that God will save our nation, politically, economically, and culturally. Other than to "repentant Israel," there is no such promise in Scripture, but we have been given a guarantee that any lost sinner who trusts Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins will be saved and given the gift of eternal life. And, we are instructed "that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all who are in authority, that we might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:1-4). A promise that God has made to the faithful remnant of the Body of Christ is that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12).

Because Christ Lives!

W. Edward Bedore

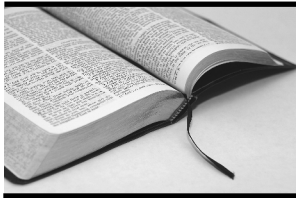
Dr. W. Edward Bedore, Editor, *BBI Bulletin, BABQ*
(All questions answered by the Editor unless otherwise noted)

A NOTE FROM DR. NIX—*Thank you for your support for the African Leader Conference Project. All of the support has been raised and I look forward to sharing with you when I return.*

QUESTION: Is there a sense in which the terms "soul" and "spirit" are used interchangeably in Scripture, while in other passages these terms are used to mean different things? What is the difference between "soul" and "spirit"?

ANSWER: Yes indeed "soul" and "spirit" are sometimes used in Scripture in what seems to be an interchangeable manner in reference to the "inner man." However, they are not the same thing. It is clearly stated in I Thessalonians 5:23 that the spirit and the soul and the body of man are each in need of the sanctifying work of God. The difference

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between the soul and the spirit are difficult for us to distinguish because they are joined together in such a way that only God can separate the two through His Word in order to reveal the true *“thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Heb. 4:12; cf. Jer. 17:9-10).

The soul of a man or woman is who they are as a person. It is the seat or residence of a person’s intellect and emotions that work together to form the will. The spirit of man is the part of man that makes him spiritually aware and capable of communication with an input from that which is spiritual. However, natural man is rendered spiritually dead towards God because of his *“trespasses and sins”* and, consequently, he must be made spiritually alive by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit before he (or she) can communicate with, fellowship with, and have a meaningful personal relationship with God (see Eph. 2:1-5). Being dead in their sins, unbelievers *“walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince and power of the air (Satan), according to the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience”* (Eph. 2:2). They are in tune with the Satanic spirit that is driving the world system, but have no capacity towards godliness. Only those who have received eternal life through faith in Christ can do that (Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 3:1-4). Believers are admonished to *“...walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh”* (see Gal. 5:16-26).

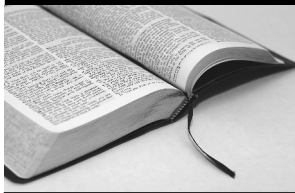
Something that should be noted here is that the soul is not comprised of three parts; intellect (mind), emotions, and will. They are simply aspects of the personhood of man that is the soul. When a person dies physically, the soul lives on and their intellect, emotions, and will continue to operate. The account of the Rich Man and Lazarus reveal that both saved and unsaved continue to think (intellect), have desires (emotions), and can make reasoned personal requests and replies (will).

QUESTION: *“If there is a difference between Paradise and Hades and only the unrighteous (the*

lost) of all ages are in Hades, what is the purpose of the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20:11-15? It seems that this would be a re-judgment of the unsaved who have died in their sins and have already been judged and found to be unrighteous when they died and were sent to Hades. In similar fashion, aren’t believers (the saved) also judged and found to be righteous and allowed into Paradise when they die? Is there a second judgment for non-believers? Why judge them a second time? Is there a chance for them to be redeemed?”

ANSWER: First of all, yes, there is a difference between Hades and Paradise. Perhaps the following illustration will help us to understand the kind of difference. Picture a large office building that is rented to two different companies, one half to each. Both companies need room to expand. One finds another facility that is larger and moves to this new location, which is better suited to its particular business. This gives the other company room to expand in their present location by taking over the now empty half of the building they are already in. Picture the building itself as Hades*, with one company being Paradise and the other the Place of Torment (see Lk. 16:19-31). From the time of Paradise’s relocation, it would be business as usual at the Place of Torment, which is still at the same Hades address. The unsaved that die still go there to await the final judgment (Rev. 10:11-15). On the other hand, from that same point of time, Paradise has been operating from its new and better location in Heaven. The prophet Isaiah predicted that Hell (Sheol/Hades) would one day *“...enlarge herself...”* (Isa. 5:14). I believe that this was made possible when Jesus Christ moved Paradise and its inhabitants from the confines of Sheol/Hades into Heaven after His resurrection. And just as those who have died in their sins (the unsaved) have gone to Sheol/Hades to await the Great White Throne Judgment, believers who have died have gone to Heaven to await their appearance before the Judgment Seat of Christ (I Cor. 3:9-15; II Cor. 5:10).

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So yes, there is a future judgment awaiting the unsaved and there is for one the saved who are in heaven as well.

Neither of these yet future judgements are to determine anyone's salvation. The salvation of a believer is determined the moment he or she believes the Gospel and personally trusts in Jesus Christ as their Savior. The believer is instantly forgiven of their sins, identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and sealed forever "in Christ" by the Holy Spirit who indwells them (see Rom. 3:23-26; I Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30). When an unbeliever dies, he/she is at that moment condemned forever, having died in unbelief. Having died in their sins (see John 3:16-18; 8:24), their eternal destiny is forever sealed with no hope of salvation. What these future judgments are about are what every individual's works have earned them. At "*The Judgement Seat of Christ*" (II Cor. 5:10), the value of the believer's works, not his sins, will be judged (see I Cor. 3:10-15). Every believer's works will be evaluated as to what sort they were (I Cor. 3:13) and they will be rewarded accordingly. Only that which is done in faith, "*the fruit of the Spirit*" (Gal. 5:22-26), will be considered for rewards the "*works of the flesh*" (Gal. 5:19-21) will be burned up as "*wood hay, and stubble,*" while what is done in faith will result in rewards that the Apostle Paul pictures as "*gold, silver and precious stones*" because of their enduring and great value (I Cor. 3:12; cf. Rom. 14: 10, 12; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:4-5; etc.).

Undoubtedly there will be a sense of remorse by some believers at the time of this judgment because of their unfaithfulness to the Lord and the

loss of rewards when they appear before Him. Nevertheless, every believer will acknowledge the abundance of God's goodness toward them and will "*glory in the Lord*" (I Cor. 1:30-31).

The Judgment of the Unsaved Dead: At the end of Jesus Christ's one thousand year reign on earth, all of the unsaved dead will be resurrected to stand before the Great White Throne where Christ will judge them according to their works and then cast them into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15). This judgment is associated with the "*Resurrection of Damnation*" (Jn. 5:29; cf. Dan. 12:2) and will determine the degree of suffering they will endure in the Lake of Fire. Only unsaved individuals will face this judgment. The Book of Life will be opened at this judgment to show that the names of these people are not in it and that they are thus deserving of everlasting condemnation. A record of their sinful deeds will be found in the other books that will be opened and their deserved degree of everlasting punishment determined accordingly (Rev. 20:12).

*For clarification, it should be noted that the Hebrew word "*Sheol*" that is found in the Old Testament and the Greek word "*Hades*" that is found in the New Testament refer to the same place.

QUESTION FOR THE READER

Who came to see Jesus at night?

Answer to the March question: (Who was shipwrecked in the New Testament?) **The Apostle Paul**, "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep" (2 Cor. 11:25; Acts 27:27-44).

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