

BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

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ISSUE 5

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We Know, But Do We Believe?

One of the quandaries of believers is trying to figure out God's purpose when hard times come their way. As with many things, there are two extremes that believers tend to go to when they are trying to understand what God is doing when these hard times, afflictions, suffering, etc. come into their lives. One is to take the position that God isn't directly involved in our day to day life and is unconcerned with our problems, so we are left to muddle through the trials of this life as best we can in our own strength.

The other extreme is to blame God for allowing us to suffer, or even of causing us to be afflicted. Many times I have heard Christians ask, "Why is God doing this to me?" Both views are wrong as God is involved in every believer's life and is concerned with the problems and hardships they face, whether they recognize it or not. He is the one who brings comfort to His troubled children (II Cor. 1:3-4), and He is not causing them to suffer. We live in a sin-cursed world in which the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike (Matt. 5:45). In other words, in the universal human experience everyone will encounter hardships, afflictions, and suffering at some point in their sojourn on planet earth because of the sin that our forefather, Adam, brought into the world, resulting in a death sentence on the entire human race (see Rom. 5:12; Gen. 3:17-19). Contrary to the misguided ideas of faith healers, word of faith preachers, and those proclaiming a prosperity gospel, God has not promised us health, wealth, and deliverance from all afflictions and suffering in this life if we have

enough faith. What He has promised is that if we simply put our faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, He will save us from the everlasting torments of "The Lake of Fire" (Rev.20:10-15) and give us eternal life (Rom. 6:23), an eternal home of glory in Heaven with Him (Eph. 2:4-9; Phil. 3:20), glorified bodies (I Cor. 15:51-53; Phil. 3:21), and to strengthen, encourage, and comfort us in this life through His Word, the Holy Spirit who indwells us, and other believers.

The Scriptures say "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 5:28). Simple enough. We know what it says, but do we really believe it? Sometimes, and I am as guilty as anybody, when the unexpected befalls us, we moan and groan and ask such things as "Why me, Lord?" and "What good can come from this?" Essentially, these are the kind of questions that Job asked when great afflictions came upon him. After allowing him to stew in his misery for a time, the Lord God answered Job by asking him a series of questions that humbled Job by helping him understand that God's knowledge and power were infinitely greater than his. The point is that even when we don't know God's purpose in allowing us to suffer through times of hardship and afflictions, we can trust the Lord, knowing that whatever He does is right and that in the end it will work out for our good and His glory. Even when we do not know the particular purpose of our Heavenly Father letting us endure a personal time of "tribulation" or trial, the Word of God tells us how we are to respond. In dealing with this

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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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issue, it will be beneficial to our understanding to see what His ultimate purpose for all believers is. The Scriptures plainly reveal to us that having been redeemed, we are predestinated *“to be conformed to the image of His Son”* (Rom. 8:29).

In Romans 5 we learn that, as believers, we are to *“glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience”* which speaks of endurance. In turn *“patience”* brings about the kind of life *“experience”* that produces Godly character in the believer. This kind of *“experience”* then strengthens the *“hope”* of the believer as he/she learns to trust in God in all things as He guides them through the tribulations of life (see Rom. 5:1-5; cf. 8:1-2, 15-18; I Cor. 2:1-5; II Cor. 5:14-18). The believer is to *“rejoice in the Lord always,”* take all their problems, hardships, and anxieties to God *“by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving”* and the Lord will bring a peace of heart and mind into your soul *“through Christ Jesus”* that is beyond finite man’s understanding (see Phil. 4:4-7).

“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (I Thess. 5:16-18).

Because Christ Lives!

W. Edward Bedore

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

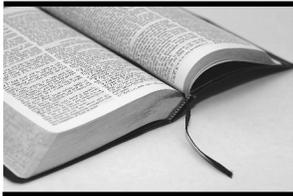
(All questions answered by the Editor unless otherwise noted)

QUESTION: Are the reports of people visiting heaven and returning to report on what they saw and experienced there for real?

ANSWER: Over the last few years there have been several books written, with at least one being made into a movie, about people going to Heaven

(usually through a so-called “near death” experience) and returning to tell us what Heaven is like. The major theme of these accounts seems to be how peaceful and comforting Heaven is and how happy it made them feel. One major problem with this is that, while they have similarities, the accounts given by the various authors differ from each other, sometimes significantly. I think that it is safe to say that, if they were all true, they would be consistent with each other. But, as they are not, their authenticity must be questioned. There are several issues to be considered when looking at this popular teaching of our day, but the most important is how it affects the Biblical doctrine of “special revelation”. Being full of specific details about Heaven and what is going on there that cannot be known except by the reports of these authors, these books are in effect claiming to be authoritatively equal with the Bible. In other words, the writers of these books are claiming to have received special revelation from God that must be blended into the Scriptures for us to have a full account of what God wants us to know about Heaven. This raises several serious problems, one being where these accounts differ. How do we discern which one is true? Doesn’t this leave us with the option of fallible men and women choosing which version of Heaven they prefer when deciding what to believe about the afterlife based on their personal preferences? Of course, we should all be aware of the problems this caused when the Serpent came into the Garden and enticed Eve to choose between what God had actually said about eating the fruit of the *“Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil”* and his version of what would happen if they did (see Gen. 2:8-3:24). The canon of Scripture is closed, which means the Bible is complete and we are not to subtract from it or add to it. By claiming to have inside knowledge of Heaven from a source outside of the Bible, their personal experience, they are in fact attempting to add to the Holy Scriptures, which alone contains special revelation from God and is

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sufficient for faith (what we are to believe) and practice (how we are to live). Putting what is found in books about trips to Heaven and back on a par with what is taught in the Bible, even if it is claimed to simply be supplementary material, is no different than accepting the traditions and dogma of organized religion (Roman Catholicism) and the writings of cult leaders such as Charles Taze Russell (Jehovah's Witnesses), Joseph Smith (the Mormons), Ellen G. White (Seventh Day Adventists), and so on, as Holy Writ. Adding to God's Word is a serious matter and it is not something to trifle with. No matter how small and unimportant an infraction we might imagine it to be, adding to God's Word is always serious and poses a real danger to the soul. It undermines the absolute authority of the Scriptures as it, in effect, teaches that spiritual truth can be found outside of the Bible.

While the Bible does not give a lot of information on what Heaven is like, the glimpses we find in Scripture of Heaven focus on God's glory and the awe and fear it caused in the men who saw these visions (see Isa. 6:1-5; Ezek. 1:1-28; Rev. 4:1-5:14). Heaven is not about us, it is about our Savior, Christ Jesus the Lord. If God had wanted us to know the details of what Heaven is like, He would have told us in His Word, the Bible. As He has not done so, we are to be content with what He has revealed in the Scriptures and to diligently study what is written that we might learn more of Him *"in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* (Col. 2:3). Let us always remember that it is Scripture and Scripture alone that *"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).

The more we know of our Lord and Savior, the greater our love for Him and our confidence in Him will be. In the Person of Jesus Christ *"dwelleth all the*

fullness of the Godhead bodily" and every believer is *"complete in Him"* (Col. 2:9-10). God's Word promises us that when a believer dies physically they go directly into the presence of the Lord (see II Cor. 5:4-8). This is why Paul could say that, for the believer, *"to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (Phil. 1:21). He knew that to depart this life to be *"with Christ"* in Heaven *"is far better"* than anything we can imagine. Jesus Christ is our Hope (I Tim. 1:1).

QUESTION: The Holy Bible, the one and only true Word of God, the King James Version, does not mention Hades or Sheol once, but Hell is mentioned there 54 times. Among others, the Rich Man in Luke lifted up his eyes in Hell, not Hades or Sheol. Stop kidding yourself. It is what it is, Hell down beneath. People like you should stop trying to deny there is a Hell to shun.

ANSWER: You don't say, but I assume that your remarks are in reference to my article, "Hell, Sheol, Hades, Paradise and the Grave" that is posted on BBI's website (bereanbibleinstitute.org) or chapter two of my book, "The State and Place of the Dead." First of all I want to make it clear that while the words *Sheol* and *Hades* do not appear in the King James Version, they are found in the Hebrew and Greek texts that the KJV was translated from. The Old Testament is based on the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the New Testament on the Greek Textus Receptus (the received text). They are also found in the numerous existent ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts these texts were compiled from. The word "Hell" is an English word used by the KJV translators to faithfully convey the equivalent meaning of Sheol/Hades to English speaking readers.

The fact is that none of the forty or so men that God used to write the Bible (Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Luke, Paul, Peter, and so on) ever spoke English and, therefore, they never used the word Hell.

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to explain the words they did use is not changing the Bible, but is done to help English speaking readers understand why the translators used the words they did when translating God's Word. Another word that is translated Hell in the KJV is "Gehenna" (see Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; Lk. 12:5; and James 3:6). Gehenna refers to a different place than Sheol/Hades does, a place of everlasting suffering and torment where all of the unsaved will eventually be transferred to. This place is called "The Lake of Fire" (Rev. 20:15). While the Sheol/Hades Hell is a terrible place, the suffering that the lost will experience there is only temporary. It is in "The Lake of Fire" Hell that all unbelievers will suffer the everlasting punishment that their sins have earned them. The Bible tells us that at the time of the Great White Throne Judgment "Hell" (Sheol/Hades) will itself "be cast into The Lake of Fire" (see Rev. 20:11-15). What the Bible teaches us is that there are two places where those who die in unbelief will suffer the torments of divine judgment, both of which are referred to as Hell in the English translations. One is a temporary place where all those who have died in unbelief are held until they are raised "unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29; Dan. 12:2; Rev. 20:11-20). This final judgment of the lost will take place at the close of the Millennial Kingdom and will be followed by the eternal state in which the redeemed will joyfully experience the blessed personal presence and glory of God our Savior, who is Jesus Christ the Lord.

I have never denied or tried to hide the fact that there is a Hell to shun whether it is the present Hell known as Sheol in Hebrew and Hades in Greek, or the final Hell known as the "Lake of Fire." The Bible tells us, and I consistently preach and teach, that all of those who die in unbelief go directly into the Sheol/Hades Hell and will finally end up in the eternal torments of the Lake of Fire Hell. The only way any lost sinner, and all have sinned, can escape this dreadful fate is to trust in Jesus Christ, before dying, for the forgiveness of sins, believing that He died for their sins, was buried, and rose again the third day just as the Bible says He did. Apart from Christ no member of the human race has any hope of escaping the Lake of Fire. On the other hand, all those "in Christ" have received the gift of eternal life and have a sure hope of Heaven (see Rom. 3:23-25; 5:8-9; 6:23; I Cor. 15:3-4; Eph. 1:13-14; I Tim. 2:5-6; etc.). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

INTERESTING BIBLE FACT

Madalyn Murray O'Hair

Madalyn Murray O'Hair, an atheist, filed a lawsuit on behalf of her son, William Murray, that led to the Supreme Court's 1963 decision which ruled that required Bible reading and prayer in schools was unconstitutional. In 1980, William became a Bible believing Christian. He entered the ministry and became highly involved in evangelistic work.

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