

BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

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ISSUE 8

BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

Is It Really Important to Study Your Bible?

To answer this question, first we must know what it means to study. Study is the use of the mind to gain knowledge or the act or process of learning about something.

Many people seem to think that studying the Bible consists of reading a small passage of Scripture followed by a devotional commentary by some preacher, Bible teacher, etc. Others depend completely on what a particular preacher, group, or organization tells them about the Bible. Still others assume they know what the Bible teaches because they have seen some motion picture about the life of Christ, or went to Sunday school when they were young, or have memorized the Ten Commandments and know the so-called Golden Rule, etc., etc.

The real truth is that very few people really study the Bible for themselves. It is a sad but true fact that most people's knowledge of the Bible is based on their own opinion of what it says or what they think it should say and not on what it really says. There are as many opinions as there are people, but truth is truth and does not change to fit human reasoning or wishful thinking.

The Bible is God's own Word, His revealing of Himself to man along with His plan and purpose for mankind. It is important to study the Bible for yourself and not depend completely on others to do it for you. Don't you think that it is time for you to read and study the Bible for yourself? It is the only way you can find out for sure what the Bible says.

Because Christ Lives!

W. Edward Bedore

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

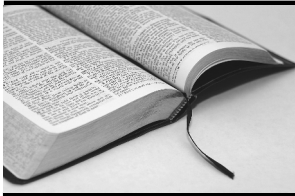
QUESTION: If local church membership is Biblical, can a person be a member of more than one church? What about a missionary; is he a member of his sending church or of the church he started on the mission field? And if he plants another church, would he be a member of three churches? To which church does he owe his loyalty to?

ANSWER: We looked at the question of the Biblical basis of church membership in the last edition of "Bible Answers to Bible Questions" (November 2018). In short, according to my understanding of Scripture, local church membership is Biblical but is not mandated, even though the Scriptures indicate that the ideal situation is for believers to regularly assemble together for prayer, praise, worship, and edification. My answers to the questions at hand reflect that opinion.

Before answering the two questions about multiple church memberships, I want to address the one about church loyalty; "to which church would a person who is a member of two or more churches owe his loyalty to?" Whether they claim membership in one church or multiple churches, if a person has been saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they are not called to be loyal to any church, organization, group, pastor, preacher, teacher, leader, or anything else. We are called to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ and the truth of God's Word. We owe all to Him who died for our sins and rose from the dead that we might have everlasting life. Consider the words of the Apostle Paul; "*But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him*" (Rom. 5:8-9). While we receive eternal

(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)

life as a gift, it was purchased at great cost to make that possible. *“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”* (I Cor. 6:19-20). *“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight”* (Col. 1:21-22).

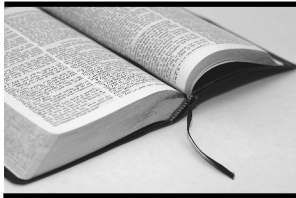
So then, can a person be a member of more than one local church? Certainly, the way local churches are typically organized in America today, a person could join more than one church. Whether or not it would be ethical to do so, is another question. Motive and circumstances have to be considered here. I know several believers who attended a particular church long-term and then moved away from the area and joined another in their new location who refer to the first one as their “home church.” They consider themselves as still a member of their home church even though they do not regularly attend said church, do not hold any position of leadership, or have a say in the affairs of the church. I see no problem with this kind of “honorary membership.” However, to hold full active membership in two or more churches is, or at least can be, problematic. There are numerous scenarios that we can think of that might cause a person to want to join two or more churches, some of which might be legitimate and others that are not. Considering the limited space available where, I will briefly address two points. First, what we are talking about here in reference to church membership is that of a “formal” membership. That is the prospective member petitions the Board to be recognized as a member of the church as prescribed in the church’s by-laws or constitution. This usually, at the very least, requires the applicant to give testimony of their salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and an affirmation that they are in agreement with the church’s doctrinal statement. This type of membership usually gives the member a voice in calling a new pastor and the taking on of any projects or programs,

etc. that requires the church to commit itself to any financial obligations.

Can a missionary who remains a member of the church that sent him become a member of any church, or churches, he plants on the field? Assuming that the sending church provides substantial financial support for the missionary, of course he should be considered a member. However, since he is not attending the church, is not involved in any regular or special activities of the church and has little or no direct social interaction with the saints who attend the church, his membership should be similar to that of the “honorary” membership mentioned earlier.

Churches that a missionary plants are rarely, if ever, fully established churches in the beginning. The missionary is basically responsible for everything. Once a location is decided on, the missionary (or team of missionaries) moves to the field and begins the work there. This includes establishing contact with believers that might be in the area, doing evangelistic work, establishing new believers in the faith, training leaders for the work of ministry, and eventually handing over the leadership of the church, or churches, planted to the indigenous believers who have been established in sound doctrine. Ideally, the missionary then moves on to another area to repeat the process and establish more churches that will stand for and proclaim the Gospel of the Grace of God that is in Christ Jesus the Lord. It seems only reasonable that a missionary be considered a member in the church, or churches, that he is actively working in. After all he is doing the work of a pastor and an evangelist and functions as a board member while he is teaching the congregation and training the future leadership of the church. If he is not a member of a new church he has planted, what would he be? He may be a planter (preacher) or a waterer (teacher) of the Word, but as the Apostle Paul pointed out to the church at Corinth: *“For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth*

(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)

anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (I Cor. 3:4-7). In other words, none of us as believers are special in and of ourselves, regardless of our position. As individual members of the Body of Christ, we are one in Christ who is the Exalted Head of the Church and He alone is to be given all honor and glory "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many" (I Cor. 12:12-14).

QUESTION: What's the problem with society today? Why can't we just learn to get along, each of us living life as we see fit?

ANSWER: Will the problems of this world be straightened out by the means of government agencies? Or are the problems of this world caused by government agencies? Is education the key to solving the difficulties that face mankind today? It is not hard to look around and see that our government, as well as all other governments, have serious flaws and shortcomings. Reports of wrong doing by government officials are in the news often. On the other hand, without some measure of governmental regulation and control, it is obvious that anarchy would prevail. Even with the laws we have, crime of all kinds are prevalent in our society. As for education, for the most part it is men and women of intellect and learning who hold influential places of high responsibility and management in society, government and business today, even as our problems grow. Programs for sex education and the prevention of drug abuse have been around for decades, yet pregnancy outside of marriage has gone mainstream, STD's are rampant, and drug abuse is a growing scourge to our nation.

We applauded the end of the Cold War and since then have looked to international peace treaties and policies to secure peace in our time, and yet global turmoil persists. And how about the social cost of the

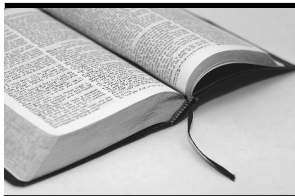
war individuals wage against each other in robbery, rape, and murder? There is also emotional turmoil caused by hatred, jealousy, selfishness, etc. among family members, co-workers, ethnic groups, and neighbors to consider. These things affect the educated and uneducated, the privileged and disadvantaged, the law abiding and the criminal, the employed and the unemployed and everyone else alike.

Yes, it is easy to point out the flaws and short comings of others, to place the blame on other individuals, society as a whole, or to point to the evils of the communist, socialist, democratic, or capitalist systems of government. But the root cause of our problems today, whether personal, cultural, national, or international is found in the hearts and minds of all individuals. Self-seeking results in wrong doing. The old fashioned, but politically incorrect, term for the problem is sin. One of the results of sin is to deny personal responsibility for one's own actions and thoughts and cast the blame elsewhere. Have you ever considered your own self-seeking sinfulness? How about your need for the forgiveness of sins? The Bible says that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23) and God does not lie. We are also told in God's Word that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Yes, one day we all must give an account to God for ourselves; we will not be asked our opinion of others or be compared with them, but we will be faced with our every sinful thought and deed. What would you say if you were called to give an account of your life today?

The only way to a right standing before God is through the forgiveness of sins that is found in His Son, Jesus Christ, who died for our sins that we might have life in Him. Do you know Jesus personally? He is the only way. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

QUESTION: In chapter two of the book, "Unlocking the Scriptures" by W. Edward Bedore, on page 27 it says "It should be noted at this point that some see more than four dispensations between eternity past and eternity future."

(continued on page 4)



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(BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS continued from page 3)

My question concerns the remarks that follow. "It is common practice to place Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, and Promise among the dispensations. However, while they play an important role in God's overall program of redemption and were dispensed by God, they are not in the true sense dispensations." Can you please clarify this for me?

ANSWER: What is meant here is that each dispensation has a distinct beginning and ending. The Old Covenant, or the Dispensation of the Law, began with Moses and ended with Jesus Christ's offer of a New Covenant. In similar fashion, the Dispensation of Grace began with the Apostle Paul's conversion and will end with the Rapture, or catching away, of the Body of Christ. In contrast, while each began at a different time, Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, and Promise, have remained in effect ever since they came into being. For instance, Human Government began with Noah and is still sanctioned by God to this day (Acts 17:26; Rom. 13:1-7). Another example is Conscience. It came into play in the Garden of Eden and is still functioning to this day by convicting men and women of their sin and making them aware of their need of a Savior (Gen. 3:6-11; Rom. 2:14-16; 3:20; 7:7; I Tim. 1:7-11). More in depth explanations of the different dispensations and their purpose, and timeframes are given in later chapters of "Unlocking the Scriptures" which is available from *Berean Bible Institute*.

INTERESTING BIBLE FACTS

The Creation of the World; 4004 BC?

The footnotes of many old editions of the Bible state that the creation of the world, as stated in Genesis 1:1, took place in 4004 BC. This date was arrived at by James Ussher (1581-1656), the chief bishop of Ireland in his day. Bishop Ussher was a highly educated and intelligent man. His dating was accepted as accurate for many years until being abandoned in favor of scientific theories and speculations that say that the earth is actually billions of years old. However, over the last 100 years or so, there has been a growing challenge to the old earth teaching and the theory of evolution based on solid Biblical scholarship and scientific facts. I don't know about you, but I don't think it is wise to trust in the ever changing views and theories of imperfect man rather than the unchanging infallible Word of God. I believe that Bishop Ussher got it right. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), and that original act of creation took place a little over six thousand years ago.



Merry Christmas

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift. 2 Corinthians 9:15

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