

BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

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ISSUE 4

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The Sufficiency of Christ

Sufficiency could be defined as “an adequate amount of something; especially of something essential.” Sufficiency occurs when you have enough of what you need to accomplish the task. This concept is especially important in the Dispensation of Grace. The word may not appear as much as other words (i.e., “grace”), but it is not less descriptive of the opportunity and blessings we have in Christ.

Let’s consider some Scripture:

1. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Eph. 2:8-9).

This verse makes it obvious that God’s grace and Christ’s faithfulness is **sufficient** for our salvation. There are no additional works that can be added due to the sufficiency of the Godhead’s contributions.

2. *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days”* (Col. 2:16).

Why are we not to let anyone judge us in this way? Because in Christ dwells *“all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him”* (Col. 2:9-10a). In other words, being in Christ is **sufficient** for a complete, righteous position.

3. *“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”* (Gal. 3:3).

Paul’s point with this verse is that the indwelling Holy Spirit is **sufficient** for our perfection.

4. *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me”* (2 Cor. 12:9).

The Lord assured Paul that His strength is **sufficient** for any of Paul’s weakness, shortcomings or frustrations. His power is **sufficient** for our service.

We could list more verses, but just these few are a wonderful reminder that God is (more than) adequate for the essential work of our salvation and service. Praise God, He is enough! This was certainly true at any time in history, but in no other dispensation is it as clearly seen and applied as in this current Dispensation of Grace.

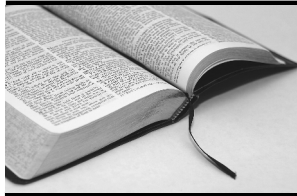
Let’s not think too highly of our abilities and accomplishments, remembering that *“our sufficiency is of God”* (2 Cor. 3:5). Through Him, we have *“all sufficiency in all things”* that we *“may abound to every good work”* (2 Cor. 9:8).

An update on the Bedores: Dr. Bedore has started radiation treatments to treat the cancer remaining after his surgery. He should be about halfway through his required 33 treatments (5 days a week for 6 ½ weeks). Please, keep Ed and Linda in prayer.

Pastor Matthew Ritchey

Associate Editor

“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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QUESTION: "Why did Paul agree to do those things (participate in a Jewish vow) in Acts 21:23-24?"

ANSWER: The promised Kingdom had been prophesied for thousands of years before Christ and was progressively revealed during Christ's earthly ministry. After His ascension, Christ's twelve apostles began the commission entrusted to them with the message of the Kingdom for the nation of Israel. We see the beginning of their ministry with the arrival of the Comforter (Holy Spirit) and can read some of the history of their ministry in the first third of the book of Acts. Yet, the dramatic change of message/dispensation that Christ entrusted to Paul necessitated there be a transition period from Prophecy to Mystery. Acts records that transition when people from the two programs were co-existing.

In Acts 21, Paul traveled to Jerusalem and met with the Jerusalem leaders, including Jesus' brother James. Paul reported on his ministry among the Gentiles, and the leaders rejoiced at the news. Yet, in what seems to derive from a desire to express goodwill and solidarity, the leaders requested of Paul:

"Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come" (Acts 21:20b-22).

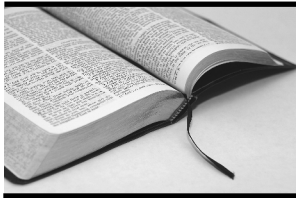
I think Paul's words in I Corinthians 9:19-22 - "*That I may win some*" - best explain why Paul agreed to the Jerusalem leaders' suggestion; everything he did was for the furtherance of the Gospel. In Acts 21, when Jerusalem's leaders asked Paul to show a sign of good faith towards God's people under the Kingdom program, Paul agreed to sponsor those men preparing to undergo a sacrificial vow in order to express that he was not at odds with the

Kingdom believers. Of course, we know the Jews did not respond well to Paul being at the Temple for when the Jews saw Paul at the Temple, they caused such an angry ruckus that the Roman guard had to protect him (see Acts 21:26-32).

It is also important to note that the Jerusalem leaders even acknowledged that they were in agreement that the Gentile believers under Grace were not required to observe such things under the Law. (See Acts 21:25.) So, Paul was not standing with these four men in Acts 21 to earn his salvation or to blur the line between Law and Grace, but to acknowledge that the two programs of God were not at war with one another, even though the propagation of God's Kingdom program had been set aside. Today, we have no remnants of the Kingdom program living, so it would be wrong for us to go along with error in order to "get along." Paul was recognizing two existing programs, one placed upon hold and one recently revealed. Today, there is only one program in operation - the Grace program.

QUESTION: "Why did God require blood for sacrifice?"

ANSWER: The world struggles to understand why we celebrate the shedding of blood, especially the blood of the Son of man, Jesus Christ. I have personally witnessed the confusion and animosity toward the subject of blood. One Sunday evening I was teaching as a meek lady rejoiced emotionally about the bloody sacrifice that Christ made on her behalf. Another lady, who had only been attending church for a few weeks, got red in the face and angrily reacted upon how sick and disgusting it was to talk about the blood. Let me make it clear: we are not reveling in the gruesomeness of the bloody sacrifice as if it were some shocking horror movie. We rejoice in the suffering, the blood and the cross because we understand what believers possess since Jesus Christ was willing to shed His blood for our sins and be raised for our justification (Rom. 4:25).



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Notice that the focus of this question is “why blood.” Could it have been something other than blood? The answer is no; a bloodless sacrifice did not work out well for Cain. In addition, Hebrews 9:22 states, “*And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.*” Yes, blood was needed.

This explanation goes back to the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned, they spiritually died in that instant. Sin brought death. Therefore, the answer actually begins by addressing the fact that all are dead in sin and in need of new life. A sinless life must be sacrificed, shedding blood, to impart life to the dead sinner.

Why blood? Why not stoning, hanging, burning, or another, less messy means of death? Leviticus 17:11 answers our question. It says, “*For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.*” Life is in the blood. I’m not sure we fully understand the implications of this statement, but we can understand that there is no life without blood. A blood sacrifice needed to be offered so that life could be imparted to the dead sinner.

One other thing to note, there is perhaps no more gruesome reminder of the cost needed to pay for sin than a bloody sacrifice. The Israelites wandering in the wilderness would have left a reminder of the devastation of sin in the sand as a result of the bloody sacrifices offered in the tabernacle. Jesus Christ Himself underwent the excruciating, bloody sacrifice to pay the cost to forgive our sin and bring us eternal life. When we understand how depraved we were and what we gain under the shed blood of Jesus Christ, it motivates us to humbly present our bodies as a living sacrifice to Him.

QUESTION: “For whom was Matthew 24 written?”

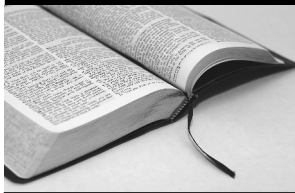
ANSWER: In Matthew 24:3, the disciples come to Jesus, after He foretold the destruction of the Temple, and asked Him, “*Tell us, when shall these things be?*”

And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” They are asking Jesus Christ to expound upon end-time events. His answer is the subject of Prophecy. His answer tells of a Tribulation period and encourages them to remain faithful until the Kingdom comes. He speaks of being ready for His Second Coming and a judgment that will take place.

The Kingdom believers will inherit the prophesied Kingdom after the Tribulation, while the Body of Christ will be raptured away before the Tribulation. This means that Matthew 24 was written for the saints who will be going through the Tribulation, not the Body of Christ.

There are many keys in this chapter that make this conclusion obvious. Jesus tells His disciples of signs of the coming peril (Matt. 24:6-7), while no signs remain before the Rapture occurs. They were to endure to the end for their salvation (Matt. 24:13) and it will be the good news of the Kingdom that will be preached (Matt. 24:14). We are saved and sealed upon the moment of belief and preach the good news of the Grace of God. Matthew 24:15 speaks of a major prophetic event (the Abomination of Desolation) that these believers are present to witness. This event takes place before the “great and terrible tribulation,” or at the mid-point of the 7 years. Again, the Body of Christ is not looking for this event, and we will be in Heaven for at least 3 ½ years before this time. Christ’s coming in Matthew 24 is signified by visible miracles (Matt. 24:29-30), while the Rapture is a secret coming in the clouds. The elect of Israel will be regathered (Matt 24:31), just as prophesied in the Old Testament. The Rapture is not found in the Old Testament because it is part of the Mystery hidden in the mind of God until revealed to Paul for the Body of Christ.

Matthew 24 was written for the Kingdom believers who expected to go through the Tribulation period and looked for the Kingdom on earth. The Mystery was still hidden in the mind of God as Jesus gave His answer in Matthew 24 and 25. We, the Body of Christ, will be raptured BEFORE the events of Matthew 24. It was written for us, but not directly to or about us.



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BASIC RULES OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION

(The following is an excerpt from Dr. W. Edward Bedore's new book "Unlocking the Scriptures.")

1. The Bible is inerrant and our **first** and **final** authority: God's Word is our **only source** for what we are to believe and how we are to live.
2. Scripture has but one meaning: Each passage of Scripture has a definite meaning of its own. If Scripture has more than one meaning, we can never be certain of its meaning. It should be understood to mean what it meant to those it was originally addressed to. "Each book of the Bible was written for some specific and immediate purpose." (*Heart of Hebrew History* by H.I. Hester-page 6, Broadman Press).
3. Scripture explains Scripture: In Bible study let the Bible speak for itself. Compare Scripture with Scripture and don't add to or subtract from it. Often difficult passages of Scripture become clear when they are connected to other portions of God's Word.
4. Pay attention to context: Give careful consideration not only to the preceding and following passages of Scripture, but also to the context of the overall teachings of Scripture.
5. Pay attention to dispensational distinctives: Prophecy and Mystery must be recognized as separate programs of God concerning different people in different periods of history.

6. Always keep in mind that the Lord Jesus Christ is the focal point of all Scripture: Everything in the Bible is in some way related to the Person of Jesus Christ and God's overall plan and purpose for the redemption of sinners. It is important to remember that, although Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior, there are dispensational aspects of His ministry that need to be recognized. For instance, today the Lord Jesus Christ is seated at the Father's right hand in Heaven and "maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:33-34; Eph. 1:14-20; 1 Tim. 2:5-6). However, at some future point of time, Jesus Christ will return to earth to judge His enemies (Jude 14-15; Matt. 24:29-30; 25:31-33; Rev. 19:11-21; Jer. 23:5-6).

7. Rely on the Holy Spirit to give you understanding (I Cor. 2:11-16; Eph. 1:15-19). Human intellect alone is able to learn many facts and details of God's Word, but it cannot grasp the true and full significance of the spiritual truth expressed therein. To truly understand the Bible, a person must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ (Titus 3:5-7; I Cor. 2:11-16).

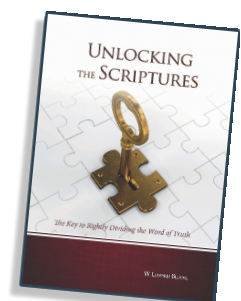
Unlocking the Scriptures

By Dr. W Edward Bedore

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