

BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

BEREAN BIBLE INSTITUTE, INC.

FEBRUARY 2019

PO BOX 587, SLINGER, WI 53086

VOLUME 10

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

ISSUE 1

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QUESTION: Did God create evil?

ANSWER: It seems logical to conclude that as God is the Creator of all things and evil exists, then God must have created evil. Isaiah 45:7 (KJV) is often quoted to substantiate this understanding of the origin of evil. However, to attribute the existence of evil to God is simply contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture that God is perfect in all His ways and does not, and cannot, do that which is evil. *"He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He"* (Deut. 32:4; cf. Job 34:10-12; James 1:13; II Sam. 22:31; Matt. 5:48). The "evil" spoken of in Isaiah 45:7 is not the moral evil universally found in sinful human beings, but rather the physical disaster, or calamity, that God brings on a nation to restrain the proliferation of its sinful ways when left to chart its own course in history. The evil God speaks of creating in Isaiah 45:7 has to do with His providential oversight and control of history and nature to bring about the downfall of wicked nations. In other words He is not saying that moral evil originated with, or is caused by Him, but that as the Sovereign Creator God He is able to use the evil works of wicked men to bring about His purposes.

Many have struggled with the idea of God using the evil doings of men to accomplish His will. In fact, the prophets themselves questioned how this could be. One example is the prophet Habakkuk who wanted to know how good could come out of the wickedness being openly practiced in Judah in his time (Hab. 1:1-4). The Lord's

answer was that He would use an even more wicked nation (Babylon) to judge morally corrupt Judah (Hab. 1:5-11). In turn, Habakkuk asked how was it possible for the Lord to use a nation even more wicked than Judah to judge His people (Hab. 1:12-2:1). It seemed to the prophet that the evil ways and doings of the Babylonians would go unpunished while Judah would suffer the harshest of treatment at their wicked hands. The Lord God's response was to assure Habakkuk that in due time Babylon would be judged for its evil doings as well (Hab. 2:2-20), thus assuring Habakkuk that at the appointed time His justice would prevail. Being assured of God's perfect wisdom, righteousness, power, and ultimate sovereignty over all the earth, Habakkuk gained a new perspective of the trust, honor, glory, and reverent worship due to the Lord God of Israel alone as the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. The prophet responds with a prayer for God to fulfill His promise to one day destroy Babylon and to restore Judah (Hab. 3:1-16) and closes with a hymn of faith in the Lord to do what is right (Hab. 3:17-19).

When looking at this subject, we need to keep in mind that moral evil is not a "thing" that can be put in a test tube and studied or put in a box and kept on a shelf for future use. In a very real sense, evil has no existence of its own. But we can say that evil is the absence of good. We commonly refer to how "cold" it is outside in the winter months, but technically what we normally think of as cold does not exist. Cold is the absence of heat, just as dark is the absence of light. When God

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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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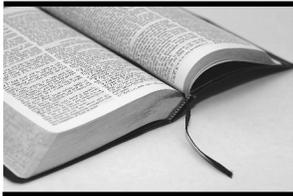
finished His creative work, He *"saw everything He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day"* (Gen. 2:31). In other words, there was no evil in all of creation at that point in time.

This brings us to the question, how did evil originate? During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ condemned the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees with the answer to this very question. When these self-righteous Jewish religious leaders confronted Him because His disciples ate with unwashed hands, He publicly threw their challenge back in their face by declaring them to be the ones who were actually transgressing the Law of God (see Matt. 15:1-11). When His disciples reported to Him that the Pharisees had been offended by what He had said, He explained what He meant to them (see Matt. 15:15-20). While there is much that could be said about this passage of Scripture, it is the Lord's words that are recorded for us in verse 19 that we want to focus on here. *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man..."* (Matt. 15:19-20; also see Matt. 12:34; Lk. 6:45). The great world-wide flood of Noah's day was sent by God because *"the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually* (Gen. 6:5; ff.). Man was created with a God-given freedom to choose between humbly serving God which is always good, or pridefully serving self, which can only produce evil. God alone, who is the Creator of all that exists, is worthy of our worship and unquestioning obedience. When an individual chooses to serve self rather than God, they are in effect putting themselves in God's place and worshipping self. *"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened...Who changed the truth of God into*

a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever Amen" (Rom. 1:21, 25). God did not create evil and He did not pre-program man to commit sin. He simply gave Adam and Eve the privilege and responsibility of choice. When they chose to serve themselves, to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, rather than to obey God by not eating the forbidden fruit, evil welled up in their hearts, bringing the curse of sin and death into God's good creation (see Gen. 3:1-19; Rom. 5:12). Taking root in the hearts and minds of our first parents, sin has been passed down to every member of the human race where it still lurks in the imaginations of the heart of every man and woman. Whether the thoughts imagined in the heart are played out in the physical realm or only dwelt on in the dark recesses of the mind, they are counted as sin and therefore are wickedly evil. Note well the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: *"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in her heart"* (Matt. 5:27-28). Is there any son or daughter of Adam who can honestly say that they have never had a sinful thought or desire that they entertained in the imagination of their heart? I think not.

Evil was not created by God but is the handiwork of mankind, and we witness its horrible results wherever we find human beings, for all have sinned (see Rom. 6:23). The evil imaginations of the mind often fill and overflow the sinful heart and are manifest in the atrocities that plague society everywhere. If you are reading this, you are either a lost sinner who is alienated from God by the wicked works of your mind, or you have believed the Gospel and your sins have been forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ and you are reconciled to God (see I Cor. 15:3-4; II Cor. 5:20-21; Eph. 1:7, 13-14; 2:8-9; Col. 1:21-22).

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One of two final destinies awaits you. If you are unsaved and die without Christ, you will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire to suffer the everlasting torment you deserve (see Rom. 6:23a; Rev. 20:10-15). But, although you don't deserve it and could never earn it, if you die "in Christ," having trusted Him for salvation, believing He died for your sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (see I Cor. 15:1-4), you will enjoy forever the glorious presence of God in Heaven where you will be seated eternally with Christ Jesus the Savior (see Rom. 6:23b; Eph. 2:1-6). By God's grace, you have been given the opportunity to choose your final destiny. Will you choose the everlasting death your sin has earned you, or the gift of eternal life Jesus Christ has made available to you through His shed blood?

QUESTION: People who die without Christ go to Hades (Hell) to suffer punishment and await the Great White Throne Judgment while believers go to Paradise in Heaven to wait for the New Jerusalem. So what is the purpose of the final judgment of Revelation 20:11-13, where books are opened to examine the deeds, or works, of those being judged and to see if their name is written in the Book of Life?

ANSWER: First of all I want to address what is said in the first part of the question. While it is true that those "people who die without Christ go to Hades to suffer punishment and await the Great White Throne Judgment," and "believers go to Paradise in Heaven," the believers are not awaiting the New Jerusalem. All believers who are saved during this current Dispensation of Grace are to be "looking for that Blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13; Phil. 3:20). The "blessed hope" appearing of Jesus Christ is not to be associated with His Second Coming to earth or the time of the New Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven, but is a reference to His coming in the clouds to catch up, or rapture, the believers out of

the world and take them to Heaven. Believers who have died before the Rapture will be resurrected and those still alive when it happens will be changed (I Thes. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:51-54). Every member of the Body of Christ, that is to say, all those saved during the Dispensation of Grace, will have a new body just as it is written in God's infallible Word, for the Lord Himself "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself (Phil. 3:21; also see I Cor. 15:51-52).

Today every blood bought saint, which is every believer, is to be eagerly awaiting the Lord Jesus' coming in the clouds to rapture the Body of Christ, but we are not to be sitting idle as we wait. Rather, we are to be working for the Lord and giving witness of the power of the Gospel to save the souls of those who believe in Christ as Savior (I Cor. 1:18, 21). The New Jerusalem is connected to Israel and the prophesied eternal Kingdom on earth that the Lord Jesus Christ will rule over forever and ever following His Second Coming and the Millennial Kingdom. Note the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on the twelve gates of the Holy City (Rev. 21:12) and the names of the twelve apostles who will rule over the twelve tribes on the foundations of the city (Rev. 2:14; Matt. 19:27-28; Lk. 22:28-30).

Another reason believers of the Dispensation of Grace are not waiting for the New Jerusalem to come down from Heaven is that it will not happen until at least 1,007 years after the Rapture has taken place. We know that this is so because the Rapture will happen before the start of the seven-year Tribulation that precedes the Millennial Kingdom.

Now, as for those who die without Christ, having died in their sins they are eternally condemned because of their unbelief. They suffer in Hades for rejecting what God has revealed about Himself in creation and "served the creature more than the Creator" (see Rom. 1:18-25ff; Ps. 19:1-6). However, since the

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product of their sinful ways is not yet complete, they will have to wait until the end of time to face the final judgment when the degree of everlasting torment that they will be sentenced to in the Lake of Fire will be determined. For instance, Karl Marx, who wrote the "Communist Manifesto," is in some degree responsible for everyone who has been ensnared by the godless communist system of government and every atrocity carried out by those who have embraced it. Not only does Marxist Communism promote a militant atheistic worldview, but it has been responsible for untold suffering and the murder of over 100 million people. The works of Karl Marx and those who follow him are all accurately recorded and in the end a perfect judgment will be administered by a perfect God in a perfectly righteous judgment of all the unsaved (John 5:23-27; Dan. 12:2). It seems that "the Book of Life" will be opened at the Great White Throne Judgment primarily to show that the names of those on trial are not written in it. Note well, this is a judgment of the unsaved dead. We should also note that "death and hell" will be cast into the Lake of Fire meaning that the lost souls in Hades who have been separated from their bodies in death will be reunited with them in "the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29) in which they will suffer the everlasting torment of "the second death" (Rev. 20:14-15).

INTERESTING BIBLE FACTS

"Father of the Sunday School"

Robert Raikes (1735-1811) is known as the "Father of the Sunday School" because of his work

in establishing schools in which poor children could learn not only the Bible and its teachings, but also reading, writing, arithmetic, and other subjects that would equip them with the skills necessary for gainful employment in the industries that were emerging at the time. In 1780 he started a Sunday school class for underprivileged children in Glouster, England. By 1887 there were over 200,000 students enrolled in such schools in Britain.

INTERESTING BIBLE FACTS

"Scrolls"

When the word "book" is found in the Bible, it is referring to a scroll. Scrolls were made of either papyrus or parchment. To make a scroll, the pages were glued or sewn together edge to edge to form a long continuous roll that was wound on a pair of dowel rods. If it was written in Hebrew, as the Old Testament was, the beginning was on the right and the end on the left because Hebrew is written from right to left. Scrolls are still used in Synagogues today.

The form of books used today, with all the pages attached on one side, came into use about A.D. 100. A book in this form was at first called a "codex." The use of codex made it possible to have the entire Bible together, which could not be done with a scroll because it would have been way too bulky. When the Lord Jesus stood up to read from God's Word in the synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath day, He read from a scroll of the Prophet Isaiah [compare Isaiah 61:1-2a with Luke 4:18-19].

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