

BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

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ISSUE 3

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What part of the Bible are we to follow?

There are varying opinions as to the answer to this question. There are many who would be quick to answer that since the Bible is divided into what is called the Old Testament and the New Testament, then of course the New Testament has replaced the Old Testament and is therefore more important. Others believe that since God's Law is found in the Old Testament, then the Old Testament is where we can find what we must do to please God.

Others believe that the first four books of the New Testament are the most important (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, called the Gospels) because they tell us of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ while on earth and record His words. Still others believe that only the words that Jesus Himself actually spoke on earth are of the most vital importance and must be obeyed. Many Bibles even have the words of Jesus printed in red to set them apart from those spoken by others. However, the Bible says that *"all Scripture is given by inspiration of God"* (II Tim. 3:16) and because Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God, every word in the Bible is His Word just as it is the Father's and the Holy Spirit's. The answer is that every word in the Bible is God's Word and therefore vitally important. However, not all of the Bible was written directly to us or about us. That is why we are instructed to *"rightly divide"* God's Word that we might be *"approved unto God"* (II Tim. 2:15).

It was of the utmost importance that Adam obey God and not eat of *"the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"* (Gen. 2:15-17), but he disobeyed and brought sin and death into the world (Gen. 3:1-24; Rom. 5:12; I Tim. 2:13-14). It is vital to our understanding of the message of the Bible for today, but there is no forbidden fruit for us to shun in the present Dispensation of Grace. It is simply too late for that. Adam effectively made sinners of all his descendants, all humans, when he disobeyed God. That is why the world is the ungodly place it is. Much could be said about the history of God's interaction with rebellious man as it is recorded in the Bible, but I just want to say here, if you do not understand the difference between Prophecy and Mystery, Israel and the Body of Christ, and the Second Coming and the Rapture, you will be confused by the *"apparent contradictions"* found in Scripture. For instance, how is it that Peter said his message had been preached by all God's prophets *"since the world began"* (Acts 3:21), but Paul said that his message had been *"kept secret since the world began"* (Rom. 16:25)? The Bible is true. Both statements are in the Bible. Which one do you believe? Or more importantly, which one are you trusting in?

Because Christ Lives!

W. Edward Bedore

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

(All questions answered by the Editor unless otherwise noted)

"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: I agree with your answer that Joseph's welfare plan was to get Israel to Egypt (see March 2019 issue "Bible Answers to Bible Questions"). Would you explain for us God's welfare plan for Israel given through Moses in Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:18-22? I believe that the Biblical principal is that God wants men to work. Those in need of help were given what was left in the fields after the harvest. They could not take what they wanted out of the barn or go ahead of the reapers.

ANSWER: You are correct in your understanding that God's welfare plan for national Israel after they entered the Promised Land was based on the principal that God wants man to work for his sustenance. In Leviticus Israel is instructed that, *"And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God"* (Lev. 19:9-10).

Then in Deuteronomy we find these instructions repeated with some added details given so there would be no misunderstanding of what the Lord God of Israel expected of His covenant people. They were to demonstrate a benevolent attitude towards the foreigners, orphans, widows, and poor in general (see Deut. 24:18-21).

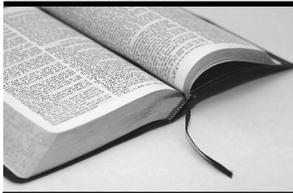
That they were to open their hand *"wide"* to the *"poor and needy"* living in Israel shows that they were to be compassionate and generous toward those in need (Deut. 15:8, 11; see Deut. 15:7-11). And always, in regard to their treatment of those in need, they were to remember that the Lord had delivered them out of slavery in Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land (Deut. 24:22). While we are not under the precepts of the Law today, the principle is still valid. Those who can work but *"would not work, neither should he eat"* (II Thes. 3:10).

QUESTION: Is Sabbath keeping for today?

ANSWER: Sabbath keeping was part of the Mosaic Covenant made exclusively with the Children of Israel through Moses (see Ex. 20:9-11). The purpose of the Law was threefold. First, it identified Israel as God's covenant people. Second, it was to remind Israel that their God was the Sovereign Creator of all things in Heaven and earth. Third, it was to reveal the sin lurking in the hearts and minds of men. Israel was bound by the Law until the time of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, after which a New Covenant was offered to Israel to replace the Old Mosaic Covenant (Jer. 31:31-33). But when the national leaders of Israel obstinately rejected Jesus Christ as the Promised Messiah and killed Stephen (Acts 7:54-60), God set His chosen people aside for a season in their unbelief and raised up the Apostle Paul and commissioned him as *"the Apostle of the Gentiles"* (Rom. 11:13; Acts 8:1; 9:1-6; 26:9-20; Eph. 3:1-9), ushering in the Dispensation of Grace that we are still living in today. The Gospel of the Grace of God that sinners must believe today to be saved from God's wrath is the message that *"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures"* (see I Cor. 15:1-4).

Note well, that it is when *"the preaching of the cross"* is believed that God saves sinners (see I Cor. 1:18, 21; Eph. 1:13-14) and not through *"Sabbath keeping"* or any other aspect of the works of the Law. In fact, as mentioned above, the Law condemns all men and women because it reveals the true attitude of their sinful hearts and minds, thus convicting them as sinners *"Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin"* (Rom. 3:20). Rather, those that, through faith, believe the Gospel are *"justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 3:24; see vs. 21-26).

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No son or daughter of Adam, who are all sinners in God's sight, can boast of any works, including keeping the Sabbath, that they have done that would help them to obtain or persevere in their salvation in any way at all. Mark it well, the salvation that brings eternal life is freely given to those who do not work to achieve justification, but simply believe the Gospel (see Rom. 4:4-5). In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul makes it as clear as possible. *"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).

Jesus Christ alone fulfilled all of the righteous requirements of the Law (see Matt. 3:13-16). Thus, out of all of mankind, He alone lived a life completely pleasing to God the Father (Matt. 3:17; 12:17-18; Isa. 42:1). This fact has left Him as the Only Man who was, is, or ever will be without sin and therefore qualified to save sinners. *"For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"* (II Cor. 5:21). Being a sinner by nature, man cannot make himself righteous by works of any kind. When, during His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees because His disciples transgressed *"the tradition of the elders"* by eating with unwashed hands (Matt. 15:1-2), the Lord turned the table on these self-righteous religious leaders who, in their zeal to keep the letter of the Law, were actually transgressing God's commandments with their rigid interpretation and enforcement of the Law (see Matt. 15:3-9). At the end of His rebuke of the hypocritical Pharisees, the Lord said to the multitudes: *"Hear and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man"* (Matt. 5:10-11). Later He explained to His disciples: *"Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast*

out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man" (Matt. 15:17-20).

Trying to find peace with God through law-keeping of any kind will only bring frustration and despair to the heart and mind of the lost sinner. There is no assurance of salvation to be found in one's self-effort to please God because a person can never know when they have done enough. Nor can anyone be certain that they will not fail to keep it sometime in the future and in the end be lost and suffer God's wrath. But this is not so if we trust in Christ alone as our Savior. *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom. 5:1). *"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. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life"* (Rom. 5:8-10).

If a person chooses to attend church on Saturday, that is alright. If they prefer to attend on Sunday, that is also okay, just as any other day of the week would be. We are not under the Law, but under Grace. In Romans, we read; *"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks"* (Rom. 14:5-6). What God honors, when men and women praise, worship, and serve Him is not the day they do it, but the attitude of their heart.



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QUESTION: What about Easter? Most of Christendom seems to celebrate it. How did it come about and is it a misinterpretation of the "pascha?"

ANSWER: Most people understand Easter to be a reference to a Christian holy day that is observed as a commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is celebrated on the first Sunday following the full moon that falls on or after March 21st (the vernal equinox), or one week later if the full moon falls on Sunday. This means that it can take place no earlier than March 22nd and no later than April 25th.

The word Easter is not found in any Hebrew or Greek manuscripts. As far as I know, it only appears once in any translation, the KJV, where it is used as an "interpretation" rather than a translation of the Greek word "pascha" which simply means "Passover" (see Acts 12:1-4). It seems that as Easter had been used in reference to the Resurrection of Christ for so long (since about A.D. 700), by 1611 the KJV translators thought of it as referring to the day of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus and used it as such rather than simply translating *pascha* as Passover in Acts 12:4.

It is thought by some that the word Easter is derived from the name of a pagan goddess of Babylon called Ishtar, whose name was "Christianized" in order to entice Ishtar's pagan worshippers into the Church of Rome. Others believe the word Easter comes from the name for a Teutonic goddess known as "Eostre" or "Eastre." There is evidence that this Germanic goddess of

light and spring can be traced back through the pagan goddesses Ostera, Astarte, and finally Ishtar, meaning that they are all one and the same goddess known and worshipped at different times in history in the context of different cultures. Regardless, as we said earlier, most professing Christians understand the term Easter to refer to the recognition and celebration of Christ's victorious resurrection just as the KJV translators mistakenly did.

I personally believe that the use, or misuse, of the term Easter has been more of a detriment than a benefit to the proclamation of the Gospel of the Grace of God in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit guided Luke to write *pascha* (Passover) when He inspired Him to write Acts 12:4 and we should leave it to say what it says, and let the context of the passage determine its meaning. I believe that those who want to set a day apart to give special recognition to Jesus Christ and His victory over sin and death when he rose from the dead should forgo the use of the word Easter and the pageantry, religious ritual, and commercialization that has come to surround it and call it what it is, the "Resurrection Day" of the Crucified One.

It seems prudent that every member of the Body of Christ acknowledge the Resurrection of Jesus Christ our Savior every day as we thank God for all of the spiritual blessings we have in Him. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly place in Christ" (Eph. 1:3; see Eph. 1:1-2:7).

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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: 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