

BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

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ISSUE 2

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From the President's Desk,

Some of you will recognize the following paragraphs as they were included in a donor letter I sent out in January to all who financially support BBI. The reason I included them here is that we forever need to be reminded that God is at work even when it is not evident to us at the time.

Recently I was asked by someone if we have any current news on the sale of our building. My first response was none yet, but, the more I thought about it, my answer should have been, not to my knowledge. All of us can look back and see how God has worked in ways we were not aware of at the time. I believe with my whole heart that God is working in the process and plans for our new location. I may not be personally aware of anything new but that does not mean nothing is happening.

I hope you can rejoice in the fact that God is working even when we are not aware of it. We all have issues in our lives that cause us uncertainty, and at times anxiety, but guess what, God has given us a solution in His Word. *"Pray without ceasing"* (I Thess.5:17). *"In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God"* (Phil.4:6). There you have it. It can't be any simpler than that. Pray and trust that God is working in ways that we might not understand.

Now, if you're like me your next question is "other than prayer, what is my part in the process"? First, we must understand that trusting the Lord and praying about the issues we face is

NOT an excuse for laziness or doing nothing. In the book of Joshua God had already promised the land to the nation of Israel. But He did not say to them "now just relax, and I will deliver it to you on a silver platter." He said "go and take it, and I will be with you wherever you go." Today in the Dispensation of Grace we are not promised the "land," but we are called to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). To walk by faith is to trust the Lord and serve Him based on what we know from God's Word. So often we worry about what we don't know and fail to act on what we do know. Faith and service are not mutually exclusive, they work together and God works through both. Let us rejoice, thank, and praise the Lord that this is true (I Thess. 5:16,18).

God is at work,

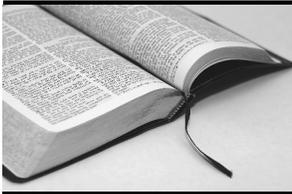
Dr. Robert E. Nix

President, Berean Bible Institute

QUESTION: I have been trying to study the Bible dispensationally, but I just don't get it. Why can't we just take the Bible for what it says instead of trying to divide it?

ANSWER: Actually we must take the Bible for what it says to properly understand it. But make no mistake about it, we must also "rightly divide" it. The Bible itself, which is God's inspired Word, tells us that all of it is for us to learn sound doctrine from, to reprove those in need of spiritual discipline, to correct those in need of it, and to give instruction for Godly living (see II Tim. 3:16-17).

"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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But note well, in the same Bible book of II Timothy, God also tells us that we are to study His Word in order to be approved by Him. And lest we be ashamed of ourselves at the Judgment Seat of Christ, He says we must also rightly divide His Word (see II Tim. 2:15). I don't know about you, but I believe the Bible is true in its entirety and that these passages of Scripture I referenced mean what they say and we are to take them seriously. So, we might ask, just how are we to divide the Word of God? and, what is the purpose of dividing God's Word?

We divide the Word of truth by studying it to determine which parts of it were written to whom so that we can understand it and properly apply its teaching to our lives. For example, long before Israel was a nation, the Creator God called Abraham, who would come to be the nation of Israel's forefather, out of Ur of the Chaldeans and promised him that sometime in the future He would make Abraham's descendants into a great nation that would live in the land of the Canaanites, which He would give them (see Gen. 12:1-7). Here it is important to point out that Stephen's message to the council some two thousand years later was based on this important unconditional prophetic promise that the Lord had made to Abraham (see Acts 7:1-4). Thus God put Himself into a covenantal relationship with Abraham that serves as a guarantee that He will in fact someday fulfill this promise. Yes, Israel did occupy Canaan and become a nation there, but the promise has never actually been fulfilled in its completeness as it will be when Christ returns to the Promised Land at the His Second Coming. *"And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him; 'Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art: northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land that thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and the breadth of it: for I will give it unto thee'"* (Gen. 13:14-17).

Several years later, when Abraham was beginning to doubt God's promise to him, this Covenant promise was reaffirmed to him through a

vision to give him assurance of the Lord's faithfulness (see Gen. 15:1-18). It was at this point that Abraham *"believed in the Lord; and He (the Lord) counted it to him (Abraham) for righteousness"* (Gen. 15:6-7).

Over two decades later, the Lord again appeared to Abraham and at this time He both reaffirmed His original Covenant with Abraham and expanded it. Abram would not be the father of just one nation, but of *"many nations"* (see Gen. 17:1-4). As a day-to-day reminder of what the future held in store for Abram's descendants, the Lord God Almighty changed his name from Abram, which means *"Exalted Father,"* to Abraham, which means *"Father of a Multitude"* (Gen. 17:5-6). Note well that this Covenant of Promise was an everlasting covenant that would pass down from generation to generation forever (Gen. 17:7-8). In addition, the Lord gave Abraham a physical sign to serve as a seal of the Covenant He made, the ritual of circumcision. Abraham and all his seed, his male descendants, were to be circumcised. Those who refused to be circumcised were to be cut off from Abraham's family line (Gen. 17:9-14). This is the first place that we find the ritual of circumcision in the Bible and it is obviously very important to God as anyone who was not circumcised was guilty of breaking God's covenant and was to be cut off from the covenant people. Some four hundred years later the Lord God of Israel incorporated circumcision into the Law, telling Moses that if a woman bears a male child *"in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised"* (Lev. 12:3; cf. Gen. 17:9-14). It is also important to take notice of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was circumcised according to the precepts of the Law (see Lk. 2:21).

So, we must ask ourselves; *"if circumcision is so important, why did the Apostle Paul argue so strongly against the preaching and practice of circumcision in relation to the Gospel he preached?"* What we have seen so far from the Bible is that the ritual of circumcision was given to the Israelite people to identify them as the people of God who will inherit the blessings of the Covenants of Promise God made with Abraham. Further research reveals that these blessings are to be handed down



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from generation to generation of Abraham's family line through his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, whose twelve sons became the forefathers of the twelve tribes of Israel (Ex. 1:1-5). Note that the Lord changed Jacob's name to Israel before he and his sons went to Egypt (Gen. 32:24-28). Fast forwarding Israel's history as God's Chosen People to the first century A.D., we find circumcision at the forefront of controversy among those who had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. One important event of that time was when the Apostles, along with the brethren in Judea, confronted Peter, not because he shared the Gospel with the Gentiles he had met with, but because he *"went in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them"* (see Acts 11:1-3).

Putting this confrontation in context, we must keep in mind that it took place over a year after the events on the Day of Pentecost that are recorded in Acts 2. Now, let's ask ourselves: Did Peter and the other eleven Apostles preach the Gospel of the Grace of God on the Day of Pentecost. If they did, then why was there a contention between Peter and the other Apostles over him eating with uncircumcised Gentiles? Do not the Scriptures say that *"there is neither Jew nor Gentile"* (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11) in the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:12-13)? Should not they have already renounced continuing the practice of circumcision before Pentecost?

I am not going to answer these questions here, but rather I am going to leave it for the truly interested reader to ponder over. If you sincerely want to "get it" when you read and study your Bible, you must "rightly divide it."

QUESTION: What do you believe the sin unto death is?

ANSWER: In answering this often asked question, I want to assure you that there is no sin that a person living in the present Dispensation of Grace can commit that God cannot or will not forgive. No matter how horrible or repulsive something might seem to us, God will forgive it as His desire is that every sinner be saved (I Tim. 2:3-6; 4:10; II Pet. 3:9; etc.). The only requirement for a sinner to be forgiven of all their

sins, past, present, and future, is to personally put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to save them, believing that He *"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"* (I Cor. 15:3-4; cf. Eph. 1:7, 12-14; 2:8-9). Some believe that the *"sin unto death"* (I John 5:16) spoken of by the Apostle John refers to a person dying in their sins, never having put their faith in Jesus Christ for forgiveness. It is certainly true that anyone who dies without ever having believed in the Lord Jesus for forgiveness is at that moment lost forever, never to have another opportunity to receive Christ as Savior. But, I do not think that is what the *"sin unto death"* is.

There is a sin that those who commit it *"shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come"* (see Matt. 12:31-32; also Mk. 3:28-29). I believe that this unforgiveable sin, which is popularly known as the "unpardonable sin," is one and the same as the *"sin unto death."* That John told his readers not to pray for those who commit this particular sin (I John 5:14-17) tells us that this is an important subject. Fear and hopelessness often overwhelm those who think that they have committed such a sin and are doomed to the everlasting torments of Hell, which is also called the *"Lake of Fire"* (Rev. 20:11-15; Lk. 12:5). Many precious souls are ensnared by the false belief that they cannot be saved because they have committed the sin unto death by blaspheming the Holy Spirit and that the Lord will never forgive them, but has condemned them to Hell (Lk. 12:10). During my years of ministry, I have encountered more than a few individuals who agonized over the thought that they were condemned with no hope of redemption. Often, with tears in their eyes, I have heard the words; *"It is too late for me, I have sinned the unforgiveable sin and I cannot be saved, I am lost forever"* when I shared the Gospel of the Grace of God with them. Those who believe this are difficult to minister to because the source of their belief is found in the Bible, which clearly says that there is an unforgiveable sin. Their problem is that they are misapplying those Scripture passages due to their failure to rightly divide the Scriptures as we are told



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to do (II Tim. 2:15). When we don't rightly divide, we end up mixing Law and Grace, Prophecy and Mystery, and the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Grace all together. This can only end up in confusion and disorder. In this case, it results in a serious misunderstanding and misapplication of the terms of the Gospel of the Kingdom to those living in the Dispensation of Grace. While the gift of salvation is by grace through faith under the present Dispensation, during the seven years of Tribulation that precedes the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, faith will not stand alone. A terrible persecution of believers will take place during the Tribulation when a man called "*the Beast*" will rise up in an effort to rule the world. Those who worship him will have an identifying mark placed on their right hand or forehead. Those who refuse to take his mark and worship him will be killed (Rev. 13:15-16). There is no forgiveness for those who choose to take the mark of the Beast (anti-Christ) rather than die for their faith in Christ. They will suffer the torments of fire and brimstone forever and ever (Rev. 14:9-11). This is the unforgivable sin, and no one can be guilty of it until the middle of the Tribulation and "*the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitting in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*" (II Thess. 2:3-4). When this wicked man, this false Christ, sits in the rebuilt Temple and declares himself to be God incarnate, a second Beast, his equally evil partner in iniquity, the false-prophet (Rev. 19:20), will begin having those who refuse to take the mark of the Beast and worship him put to death (see Rev. 13:11-12, 15-16). To worship the Beast who is the anti-Christ in place of the Christ is a particularly loathsome sin to the Lord. In the days of the Judges, Israel rejected the

Lord as their King and demanded a king like all the other nations (I Sam. 8:1-9ff), and He was merciful to them. Later they rejected His only Begotten Son and demanded that a vile man, Barabbas, who was a seditionist, a robber and a murderer, be given them (Matt. 27:16-26; Mk. 15:7-15; Lk. 23:18; Joh. 18:38-40), while declaring that they had "*no king but Caesar*" (John 19:14-15). Again He extended mercy to them by offering the Kingdom (Acts 2:14-40; 3:12-26; 4:1-12ff). But, when Jesus Christ returns in power and glory as King of kings and Lord of lords, those who have taken the mark will not find mercy, but will face the righteous judgment of the Lord. To "*blaspheme against the Holy Spirit*" (Matt. 12:31-32) is to deny the testimony of the Holy Spirit who will authenticate the message of the Lord's Last Days prophets with signs, wonders, various miracles, and gifts (Acts 2: 1-21; Joel 2:28-32; 3:1-9; Heb. 2:1-4). When Stephen, in his stinging rebuke of the Council (see Acts 6:9-7:50), charged them with resisting the Holy Spirit just as their forefathers did, he was in fact charging them with the national crime of the betrayal and murder of the Messiah (see Acts 7:51-53). Rather than repent, they stoned Stephen, who was filled with the Holy Spirit, thus blaspheming Him (Acts 7:54-60). The spiritually blind leaders of Israel were leading the nation into perdition. But, praise the Lord, rather than unleashing His wrath against Israel and the world with the Tribulation, the Lord interrupted the flow of prophecy and ushered in the Dispensation of Grace with the saving of His archenemy Saul of Tarsus, who is better known as Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles (Acts 8:1-4; 9:1-20; Rom. 11:13). When the Dispensation of Grace ends, the Tribulation will begin and the Last Days prophecies will be fulfilled.

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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

President & Executive Editor: Robert E. Nix, Ph.D.
Managing Editor: W. Edward Bedore, Th.D.
Associate Editor: Matthew Ritchey, M. BS.
Layout: Jessica Sadler