

# BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

*And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God*

BEREAN BIBLE INSTITUTE, INC.

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ISSUE 3

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### *From the President's Desk,*

Please join us in praising the Lord for the work He is doing through the ministry of *Berean Bible Institute*. It seems like each week we are gaining new students not only from the United States but from places around the globe. It is such an encouragement to see men and women who desire to grow in the Lord and be better equipped to serve the Savior. Please continue to pray for the faculty and staff as we navigate these times of blessing.

Because of our increase in students, I am traveling more and presenting the mission and ministry of the *Berean Bible Institute*. While we are blessed with new students desiring to take courses to prepare for ministry, it takes more and more resources to accomplish the task at hand. It is truly a joy to share what God is doing through BBI as I visit churches and conferences. Every place I am given the opportunity to share the mission of *Berean Bible Institute*, I meet believers who see the need for a school that is committed to training pastors, missionaries, and Christian leaders who will proclaim the Gospel of God's Grace. It is such a blessing to me when people tell me that they will pray for BBI, partner with us financially, and help promote BBI however they can. While our mission is clear: to train pastors, missionaries, and Christian leaders for the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the proclamation of the gospel of the grace of God given to and through the Apostle Paul, it takes a team to accomplish our mission.

As many of you know we have been searching for an Administrative Specialist to work in the areas of academics and institutional advancement. For over a year we have been searching for someone who would join our staff and lend support in these areas. I am happy to announce that as of April 14th,

we have hired Ms. Kayla Traxler to fill this role. Kayla has a love for the Lord and a desire to see people reached with the gospel. Kayla comes to us with a degree in Graphic Communications and a desire to see the ministry of *Berean Bible Institute* grow by training even more pastors, missionaries, and Christian leaders who will take the Gospel of God's Grace to the world.

As I close, I want to thank our partners for their prayer and support. You are such a blessing to us. Your partnership with BBI is so encouraging and because of your faithfulness and generosity, BBI moves forward fulfilling our mission for the glory of God.

Because He Lives,

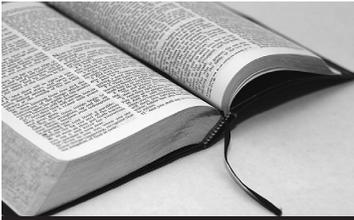
Dr. Robert E. Nix

**QUESTION:** If Paul was the unique apostle of Grace, why did Peter declare "But we (Israelites) believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they (Gentiles)"?

**ANSWER:** The setting of Peter's statement is a counsel of the Kingdom leaders meeting with Paul regarding the issue of circumcision (Acts 15:2). Before this counsel took place a lot had occurred, including Peter witnessing the conversion of Cornelius the Gentile (Acts 10) and Paul completing his first missionary journey (Acts 14:26). It was at this counsel at Jerusalem that Peter announced, "through the grace of God we [Israelites] shall be saved even as they [Gentiles]" (Acts 15:11). By the time he made this declaration, Peter had come to a greater understanding of God's plan for redemption since the time he was first chosen by Jesus while he was fishing (Matt. 4:18-22).

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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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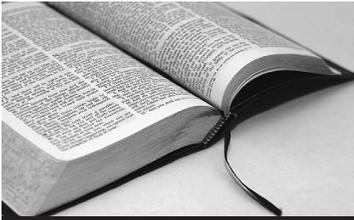
Sometimes those of us who understand Paul's unique ministry within the sacred Scriptures are so conditioned to notice the contrasts between Prophecy and Mystery, Law and Grace, that we overlook the similarities between the programs. God's grace, redemption in Christ, and God's desire to save the world are three similarities that are shared between the dispensations, even the way God's grace was displayed, how the redemption was applied, and how the world was reached is different between dispensations. Let's look at how these three similarities (grace, redemption, and God's desire) fit with Peter's statement.

First, without God's grace, salvation would never have been possible, for no one was ever deserving of God's eternal acceptance. While mercy is often emphasized in the Old Testament, grace has a providential presence. Grace was there when God made animal skins to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness (Gen. 3:21) and when He promised to send One to redeem the world (Gen. 3:15). It was present in the days of Noah, who found "*grace in the eyes of the Lord*" (Gen. 6:8). Moses pleaded for the grace of the Lord (Exod. 34:9). The psalmist praised the Lord who "*will give grace and glory*" (Psa. 84:11), and Solomon wrote, "*He giveth grace unto the lowly*" (Prov. 3:34). The Lord referred to people who "*found grace in the wilderness*" (Jer. 31:2). In the future, the Lord promises to "*pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace*" (Zech. 12:10). Of John the Baptist it is said, "*the grace of God was upon him*" (Lk. 2:40), and of Jesus' earthly ministry it written that the Law was given by Moses, but "*grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*" (Jn. 1:17). The Apostles after Jesus' ascension were said to give witness to the resurrection of Christ because "*great grace was upon them all*" (Acts 4:33). God's grace is not exclusive to this current Age of Grace; it is an eternal attribute of God. While God is displaying His grace fully and unfiltered in today's dispensation, Peter was correct in his assessment that the Kingdom believers were ultimately saved by virtue of God's grace.

Next, salvation has always been part of God's plan. I am going to particularly focus on the redemptive aspect of salvation since I believe that is what Peter ultimately had in mind. It is true that Peter and the

Apostles were preaching the Kingdom promised and prophesied, but we must also remember that there was a big addition to the Kingdom gospel now that the redemptive work of Jesus Christ was accomplished. Now the apostles understood salvation more fully and could witness that eternal life in the Kingdom came through faithfulness to Jesus Christ (I Pet. 1:3; I Jn. 1:7). As Grace believers, we are often quick to quote Acts 2:38 ("*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*"), but that was the necessary response to Peter's words a few verses earlier: "*God hath made that same Jesus...both Lord and Christ.*" In Acts 3, the command was to repent (vs. 19) and turn to God's Son Jesus (vs. 26). So, yes, the Apostles were preaching the Kingdom, but they were focusing on the provision of Jesus Christ and His identity as Israel's Messiah in order to enter into that Kingdom. There was more information revealed to them now that Christ had ascended than there was when they were initially called to follow Jesus (Matt. 10). Jesus Christ was their salvation; they would enter into the Kingdom through Jesus Christ. While I am no way dismissing the importance of the part of Peter's message that offered the Kingdom, we must also remember that the Apostles were preaching Jesus Christ. He is the ONLY Redeemer who has ever been and will ever be. How and when that redemption is fully applied to the Kingdom believer versus the Grace believer has some differences, but it is the same Redeemer and same death, burial, and resurrection. This allowed Peter to agree on the similarities of salvation (redemption) between Paul's ministry and his own.

Finally, God has always desired to reach the world. When Christ died on the cross it was FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD, not just people of a certain nation (Jn. 3:16; II Cor. 5:15; Heb. 2:9; I Jn. 2:2). I am emphasizing this because when Peter made that statement in Acts 15:11 he had already personally witnessed that this was true with Cornelius. Then, after hearing his account, "*they that were of the circumcision*" (Acts 11:2) had acknowledged this in Jerusalem saying, "*Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life*" (Acts 11:18). The heart of what Paul was bringing in regards to the Mystery revealed to him correlated with what Peter and the Apostles



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had already witnessed: that Christ is the Redeemer of everyone and God offers eternal life to Jew and Gentile. Even though the how's, when's, and why's are different under the Kingdom program ("*salvation is of the Jew*" John 4:22) and the Grace program ("*for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek...who-soever shall call...*" Romans 10:12-13), both are based on the redemption that is found only in Jesus Christ. This enabled Peter, who ministered under a different program than Paul, to at least agree that God so loved the world (Jn. 3:16), even while the offer was focused on different audiences.

Peter's statement in no way does away with the fact that he was given the Gospel of the Circumcision while Paul was given the Gospel of the Uncircumcision (Gal. 2:7). It does show that Peter recognized that he and Paul were serving the same God, the same Christ, and the same redemption. The Twelve Apostles preached Jesus Christ according to the prophesied Kingdom both before and after they met with Paul and heard about his "new faith." The Kingdom apostles did not switch messages to line up with Paul's new revelation; they recognized that God had chosen Paul to fulfill a ministry that was hard to understand and was previously unknown. They extended to him the right hand of fellowship, recognizing it was of God that Paul was preaching Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery. They acknowledged that Paul had been called to take the gospel of Grace to the Gentiles, while the Twelve continued to minister the Kingdom to the circumcision.

**QUESTION: Was the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar a believer? If so, does this mean he will be in the Kingdom promised to Israel?**

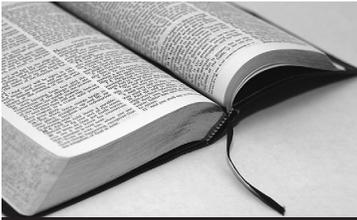
**ANSWER:** Nebuchadnezzar certainly believed in God many times during his reign. In his second year as king (Dan. 2:1), after Daniel had credited God with giving him the ability to interpret the king's dream when Nebuchadnezzar's own counsel could not decipher the dream's meaning, King Nebuchadnezzar "*fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer oblation and sweet odours unto him*" (Dan. 2:46). While we see some glaring problems with these actions, especially his worship being misplaced, the next verse (v. 47) goes on to record Nebuchadnezzar saying, "*Of a truth, that your God is a God of gods,*

*and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets.*" The king certainly seemed to acknowledge the superior power and knowledge of God.

Yet, in the next chapter, the king is making an idol that everyone is required to bow down and worship. You probably know the story. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to follow the decree to bow to the image and were thrown into a fiery furnace, but the Lord preserved their lives so they walked out of the furnace unharmed. As King Nebuchadnezzar called the three Jewish men out of the fire, he refers to them as "*servants of the most high God*" (Dan. 3:26). "*Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort*" (Dan. 3:28-29). The king went from being extremely angry with these men to being humbled that these men's God preserved them in the punishment inflicted upon them. We love a good conversion story, but is this a true conviction or just being impressed by the God of these men?

In the very next chapter, Nebuchadnezzar believes again. Chapter 4 is a report from the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar. He begins with a glowing report of God (vv. 2-3). Yet, when he begins to tell his story, we learn that he called Daniel Belteshazzar "*according to the name of my god*" and refers to "*the holy gods*" (v. 8). He also calls for his counselors to interpret his dream before he calls for Daniel. What happened to his admiration of God from chapter 2 to chapter 3, and then from chapter 3 to the accounts in chapter 4? It would seem that, thus far, King Nebuchadnezzar had only adopted the one true God as another powerful God, perhaps even the most powerful.

The account in chapter 4 continues with Nebuchadnezzar being humbled by being driven into the wilderness to live like a wild beast. After "*seven times pass over him*" (vv. 16,23), King Nebuchadnezzar



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returns to his senses and is given back his Kingdom after he lifted his eyes up to heaven and *“blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou?”* (vv. 34-35). This chapter ends with what seems to be a change of heart by King Nebuchadnezzar. He admits, *“Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”*

King Nebuchadnezzar certainly seems to have learned several lessons about God throughout his reign. Yet, was his belief in God to the salvation of his soul? Remembering that a belief in God is not enough (even the demons believe in God and tremble before Him; James 2:19) but under the Kingdom program a Gentile would have to convert to Israel’s law, there is not enough information to form a solid opinion on Nebuchadnezzar. The only information we have casts some serious doubt that the king had anything more than a humbling before the Sovereign. During his son Belshazzar’s reign, nothing is said of Nebuchadnezzar’s faith in God, only that he *“knew that the most high God ruled in the Kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will”* (Dan. 5:21b). It would be best for us to leave the matters of the heart to the Lord and not try to fill in the blanks, especially when there is no proof that King Nebuchadnezzar ever fully converted to the Lord.

## COMMON SAYINGS FROM THE BIBLE

### *“Knees Knocking”*

When someone is scared or nervous, we emphasize the strong emotional reaction to the stimuli by saying their knees are knocking. They were so afraid

or nervous that their knees were shaking so hard they were banging together.

In Daniel’s day, Chaldean King Belshazzar was holding a huge drunken party. His biggest mistake was using the vessels stolen from the Temple to drink wine. His jubilant attitude changed suddenly when he saw a hand writing a message on the wall of the room. How would you feel if you noticed a hand writing on the wall of your kitchen during dinner one evening? Your knees would probably be doing some knocking, right?

Daniel 5:6 tells us, *“Then the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.”* As far as we know, Belshazzar was the first one to have his fear be described as his knees knocking.

Belshazzar was right to be scared. The message written on the wall declared the king’s punishment for exalting himself above the Lord. He died that very evening.

### *“Go the Extra Mile”*

If you are an employee who goes above and beyond what is required, you may have been told that you “go the extra mile.” This is a phrase we still use to praise someone for selflessly giving more than expected.

This phrase, and the teaching behind it, has its origins in the Scriptures. In Matthew 5:41, Jesus teaches, *“And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”* He was telling His followers to not be satisfied with only what is required of them, but to go above and beyond. This, of course, is a matter of proper motivation and a heart set on pleasing the Lord.

We should always be willing to “go the extra mile” to serve the one and only Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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