

Bible Answers to Bible Questions

& Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

BEREAN BIBLE INSTITUTE, INC.

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Issue 8

From the President's Desk,

It's hard to believe that December is upon us and the end of the year is just around the corner. For the faculty and staff at BBI this means Fall Term courses coming to an end, hosting our annual volunteer appreciation dinner, holding our staff Christmas party, and preparing for our Spring Term to begin in January. In other words, we are "full steam ahead."

With the thought of the busyness surrounding all of us this time of year, I am reminded of an event that took place over two thousand years ago in a town called Bethlehem. You might remember that a certain decree by Caesar Augustus caused citizens to travel back to their birthplace to be registered and taxed. Yet, amid the chaos and busyness of that time, God was doing something very special. He was offering to the world the greatest gift of all in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It would be a shame to get so caught up in the chaos and busyness around us and miss the fact that God is still working in and through those who "love Him and are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Many of you know that on May 15-25, 2023, BBI will be leading a trip to Israel. It is such a blessing to hear from those who have signed up for the trip telling us how much they are looking forward to this wonderful opportunity. If you are thinking about going on this trip, there is still room and time to sign up. The deadline to reserve your spot is January 24th, with the final payment due on March 3rd. I am encouraged to let you know that all COVID restrictions have been dropped for those traveling to Israel. If you are considering traveling with us, I want to encourage you to call us at BBI or visit us at bereanbibleinstitute.org where you will find video presentations from Pastor Kern and myself on different aspects of the trip. You

will also find links to Pilgrim Tours with the complete information on the trip.

Please continue to remember BBI in your prayers. We are again looking for a full-time Administrative Specialist at *Berean Bible Institute*. Recently, Kayla Traxler, whom we hired just over six months ago, has decided to move back to her hometown of Baraboo, Wisconsin. Kayla will still be doing some project work for us, but we need to find another staff member who can help us on a daily basis.

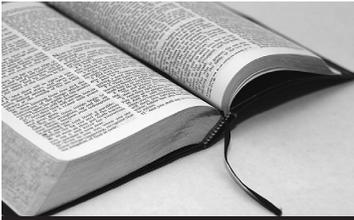
Finally, I would also like to ask you to pray for BBI in the area of financial support and consider giving a year-end gift to help us move our mission to train pastors, missionaries, and Christian Leaders forward. *Berean Bible Institute* is a faith ministry and exists through the gifts and support of those who believe in our mission. While we charge tuition, we keep our tuition extremely low so that those training for ministry don't find themselves in educational debt as they seek to serve the Lord.

Thank you so much to those who faithfully pray and support BBI; we could not do it without your partnership in this worthy cause.

Serving together,

Dr. Robert E. Nix, President

QUESTION: I have heard Romans 2:28-29 used to state the Body of Christ is spiritual Israel. And, of course, this opens the door to spiritualize all the promises for Israel in the Old Testament and the Gospels. Can you please help me with this?



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ANSWER: First, we must establish who is being directly addressed in Romans 2:28-29. When we back up a few verses (vs. 17), we read, *“Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God.”* The statement in Romans 2:28-29 was specifically for the one who was physically born a child of Abraham and, yet, had rejected the righteousness of God proclaimed through Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 10:2-4). It was not enough for a person to simply be born a descendant of Abraham for, even as Jesus told Nicodemus, *“ye must be born again.”* The physical Israelite had to undergo a spiritual change to be prepared for the kingdom to come (John 3:3-7). If this truth means Israel is replaced by the Body of Christ, then it started back in Jesus’ day. Jesus declared, *“And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham”* (Matt. 3:9). Jesus is stating that it was not enough just to have Abraham in their physical lineage. The next verse tells them that they needed to bring forth fruit or be cut down and cast into the fire. John 8:31-41 is important to this topic as well. In a nutshell, Jesus tells them that if they were truly Abraham’s seed, they would keep His word and do the works of the Father. Since these Jews were not keeping His word and doing the works of God, their father was the Devil. This is not replacement. Like Paul says in Romans 2:28-29, it is a call to the need for a deeper, spiritual change to take place through Christ.

God did **not** replace Israel when he told Hosea to label them *“Not My People”* (Hos. 1:9), for He tells them that one day they would be *“My people”* once again (Hos. 2:23). If God does not keep this specific promise to the nation of Israel, He is a liar. All the covenants were made WITH ISRAEL. The Abrahamic Covenant declared that he would give to Abraham and HIS SEED (a.k.a. Israel) the land for an EVERLASTING POSSESSION (Gen. 17:8). If God decides to give the land to someone else, He can not keep His word. The Mosaic covenant was given when God told Moses, *“Thus shalt thou say to the HOUSE OF JACOB and tell the CHILDREN OF ISRAEL”* (Ex. 19:3). The Palestinian covenant was made WITH THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL when Moses *“called unto ALL ISRAEL”* (Deut. 29:1-2). The Davidic Covenant

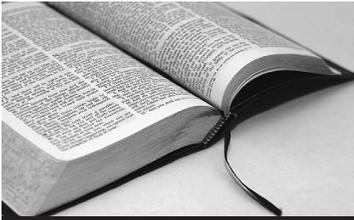
includes a place for *“my people ISRAEL”* (II Sam. 7:10). The New Covenant was made *“with the HOUSE OF ISRAEL and with the HOUSE OF JUDAH”* (Heb. 8:8). How could God be a God of His word and not keep His contracts with Israel? He cannot.

Replacement theology (God has replaced physical Israel with a mystical Israel made up of many physical nations) is one of many attempts to explain why the kingdom has not arrived like Jesus said it was going to in the Gospels (Mt. 4:23). We know the answer is not replacement, but interruption. God interrupted His program with Israel to give all nations a chance for salvation under the current Dispensation of Grace, hidden in the mind of God until revealed to and through the Apostle Paul.

It is the Apostle Paul who gives the most concise answer to replacement theology when he asked and answered: *“I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew”* (Rom. 11:1-2). So, has God cast Israel eternally aside and replaced them with someone else? Absolutely not! Paul explains what has happened is that God has turned to the Gentiles for a time, but Israel **will** receive the promises and salvation promised. *“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob”* (Rom. 11:25-26).

In conclusion, Romans 2:28-29 is talking about the need for the physical descendants of Abraham to have a spiritual birth. This was true in the Kingdom program and it remains true under Grace. To use these verses, or any other verse, to show that Israel has been replaced by someone else for eternity is wrong. And, it makes God a liar. I am so thankful I can trust in a righteous, faithful God who also extended His Grace toward me.

QUESTION: Jesus gave His twelve disciples power against unclean spirits and to heal all kinds of sickness in Matthew 10:1. I have heard some Christian preachers say believers today have this



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same power. Can believers today pray for the sick and expect they will be healed? Please explain.

ANSWER: Too often, people find the Scriptures that they like and apply them without taking the time to consider the context in which the verse applies. In Matthew 10:1, Jesus is giving certain abilities to a specific group of people in order to aid them in their ministry. The verse tells us directly to whom these gifts were given: the twelve disciples. These abilities were not even given to all Jesus' followers, but only to the Twelve. And, we are not left guessing the identity of which twelve disciples because the following verses (vv. 2-4) list the men by name who received the authority to cast out unclean spirits and power to heal all manner of sickness and disease.

Further, there are other instructions that go along with these abilities/gifts that, in order to be consistent, need to be applied and obeyed. These twelve were to only go to Israel. They were specifically told NOT to go to Samaritans or Gentiles (vv. 5-6). The gospel they were to share was that the Kingdom is almost here (vs. 7). They were not to raise financial support or take any money with them, or even a change of clothes (vv. 9-10). They were not to prepare their sermons ahead of time because the Holy Spirit would take over to give them the words to say (vv. 19-20).

While there are lessons in Matthew 10 that we can learn as we serve the Lord (i.e., be willing and prepared to face persecution for the Lord, vs. 17-19 cf. II Tim. 3:12-13), there is nothing we can directly apply from Matthew 10 (e.g., they WOULD be brought before councils, synagogues, and Gentile courts) for the Twelve Disciples ministered under an entirely different program than we do today. Today, if we are practicing any of the directions given to the Twelve in Jesus' early ministry, we are out of the will of God.

We currently minister under the Dispensation of the Grace of God, and God revealed this truth to one apostle: Paul (Eph. 3:2-5). We are not just permitted to go to Gentiles and Samaritans, but are told to go to all nations (Acts 13:46), for there is no distinction between Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles today (Rom. 10:12; Gal. 3:28). The Gospel is not that the Kingdom is coming, but that Christ died for your sins, was buried and

rose again (I Cor. 15:3-4), the Gospel of the Grace of God (Acts 20:24). We are told to study the Scriptures in order to be prepared and equipped (II Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17), and we are not told to depend on the Holy Spirit to give us special revealed knowledge. We are instructed to provide for our own family; otherwise, we are worse than the heathen (I Cor. 9:11; I Tim. 5:8). Different dispensation, different instructions to follow.

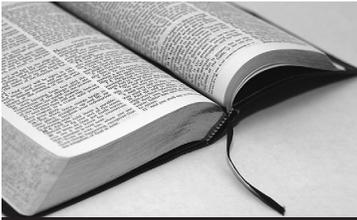
No one has the power to cure all manners of disease or cast out demons. We have no promise in this current dispensation that those who pray WILL ABSOLUTELY be healed from their sickness and disease. This lack of assured healing is not due to a lack of faith of the one praying, but it is due to the fact that today God's grace is sufficient for us (II Cor. 12:9). We are to take the proper treatments to treat curable physical ailments (I Tim. 5:23). Regarding demons, our instruction is our preparation: the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 3:16), the deliverance of the Gospel (Acts 26:18), and utilizing the armor of God (Eph. 6:11).

We cannot take the instructions of Matthew 10 and expect them to work today. God is working according to the spiritual provision under Grace today. Can God choose to heal someone of their physical infirmities? Yes, He reserves that right. Do you or I have the power any more to heal someone of sickness? No, we do not; these were signs of the coming, prophesied Kingdom, which has been placed on hold for the duration of the Age of Grace. Our instruction is not to expect physical comfort and health, but to be content in the Lord (Phil. 4:11; I Tim. 6:8). Contentment comes when we truly understand the magnitude with which God has graced us as members of the Body of Christ.

QUESTION: Who is the friend of the Bride Groom?

ANSWER: The Scriptures use this title once in John 3:29: *"The friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice."*

The "friend of the bridegroom" in Jesus' day would be somewhat similar to the best man to the



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groom today. However, while today the best man is oftentimes just an honorary position, the friend of the bridegroom had very important duties to perform regarding the wedding during Jesus' day. He needed to be trustworthy and responsible, as he was responsible for making the wedding happen and organizing all the details of the ceremony. He had the honor of arranging the details of the engagement and acted as mediator between the groom and bride (i.e., "before they came together" in Mt. 1:18). This friend would invite the guests and make the proper arrangements. The friend of the groom is said to have hosted the marriage event and provided the reception. Oftentimes, he would even plan the honeymoon and arrange the couple's first home together.

John the Baptist is referring to himself in John 3:29 as the "friend of the bridegroom," the groom was Jesus Christ. John saw his role as preparing the way for the Christ (Mark 1:2-3; Luke 1:76), announcing Him to the bride, the nation of Israel, and preparing her for the wedding (Isa. 62:4-5; Jer. 31:32; Hos. 2:19-20; Rev. 19:7-10). John was the friend of the Bridegroom. The groom was Christ, and the bride was Israel. In contrast, we, in the current Age of Grace, are not the Bride of Christ but the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:5; Eph. 1:22-23).

In the John 3 passage, John deflects attention and importance off of himself and on to Christ (vs. 28). The bride did not belong to the friend but to the groom, just as Israel was not John's but Christ's (vs. 29). As the wedding day drew near, the friend's importance would decrease, while the focus and importance of the groom would increase. This was also true of the ministry of John: the significance of John's ministry would decrease as the ministry of Christ came to the forefront (vs. 30). John was not the central character in Jesus' story, the Groom Jesus was (and is), for He had the connection to the Father (vs. 35).

John properly recognized his place in the grand plan of God (Mt. 3:11). His place was not to call people to himself, but to announce the coming of the Christ. The joy of the friend of the groom was to serve the groom; this was true of John. He had heard the voice of the Christ and had his joy realized (vs. 29).

While we are not the friend of the bridegroom or the bride today, we still have an important job of representing our Lord well (II Cor. 5:20), telling others His message of salvation (I Cor. 9:22-23), and giving all the attention to the One deserving (II Cor. 10:17).

In answering the question, John was the friend of the Groom Jesus Christ. As historically the groom's friend performed his duties out of humble love for the groom, John the Baptist, at the time of his death, fully completed his duties as he arranged the coming of Jesus Christ. As John said these words in the Gospel of John, it was about time for the Groom to take over the duties. John was soon beheaded by Herod (Mt. 14:3-12), knowing he performed his responsibility as the friend of the groom well and having joy at hearing the Groom's voice and witnessing His Divine verification (Mt. 3:13-17).

INTERESTING BIBLE FACTS

(Short and Random)

- The Bible is over 600,000 words long. It is said to be around 611,000 words in the original language; 787, 137 in the King James Bible.
- The Bible has 1,189 chapters – 929 in the Old Testament and 260 in the New Testament.
- The longest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119 (176 verses).
- The shortest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 117 (2 verses).

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