

Bible Answers to Bible Questions

& Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

BEREAN BIBLE INSTITUTE, INC.

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Issue 2

From the President's Desk

Making an Eternal Investment

By "Making an Eternal Investment," I am suggesting that you consider investing in a ministry that is making a global impact for the glory of God. Currently, 79% of our student body is either serving in a ministry or actively training for a ministry where they believe God has led them. The following example is meant to demonstrate how important it is to have individuals partner with *Berean Bible Institute* to provide solid biblical and ministry training for godly leaders who desire to serve the Lord in the United States and on the foreign field.

The importance of your eternal investment in BBI is illustrated in one of our current classes. Since the third week of January, I have been teaching a sixteen-week long course entitled "204: An Exposition of Paul's Epistles." In this course, I have a young man who is studying to be a missionary, a young man beginning his first pastorate, a couple who have a creation apologetics ministry, and three missionaries currently serving in South America. These men and women are committed to the gospel of God's grace and are taking courses at BBI to prepare them for their current ministries and wherever the Lord may lead in the future.

Your investment in BBI allows this type of training to occur in each course we offer. Our students only pay a fraction of what it costs to provide the necessary courses and to operate an institute with the faculty and staff who faithfully carry out our mission 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.

Some of you are already partnering with us and are making an eternal investment on a regular basis, and if that describes you, we praise the Lord that you are standing with us. If you are currently not supporting BBI and believe in our mission, I would like to ask that you prayerfully consider partnering with us to see that leaders are continuing to be trained to spread the Gospel of Grace throughout the world.

The State of the Institute

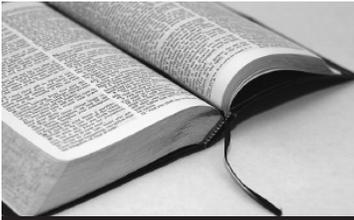
Because we believe it is essential that you are aware of how God is working at BBI, beginning early next month and again in the fall we will send out a special letter entitled "The State of the Institute." This letter will share what God is doing at BBI and how you can pray for us as we press on with the ministry God has given us. We hope that through this correspondence you will stand with us by faithfully praying for us and partnering with us to continue to provide ministry training for the glory of God.

Thank you so much for your prayer and your financial support. Your partnership with BBI is making a difference all over the world.

Because He Lives,

Dr. Robert E. Nix, President

"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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& Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

QUESTION: Aren't the holidays we celebrate today man-made? God's ordained feasts are listed in Leviticus 23. As a child of God, the closer I get to Him the more it seems much of church practices are only the traditions of man. Should we be celebrating such holidays?

ANSWER: Thank you for your question on a subject that is discussed among many Christians. I see two parts to your question. First, are our current "religious" holidays ordained by God in His Word? Second, should believers be taking part in holidays?

Leviticus 23, which you referred to in your question, lists the God-ordained feast days (holy days or holidays) that Israel was required to observe. The feasts under the Law were not suggestions; they were demands. We are not under the Law, so we do not celebrate these Jewish feasts today (Rom. 6:14b; Gal. 4:9-11; Col. 2:16-17). Today, anyone attempting to follow these feasts in some way, or to allegorize God's original intent, is in error.

It is troubling when Christians lift our current holidays up to the level of the feasts of Israel. Our holidays are not ordained by God and are not required for us to observe. If someone does not celebrate Christmas on the 25th, or at all, they are not against the will of God like Israel would have been if they had not observed the Day of Passover. Our holidays were the creation of man, therefore, manmade. Celebrating a certain holiday (or not) gives you no reason to boast.

There are certainly many pagan celebrations associated with many of our holidays (fertility of Easter, leprechauns, elves, and evil spirits). Equally, there are many religious aspects of the holidays that we do not condone (sainthood of St. Patrick's day; All Hallow's Eve). The motivations behind the origin of some of the holidays are questionable, and yet, there are many opportunities to highlight and proclaim certain truths of God during the holidays (resurrection and life during Easter, the birth of the Savior at Christmas, the reminder to give thanks at Thanksgiving, the importance of mothers and fathers on Mother's Day and Father's Day, respectively, the greatest of these is charity on Valentine's Day).

My church has decided every year on Easter to celebrate Resurrection Day, which means we

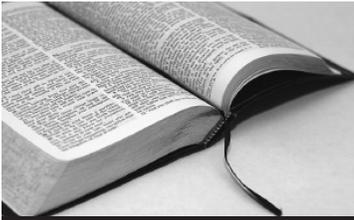
celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Do we have a scriptural passage that states we have to do this every year on an appointed day? No, we do not. Is it a bad thing for us to decide to have a day when we are certain to praise the resurrection of Jesus Christ? I don't see how this would be a bad thing, unless we are placing unscriptural demands upon people. In case you are wondering: Yes, we certainly do celebrate the resurrection outside of that certain day, much like we talk about the incarnation of Christ on days other than Christmas.

Many churches collectively made the decision long ago to use Christmas to testify to the fulfilled coming of the Savior on a day called Christmas. We have the freedom under Grace to set aside certain days to celebrate, remember, and reflect on our Savior. While these days should be a remembrance and not a requirement, God is not displeased when we decide to worship the humiliation of Christ to die for our sins.

If someone is raising our current holidays up to the level of God's authoritative Word, it is wrong. It would not be right for someone to impose a holiday on anyone. Yet, to make a decision to spend a day focusing on a certain aspect of the truth of God's Word is a good thing. We are people prone to distraction, and these holidays serve as reminders of what life is all about. The great thing about Grace is that you don't HAVE to celebrate it. You are not required to take part. The other great thing about Grace is that we are free to set aside days to concentrate on celebrating a certain truth about God. It would not be right for someone to dismiss a person's intent to use a day to celebrate the Savior.

Romans 14:5-6 holds an important instruction regarding this issue: *"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."*

No matter where we personally stand on the observing of holidays, may our goal be that the Lord is exalted.



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QUESTION: I have recently been told that the Bible teaches the earth is flat. Am I missing something? Are there any Bible verses addressing the shape of the earth?

ANSWER: As with any question, we should search the Scriptures to see what they have to say. Though the Bible is not a science textbook, it is also not absent of scientific facts.

Some of the verses pertaining to this subject are:

Isaiah 11:12 - *"He will set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel; and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."* (See also Rev. 7:1.) The thought here is that the mention of "*corners*" must mean that the earth is flat, as corners refers to a square or rectangle. Yet, technically, the Hebrew word can also mean *quarter*. A quarter is a fourth of a whole, and you can divide an orange into quarters just as well as a piece of paper. Regardless, this verse is saying that the Lord is going to regather Israel and Judah from every place on earth; it is more directional (north, south, east, west) in nature and has nothing to do with the shape of the earth. We still use a similar idiom today (The Olympians came from the four corners of the world to compete in the games) to refer to all the different parts of the world, including the farthest reaches.

Job 28:24 - *"For He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heavens."* (See also Job 37:3; Ps. 48:10; Prov. 30:4.) Here, it is thought that the word "*ends*" demands that the earth has an edge to it, like the edge of a table. Again, the point of this verse is not to state the shape of the earth, but that there is nowhere that God cannot see. He can see the top and the bottom, the Americas and Asia. Deuteronomy 13:7 also refers to *"the end of the earth unto the other end of the earth."* However, the verse itself specifically describes what is meant by this phrase when it begins *"the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth, even unto the other."* Once again, the terminology refers to near and far and everywhere in between, not that the earth has edges to it.

Psalms 104:5 - *"He laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever."* Also, Psalm 75:3 - *"The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved:*

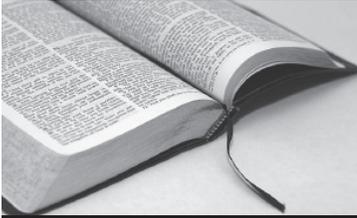
I bear up all the pillars of it." (See also Ps. 75: 9 93:1.) The Bible refers to "*foundations*" and "*pillars*," but it does not mean the earth is literally held up by stone or steel. The verses refer to the sustaining power of God. Even when the world comes crashing down, God's foundations are immovable and His pillars are firm.

Matthew 4:8 - *"Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them."* I don't know of one mountain where you can go to the top and see everywhere on every continent. So, to use this verse to declare the shape of the earth is, to be blunt, grasping at straws. There are mountains from which you can see a great distance to get the aspects of the vastness of the surrounding land. The emphasis in this passage isn't: Could Christ see every kingdom of the world, and if so, the earth is flat. The emphasis in the verse is that Satan, the god of this world, tempted Christ by offering Him an easier way to gain authority and power.

There are many other things to consider when determining what the Scriptures say on the shape of the earth, and our consideration cannot come from having our minds already made up. For instance, we most often use the term "earth" to refer to the entirety of the planet. The Bible often uses the term "earth" to refer to land masses on this planet in contrast to the water on this planet (e.g., Gen. 1:10). This is true of Deuteronomy 13:7 used previously.

Regarding those "*foundations*" and "*pillars*" holding up the earth, Job 26:7 declares God *"stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing."* If I contracted you to put a basement in a house I was building and I came to check out the work and there was nothing there, I'm not paying you. Therefore, these "*pillars*" and "*foundations*" of the earth must be something other than material elements. Indeed, it is referring to the sustaining work of God, the earth itself rests on immaterial. Unlike the supposed proof-texts listed above, this verse IS talking about how our planet hangs in place - It is "*hanging*" in space on nothing solid.

Isaiah 40:22 speaks of God *"sitting on the circle of the earth."* Instead of proof-texting to gather evidence



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to seemingly support our preconceived beliefs on the shape of the earth, we should look for a verse directly talking about the shape of the earth; that verse is Isaiah 40:22. Notice what is the noun ("*sphere*") and what is the prepositional phrase describing the noun ("*of the earth*"). In other words, God sits on the circle earth.

Despite what some say, there is nothing ungodly about a circular earth. If our unwavering authority, the Bible, says it, we should expect unbiased science to confirm it.

(The questions in this edition were answered by Matthew Ritchey, BBI Editor.)

BIBLE FACTS

MINISTRIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Though He often works in the background with little to no mention, the Holy Spirit is an important part of the Trinity. Listed below are some of the names and ministries assigned to God the Holy Spirit through the ages.

Baptizer: *I Corinthians 12:13*

Bearer of Fruit: *Galatians 5:22-23*

Comforter / Counselor / Advocate: *Isaiah 11:2; John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7*

Convicter: *John 16:7-11*

Deposit / Seal / Earnest: *II Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14*

Giver of Gifts: *Exodus 31:3; I Corinthians 12:4,11; 14:12*

Giver of Prophecy: *II Samuel 23:2; II Chronicles 15:1; Joel 2:28*

Guide: *John 16:13; I Corinthians 2:14*

Indweller of Believers: *Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 2:21-22; I Corinthians 6:19*

Inspirer of Scripture: *II Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:16*

Intercessor: *Romans 8:26*

Regenerator: *Titus 3:5-6*

Revealer / Spirit of Truth: *John 14:17; 16:13; I Corinthians 2:12-16*

Spirit of God / the Lord / Christ: *Matthew 3:16; II Corinthians 3:17; I Peter 1:11*

Spirit of Life: *Romans 8:2; II Corinthians 3:6*

Teacher: *John 14:26; I Corinthians 2:13*

Witness: *Romans 8:16; Hebrews 2:4; 10:15*

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