

BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

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ISSUE 5

From the President's Desk,

By the time you read this, we will be gearing up for our fall online instructor-led courses. I am always amazed at how quickly summertime speeds by and before you know it our classes are beginning. It is exciting to see more and more of you have an interest in working toward a certificate, or degree or just wanting to take a class to strengthen your understanding of God's Word.

Another reason for encouragement is our Brazilian extension of *Berean Bible Institute* will have six students finishing their Certificates in Dispensational Studies. As you may recall, over a year ago we began offering courses for students in Brazil who desire to grow deeper in their understanding what God is doing in the Dispensation of Grace.

Finally, I want to officially announce that Pastor Andy Kern and I will be hosting a trip to Israel in May of 2023. The trip will be from May 15-25. Having been to Israel before, I can assure you if you go you will be blessed by visiting the very places that you read about in the Scriptures. Please visit our website to get more information about this trip or call us to request a brochure.

Because He Lives,

Dr. Robert E. Nix

QUESTION: In the (June 2022) BABQ you changed the word "saints" to "angels"? Isn't this like trying to improve the Bible?

ANSWER: Thank you for your question. It is an important one. To clarify, I did not "change" the word; instead, I challenged the meaning **the church**

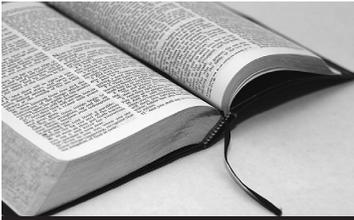
has assigned to the word by making it more specific than the word God inspired. This is why I explained that the usage of the word isn't limited to redeemed citizens. The word is literally "holy (ones)." I tried to be careful in the article to state that "I believe" where appropriate so that it leaves room for study.

Christendom has a habit of assigning exact meaning to words that are beyond what God intended. One example is the word "church." Many in Christendom teach that "church" always refers to the same group of people. Yet, it does not always refer to the same people. The translators, wisely, did not always translate the Greek word *ekklesia* as "church," allowing the context to define the "called-out group" being referred to in the passage. For instance, the word *ekklesia* appears in Acts 7:38 "congregation," 8:3 and 18:22 "church," and 19:32 and 39 "assembly." The group in each of the aforementioned verses is different, describing: the Israelites in the wilderness (7:38), the collective Kingdom church (8:3), the local church in Caesarea (18:22), a riotous mob (19:32), and government authorities (19:39). If we followed the prevalent view in Christendom, we would have to believe all of these groups are the same; and they obviously are not.

Another example is the word "baptism." Many subconsciously put "water" before the word thinking every baptism has to do with water, which is just not true. Yet another example is "kingdom." It is not referring to castles, but to a reign. The focus of that reign is determined by the context. It is not always referring to a tangible place (i.e., Jerusalem) but sometimes, as in Paul's epistles, to the overall rule of God.

Our desire should be to understand what God is communicating through His Word—not what the church has taught it to say or what a group of translators has led us to believe. We need to be able

"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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to explain to those who are expecting a “mansion” in Heaven due to John 14:2 that the original word is not referring to our current understanding of a huge, expensive house. The word translated “mansions” in the KJV means *places to dwell*. In other words, Jesus was telling them there were many places to dwell in His Father’s house, much like the Temple had rooms for the priests to dwell during their assigned weeks of Temple duty.

One more example is found in II Thessalonians 2:7, which states, “*he who now letteth will let.*” If I let you out of the house, I am allowing you to leave. The original Greek word actually means the opposite: *hinder, hold back, suspend*. I do not think I am doing a good job if I continue to let (allow) people think that II Thessalonians 2:7 is allowing people to do something when he is actually holding something back or keeping it from spreading. Our understanding of words has changed over the years and I can find synonyms and substitutions that are STILL the word God inspired to help people understand what God is communicating.

Thank you once again for your question. None of us could ever “improve” the inspired Word of God, nor should we try. Our goal is to help people understand the inspired Scriptures. Sometimes this means addressing traditional understandings or correcting conclusions or substituting a similar word to help people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to grow in reliance upon His wonderful words of life.

QUESTION: Where did the Old Testament believers go when they died? Where do the New Testament believers go when they die?

ANSWER: Anyone who died in the “Old Testament” went to Sheol when they died. For further study, see the wicked (Ps. 9:17; 31:17; 49:14; Isa. 5:14) and the believers (Gen. 37:35; Job 14:13; Ps. 6:5; 16:10; 88:3; Isa. 38:10). Sheol, however, had two very different partitions (Lk. 16:26): the one for the wicked was a place of torment (Mk. 9:45), while the place for the faithful is called Paradise (Lk. 23:43).

While there is some disagreement amongst Bible scholars regarding the location of Paradise after the ascension of Christ (some, like me, believe it will remain where it was until the bodily resurrection;

others think Christ took Paradise to Heaven), it is still safe to say that the Kingdom saints continued to go to Paradise upon death while the unfaithful went to eternal torment.

The only drastic change to a person’s destination after death was revealed when the Mystery was entrusted to the Apostle Paul regarding the unique, previously unknown group of believers called the Body of Christ of which we are part (Eph. 3:1-9). We have been told that believers immediately go to Heaven when we die (II Cor. 5:6-9). This is an eternal location that was unknown and not promised included in the Mystery revealed to and through the Apostle Paul.

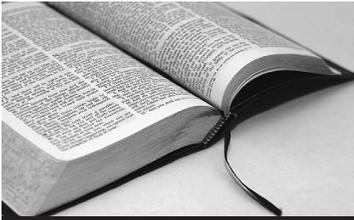
So, Kingdom believers (a.k.a. faithful Israelites and proselytes) went to Paradise upon death. We, the Body of Christ, go to Heaven when we die.

QUESTION: Does the Bible tell us what kind of body we have after our soul and spirit leave our body?

ANSWER: While our new body will be too marvelous for words, we do have some descriptive terms regarding it. First Corinthians 15 tells us it will be given of God (vs. 38), different than the ones in which we dwell on earth (vv. 39-41, 51), incorruptible (vv. 42, 52), glorious and powerful (vs. 43), spiritual (vv. 44-46), heavenly (vs. 47-49), and immortal (vs. 53). This future body is preferable to our current body of flesh (II Cor. 5:8) and will be fashioned after Christ’s glorious body (Phil. 3:21).

Even with these details, it is difficult for us to comprehend exactly what our future eternal body will be like. Yet, these words give us a taste of a future that is too wonderful for us to imagine and should leave us longing for the day when death is swallowed up in victory.

QUESTION: I heard this pastor say that, in Luke 16:19-31, Abraham’s bosom was in Heaven because the angels took the beggar to Heaven while the rich man went to Hell and torment. I have been teaching that this is NOT a parable but truth because Jesus uses names which He doesn’t do in His parables. If this is true, then the rich man can see into Heaven



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and talk with Abraham who is in Heaven. That can't be true.

ANSWER: Parables are illustrative real-to-life stories that teach an important truth. In other words, you won't find talking animals in a parable, for animals do not speak in real life. There is no definitive rule (other than the one made up by theologians) to say that parables cannot be an actual event used to teach an important truth. This is the case with the story of the rich man and Lazarus. It is a true parable told to teach an important truth to the disciples.

As explained in the previous question, Abraham did not go to Heaven. He went to Paradise, which is the blessed side of Sheol across the dividing chasm from the torment side. Maybe it would help to picture two houses separated by a big field. Keep this in mind.

There are two main reasons that people teach that Lazarus went to Heaven. First, it comes from not recognizing that the destination of Heaven was unique to Paul's message of Grace. No believer expected to go up to Heaven before Jesus Christ unveiled it in the Mystery message.

The second reason has to do with the statement that the rich man *"lift up his eyes"* (Lk. 16:23). Returning to the mention of the two houses separated by a large field, now picture you owned one of the houses. You are sitting on your wrap-around porch in your rocking chair as you read the newspaper (or check the news app on your phone). You happen to lift up your eyes and notice your neighbor mowing his grass way over yonder. Did you lift up your eyes to the sky above? No, you glanced up and looked across the field. This is what the rich man did in torments. He looked up and saw Abraham and Lazarus way over yonder—not to Heaven but across the chasm.

I suppose another reason people give for Lazarus being in Heaven is the presence of the angels in verse 22, but it says the angels carried him *"into"* (it could actually be *"to"*) Abraham's side. It does not say that the angels carried him *"up."*

So, you are correct in both of your conclusions. First, the account of Lazarus and the rich man was a true life event that actually happened, and, second, the rich man was not talking to people in Heaven while he was in torment.

QUESTION: What does the Bible say about women pastors?

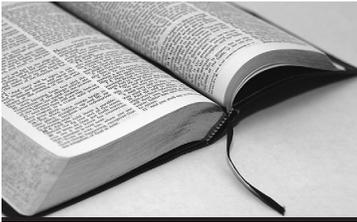
ANSWER: I am a big believer that Christendom (used to denote all those who claim to be Christian) should admit when it has done wrong and move forward in truth. How the "church" acted in the past shouldn't reflect on what the Bible said; church history is not our source of doctrine, the Bible is always the source of truth, even when the church is disobedient to certain truths.

If we are honest, in the past, society and the church hasn't always treated women in the way God intended. Women were sometimes treated as lesser members whose only value was in how many children they bore, how clean their house was, and what benefit they offered to others. Critics have used past shortcomings (often misrepresenting and dramatizing the past) to charge the church with being sexist against women. (News flash: the church was mirroring society.) While we have nothing against mothers or clean houses or being kind, we know the Scriptures present the marriage union as a partnership (with differing roles and accountabilities), not a dictatorship (Gen. 2:18,23-24). The woman was not created to be man's slave.

Others insist that the church should follow society in blurring all gender distinctions and let everyone have an equal opportunity at all roles. By-the-way, the church has been guilty of feeding into gender stereotypes as well. Case in point, not all boys like to get dirty and not all girls mind being dirty; not every male likes sports and not every female enjoys shopping. Despite the sometimes misplaced stereotypes, male and female WERE created different by God (Gen. 5:2).

Then there are some that argue a woman is just a capable of pastoring as a man and oftentimes is very well-versed in the Scriptures. We do not doubt the knowledge of the Bible that is possessed by some of our godly ladies; yet the Scripture, in assigning responsibility, does not base roles on ability and deservedness. Otherwise, none of us would be able to serve the Lord (Rom. 7:18; cf. Rom 8:2).

We cannot let Christendom's abuses, cultural bullies, or lack of male pastors' cause us to waver in



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what the Bible teaches about church leadership. The specific question was about women pastors so we will confine our answer to the topic.

Let us first establish the importance of women in the local assembly. Too many children would not be raised in the things of the Lord if it were not for a faithful mother/grandmother. Many widowed women are the most faithful supporters and attendees of the local assembly. Countless women excel in gifts of hospitality, mercy, serving, children's ministry, shut-in ministry, encouragement, praying, and sharing the gospel. Honestly, much of the ministry in the local church depends on women. Women are gifted by the Holy Spirit and share a high calling. Women are called to serve the Lord and to allow the Spirit to bear fruit. Women are equal members of the Body of Christ. Thank you, ladies, for what you do for the Lord and our local assemblies. Never allow yourself to feel like you are of lesser importance.

Speaking of ability, Priscilla would serve as an example of a capable minister who, along with Aquila, helped others come to an understanding of God's grace and the Savior (Acts 18:26). This woman was greatly used by the Lord. Yet, we have no information that would lead us to believe (nor should we) that Priscilla was pastor of a church. Leadership is a separate issue from effectiveness. Again, this is not a question of ability or intelligence, but of God-given expectations and responsibility.

The question is answered clearly in I Timothy 2:11-12 where the Word of God proclaims, "*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.*" Despite all the ways I have heard this verse abused (e.g., a woman can't ask questions in Sunday School) and all the baseless objections to this verse (e.g., Paul was only talking to the women at Ephesus), the warning is against a woman contradicting and usurping the God-given

authority in the local assembly—a responsibility He has entrusted to qualified male leadership (note the masculine pronouns in I Timothy 3:1-7).

In the church, as in the home, God has assigned different roles to men and women. The men have been given the assignment to lead the local assemblies according to the doctrines of the Body of Christ. Bluntly, this excludes women from serving as pastors over men, which definitely includes preaching to them, teaching them publicly, and exercising spiritual authority over them. I personally do not think this means they cannot have a "say" in the happenings of the local assembly, although there are appropriate and inappropriate avenues. I do not think this means they have to sit down and shut-up, but they do not have a right to mutiny and take-over leadership. **God has entrusted the responsibility of leading the local assembly to the men.** Unfortunately, it is due to the lack of willingness in our men to lead that has led to many vacancies in church leadership.

Men, embrace the blessed obligation to lead the church of God. Get involved and stop making excuses to remain on the sidelines. We need pastors and missionaries and elders. Too often women feel forced to take on semi-leadership roles because they care about the church and no male is willing to step up and lead. Are you willing to be a benevolent leader in your local assembly? We need you.

Ladies, you are important. Don't let the world tell you your worth comes from breaking the glass ceiling in local churches, and don't let your leaders tell you that you are less important than the men on the board. The Bible is full of women—Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Esther, Ruth, Mary, Martha, Phoebe, and Priscilla—who played an essential role in God's work. I also implore you to recognize the burden the leadership of your church carries. It is easy to be critical and think of all the ways you would do it better, but make it a goal to be an encourager.

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