



The

# ENJOY THE BIBLE

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## Questions and Answers

At Enjoy The Bible Ministries we receive a fair amount of correspondence, especially in the form of Bible questions. Periodically we like to take the opportunity to share a few of these questions and answers with you. The following selections have been edited to conserve space, ensure clarity, and remove any personal information.

### MATTHEW 10:16

*When Jesus says in Matthew 10:16, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves"; what is this all about and who are the "wolves"?*

Matthew 10:16 is the beginning of a warning that the Lord Jesus Christ gave to His 12 Apostles in His program with Israel. It concerns what they were going to encounter from the people of Israel as they fulfilled their ministry of proclaiming "the gospel of the kingdom" among the cities of Israel. Beginning with John the Baptist's ministry God's program with Israel had entered its climactic stage. Just as "the gospel of the kingdom" said, Israel's long-awaited and long-ago-covenanted kingdom of heaven was "at hand." John began to proclaim this to Israel, and by means of this gospel, and by his baptism, he began to call out the remnant of Israel that had been prophesied about. And it would indeed be a small remnant in Israel that would respond to "the gospel of the kingdom," just as the prophets described. The majority of the people would stick with Israel's vain religious system headed up by their rulers, along with the chief priests, lawyers, scribes, and the like. The preaching of "the gospel of the kingdom," along with the testimony that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, would not be received by them as good news. Instead, they would oppose it, along with opposing those commissioned by the Lord to proclaim it to them. It is this that the Lord is warning and instructing His 12 Apostles about beginning in Matthew 10:16.

As Matthew 10:1-15 sets forth, the Lord commissioned the 12 to go only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" and to "preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." In connection with manifesting the signs of the kingdom that the prophets had spoken of, the Lord gave the 12 power to heal the sick, cast out devils, and the like, which confirmed the reality of the kingdom being "at hand." In addition, He also instructed them on how to conduct themselves as they journeyed among the various cities and towns of Israel and how to respond to the type of reception they received. How they were received and what they did in re-

sponse to it would be used by the Lord as a criterion for judgment in "the day of judgment." Just as the prophets set forth, the Lord would purge His land in that day, both wasting and destroying in it all opposition to Him, including even places of opposition. And there would be much opposition and many places of opposition that the apostles would encounter. This, too, is just what the prophets had described.

In connection with this the Lord warned His Apostles about the prevailing negative reception they and their message were going to receive. Hence He said to them, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." As "sheep" they were going to be preyed upon and attacked by the "wolves." In particular, the "wolves" is a reference to Israel's rulers and judges, just as God had previously described them to be, for example, in Zephaniah 3:3.

<sup>3</sup> "Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow." (Zephaniah 3:3)

In view of this the Lord went on in Matthew 10:17-18 to describe how that the Apostles would be delivered up to the councils and hauled before the governors, etc. They, therefore, were going to need to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." The Lord's doctrine would equip them with the wisdom they needed. They also did not need to be concerned with providing for themselves or avenging themselves. Rather they were to be "as harmless as doves." As the Lord further said to them in verses 19-20 He would not only miraculously provide for their defense, but He provided for them not to have to fear the opposition in other areas as well.

This is the gist of what the Lord is saying in Matthew 10:16, and how it pertains to what was going on in God's program with Israel when the Lord was here on the earth and the climactic stage in Israel's program had arrived. God, of course, has temporarily suspended His program and dealings with Israel, just as the Apostle Paul teaches us about in his epistles to us. From the time when God raised up the Apostle Paul to be the apostle of the Gentiles and revealed to him "the mystery of Christ," the dispensation of God's grace for us Gentiles has been in effect, and it is still in effect today. However, God's program and dealings with Israel have not been canceled. As Paul teaches in Romans 9-11, God will yet resume and fulfill His program with Israel. Their fulness is yet to come. And when God does conclude

this present dispensation of Gentile grace and resumes His program with Israel, then Israel's "gospel of the kingdom" will once again be preached. At that time the doctrine, for example, in Matthew 10 will once again be applicable to, and followed by, the remnant of Israel.

## **JAMES 2**

*Why does James say in James 2:26 that "faith without works is dead"?*

James was one of the "pillars" in God's program with Israel, and as such his epistle is written to the believing remnant of Israel to whom he ministered, as James 1:1 makes clear. He sets forth fundamental doctrine to the remnant regarding the privilege they have to function just as James 1:18 says, as "a kind of firstfruits of (God's) creatures." This was indeed a special privilege for the believing remnant. It was something that had not only been prophesied about, but was also something in which Abraham had participated. As James teaches in chapter 2, Abraham had justified himself in the eyes of men by his works as "the Friend of God." And this is exactly what God's creatures will be when He fulfills His program with Israel and establishes His kingdom on this earth. And now these members of the remnant of Israel had the opportunity to do the same, which is what James exhorts them to do throughout his epistle, but especially in chapter 2.

James is dealing with two separate and distinct justifications in chapter 2: i.e. justification by faith and justification by works. Though they are separate and distinct, it is God's design in His program with Israel that both justifications be possessed by an Israelite, with the justification by works following and complimenting the justification by faith. Abraham had both justifications, and so having both he not only had justification by faith unto eternal life in God's sight, he also had justification by works in the sight of men vindicating him as "the Friend of God" he professed himself to be. With Abraham God established the fact that in His program with Israel these two kinds of justification would be the big issues in His dealings with them as the seed of Abraham.

Therefore as the natural "seed" of Abraham the people of Israel would first need to be justified by faith as their father Abraham was, and in so being they would be the "children of Abraham" with imputed righteousness and heirs of eternal life. However following this, the child of Abraham needed to be justified by his works as "the Friend of God," (just like his father Abraham was), in order like Abraham to be counted worthy of the kingdom with all of its honors and the like.

The members of the remnant of Israel that James is writing to already had been justified by faith like Abraham, as James makes apparent in writing to them. But that's not the only kind of justification they ought to be content with as the children of Abraham. When it comes to the judgment at the establishment of the kingdom that determines the kind of entrance they will have into the kingdom, if they do not

have justification by works as "the Friend of God" like their father Abraham, then they will not be counted worthy of the kingdom and its honors. Their friendship with the world will testify against their worthiness to be counted among the King's worthies. And this is what James warns them about, admonishes them on, and exhorts them unto, throughout his epistle to them.

The two justifications are separate and distinct, but the justification by works as "the Friend of God" does compliment and "perfect" the initial "faith," completing the full package of justifications that is to be the mark of a child of Abraham as he functions as "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world."

Because God has designed for the remnant to have both kinds of justifications, James concludes his teaching on it with the statement in 2:26 regarding faith without works being dead. Just as the natural thing is for the body to be joined together with the spirit, and when it is not the body is "dead," (i.e. separated from its natural compliment); so also is it the same with their faith, i.e. their justification by faith. God has designed for them to emulate their father Abraham and to do the works of Abraham. He has designed, therefore, for their justification by faith in His sight to have justification by works as the friend of God in men's sight as its natural compliment. But if they don't have justification by works as the friend of God, their faith is "dead, being alone," being separated from its designed compliment. And their entrance into the kingdom will not be with abundance and reward.

## **I CORINTHIANS 10: 1**

*Why does Paul refer to the ones who came out of Egypt as "our fathers" when he says, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea"? Is it the same as the fatherhood of Abraham, as in Romans 4?*

The "fatherhood" of Abraham issue, as in Galatians 3 and Romans 4 would be the issue if Abraham alone was in view. But seeing that the issue in I Corinthians 10 is plural, "fathers," and it is dealing with an historical event past the time of Abraham, it is evident that Paul is using the word "fathers" in another way.

The word "father" in the singular is often used to refer to one who is either the author, originator, founder, etc., of something, or the first person associated with some particular thing. When more than one person would qualify for such a distinction then the word "fathers" would be applied to them. This is Paul's use of the term in I Corinthians 10:1.

The Israelites coming out of Egypt were "our fathers" in connection with the sanctification that Paul is talking about. They experienced an identifying sanctification by which they were to see themselves as completely dead to what they used to belong to, just as we do in this dispensation. However, as Paul shows, they failed to appreciate their identifying sanctification and so experienced grievous consequences in view of it. And as such, with them being "our fathers" in this area,

Paul makes the application that we ought not follow their example.

## I AND II KINGS

*How did the people of Israel get to where they are in the books of I and II Kings, and what happened to put them there?*

The books of I & II Kings in particular set forth the historical record of Israel undergoing the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and the beginning of the 5th courses of punishment described in Leviticus 26. When God brought Israel out of Egypt the nation opted for God to deal with them on the basis of the Law Covenant they made with Him at Mount Sinai. That Law Covenant was a performance contract. If they performed its commandments, statutes, judgments, and the like, they would be blessed by God, both personally and nationally. However, if they failed to perform and did not keep the covenant, then they would be cursed and punished by God, both personally and nationally. In Leviticus 26 the terms of the covenant regarding the national blessings and cursings are set forth, with verses 14ff describing the way in which the national curses would come.

Briefly put, Leviticus 26:14ff sets forth a total of 5 courses of punishment that Israel would experience if they failed to comply with the Law Covenant. By the time you get to I Kings Israel has already experienced the 1st course of punishment. The book of Judges, along with Ruth, and the first part of I Samuel deal with Israel under the 1st course of punishment. Before beginning to bring the 2nd course of punishment upon them, (which the nation merited), God gave Israel a merciful time of unmerited blessing under David and Solomon. This He did for the purposes set forth in the Davidic Covenant. Near the end of Solomon's reign, however, (as set forth in I Kings 11), Solomon plunged the nation back into rebelliousness, and the 2nd course of punishment described in Leviticus 26 arrived. The 2nd course was followed by the 3rd, the 4th, and then the 5th course arrived, the beginning of which called for Israel to be taken by captivity out of their land, which is what the account of II Kings concludes with.

The books of I & II Kings, therefore, set forth the historical record of Israel coming under the effects of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and the beginning of the 5th courses of punishment of the Law Covenant in God's program with Israel.

## II CORINTHIANS 11: 1-2

*Though I am persuaded that the term "the bride of Christ" belongs to God's program with Israel, it is puzzling when Paul in II Corinthians 11:2 says, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."*

I agree with you in recognizing that the bride of Christ is not a designation given to us today, God's "new creation" the church the body of Christ in this dispensation of grace. The designation clearly belongs to Israel in God's program with His nation, and in particular pertains to the living-union-relationship that He will establish with them when He brings His residence to this earth and joins it to the land He gave to

Israel. Hence, as John describes in Revelation 21:9-10, "the bride, the Lamb's wife" is "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." What John sees is the culmination of God's program with Israel. He sees the living-union-relationship of the marriage of God Himself to them in their land, which has been the declared and prophesied issue with them, their land, and Him since the foundation of the world.

We in this dispensation of grace also possess a living-union-relationship with God as the members of the body of Christ. God, in accordance with the genius of His wisdom, has provided for the existence of two kinds of living-union-relationships with Himself. Marriage is one, and being members of a body is the other. Israel possesses the marriage living-union-relationship, while we being the body of Christ naturally possess the body member living-union-relationship. The two kinds of living-union-relationships provide for God to have two distinct entities in such a relationship with Himself. And, of course, the genius of God's wisdom in doing this is that it provides Him with the two distinct entities needed for the reconciliation of both the earthly realm and heavenly realm back to Himself from Satan's usurpation. Israel in their living-union-relationship with God is His means for the reconciliation of the earthly realm, and we the church the body of Christ in our special living-union-relationship with God are His means for the reconciliation of the heavenly places.

Naturally enough, it's when Christians fail to "rightly divide the word of truth" in accordance with God's two distinct programs that confusion arises and Israel's living-union-relationship with God is thought to be ours today, etc. However, even when a Christian does recognize the distinctiveness and differences between God's two programs, sometimes Paul's use of marriage, or marriage-type terminology with us today causes a bit of consternation, as in II Corinthians 11:2. Yet that doesn't need to be the case. This is because the things associated with the marriage relationship can be used to illustrate and define a number of matters like love, self-sacrifice, righteous jealousy, and the like. And this is just what Paul does when he uses it with us in this dispensation.

The issue in II Corinthians 11:2 is an illustrative analogy of espousal so that the Corinthians can understand why Paul is so upset over what is happening in Corinth and why he is being so protective of them with regards to some "very chiefest apostles" who have enamored the Corinthians and swept them off their feet. In chapter 10 Paul just began addressing in particular the issue of the 'love-spell' that these "very chiefest apostles" had cast upon a number of the Corinthians. In so doing he set forth how that he dare not make himself of their number or get into a beauty-type contest with them by comparing himself with them, etc. Instead, he would simply set before them the Lord's own commendation of himself as their rightful apostle, and "revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled" after they had the opportunity to respond to what he says.

Having said this, Paul knew that these bedazzled Corinthians would misinterpret his motives. He knew that they would not perceive his genuine “godly jealousy” as the motive behind his actions. Rather, they would accuse him of simply operating on sour grapes, so to speak. They already thought of him as if he “walked according to the flesh” and so they would naturally think that he was just fleshly jealous of these apostles who were much better than him in so many impressive ways. Therefore knowing this, Paul begins chapter 11 with an appeal for them to “bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.” He knows they think he is a fool for speaking as he has already in chapter 10, and now he beseeches them to bear with him as he tries to explain his motives to them in a way that they can understand. He, as he declares in the opening of verse 2, is “jealous over them with godly jealousy.” He isn’t walking after the flesh like they think. Instead he has the very same jealousy over them as God Himself has, and this is something they need to understand if they are ever going to respond properly to him as they need to. Therefore, the context from at least back into chapter 10 is the key to understanding and appreciating what Paul is now going to say in the rest of verse 2.

Notice that Paul’s illustrative analogy begins with the word “for.” Hence, it is an amplification upon the declaration he has just made about being “jealous over you with godly jealousy.” Once again, he knows that the ones he is particularly addressing here in chapters 10-12 do not understand his genuine love for them. They do not understand his reasons for being upset with their disapproval of him. They do not understand his motives behind dealing with them as he has done, etc, etc. He knows that they think he “walks after the flesh”; that he is insincere; has ulterior motives; operates on a hidden agenda; and is just plain fleshly jealous over these much more impressive and entertaining “very chiefest apostles.” Once again, Paul knows all of this and is taking it into account as he deals with them.

Paul is jealous, as he says. But not of “the very chiefest apostles.” That truly would be fleshly jealousy. Instead, as he says to them, “I am jealous over you with godly jealousy.” And once again, this is completely different and is righteous, being the very righteous jealousy that God Himself possesses and operates upon. However, Paul knows that these Corinthians are not going to pick up on this right away. They didn’t have any frame of reference for this kind of jealousy, (anymore than Israel did when God first declared it of Himself to them.) So Paul provides for them to have a measure of understanding and appreciation for his “godly jealousy” over them by giving them an illustrative analogy of what it is like. And he does this by referring to a righteous jealousy that they could easily understand and relate to - i.e. the kind that an espoused husband would have to his virgin. Just as an espoused husband would not want his virgin seduced by anyone, and would possess a righteous jealousy over her in the face of any such seductions, so is it with Paul. Even in their carnality these Corinthians could under-

stand this. And this is the kind of righteous jealousy that Paul had for them.

Therefore, he wasn’t walking after the flesh at all. His jealousy wasn’t sour grapes. Instead, they were being seduced by a seducer and did not even know it. Their spiritual chastity was being violated by the allurements of a seducer, and they needed to realize this and preserve their chastity. And this is what he goes on to declare to them in no uncertain terms in verses 3ff. If they would “bear with” Paul as he deals with them on this, then they would come to realize the righteousness of his motives, the sincerity of his love for them, along with both the power and correctness of his “godly jealousy” over them.

#### **GALATIANS 5:22 and PHILIPPIANS 1:11**

*What, if any, is the difference between “the fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22 and “the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ,...” in Philippians 1:11?*

In essence it is the same issue in both places, but the nature of the context has dictated Paul’s wording. With the Galatians the emphasis is upon the source of the fruit. Hence, the designator “of the Spirit.” With the Philippians the emphasis is upon the means by which God the Father is being glorified through them, and that being because the life of Christ was being manifested through them. Hence, Paul describes the fruits of righteousness that they were bringing forth as being “by Jesus Christ.”

In view of the fact that the Galatians had put themselves “under the law,” they were not “walking after the Spirit” at all. Contrary to what they thought, or had been taught, by putting themselves “under the law” they were not going to be able to live unto God. The law is a fleshly performance system that manifests the productive capabilities, and fruit, of the flesh. It puts on display what the flesh can do; what it can accomplish. And so when one is “under the law” he is “in the flesh,” “walking after the flesh,” trying to be made “perfect after the flesh,” and brings forth the fruit of the flesh. However, the fruit of the flesh is not “fruit unto holiness.” It is not fruit that God’s Justice can accept. It is not fruit that God has anything to do with producing. Rather, it is just as Paul says in Philippians 3:9, it is “mine own righteousness, which is of the law.” And as such it falls far short of being “fruit unto holiness.”

The Galatians, having been “bewitched” by erroneous teaching about the law, weren’t recognizing the reality of this. They didn’t realize that they couldn’t “live unto God” by the law; that their position “in Christ” was not being put into practice by them being “under the law.” They needed to realize that the Spirit of God’s fruit being produced through us, (which is what the glory of our sanctification is all about), doesn’t occur except by living “under grace.”

It’s only by “walking after the Spirit” that the “fruit of the Spirit” is produced. It’s only by “walking after the Spirit” that our members are what God has sanctified them to be – i.e. instruments of righteousness unto Him.

And so in dealing with the Galatians, Paul talks about the “fruit unto holiness” that our sanctified position “in Christ” enables us to bring forth as “the fruit of the Spirit” that it is. Its source is not “of our flesh,” but “of the Spirit.” As we “walk after the Spirit” He quickens our mortal bodies, actively making our members “instruments of righteousness unto God” and so bringing forth His fruit through us.

With the more doctrinally mature Philippians, Paul speaks to them regarding the understanding and appreciation they had for the fact that as they lived in accordance with the fulness of their position “in Christ,” the life of Christ was also being manifest through them to God the Father’s glory and praise. Hence as they abounded yet more and more in knowledge and all judgment, and were approving the things that were excellent, they would be ones who would be “filled with the fruits of righteousness.” And those “fruits of righteousness” would be the issue of Jesus Christ being made manifest through them, and God the Father being glorified and praised thereby.

The Philippians understood and appreciated not only the doctrine of our justification “in Christ” and our sanctification “in Christ,” they also knew the doctrine of our exaltation “in Christ.” And in connection with our exaltation “in Christ,” they knew that we have the exceeding high privilege of God’s grace to be putting the life of Christ on display, and for that to be done in the face of the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. They knew what Paul knew that made him say, “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ,…” They also understood what Paul meant when he said, “that I may win Christ”; and also, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” They understood, appreciated, and operated in connection with all of this understanding. And so with them, Paul speaks of what “the fruits of righteousness” are when it comes to the glorification that God the Father receives from them. They are not just the genuine “the fruits of righteousness” in contrast to the fruits of the flesh produced by the law. They are “the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ”; .i.e. by the Lord Jesus Christ living His life out through us, the members of His body, to the glory of God the Father in the heavenly realm.

**MATTHEW 21:18-19**

*Why did Jesus cause the fig tree to wither and die, as described in Matthew 21:18-19?*

This event is actually quite significant in God’s program and dealings with Israel, in view of the fact that God had taught His nation in the past that various aspects of their national existence were likened by Him unto some particular trees. The fig tree was one of those trees. It, along with 3 other trees, were used by God to represent and describe four aspects of Israel’s national existence and experience.

Now there is a lot that could be said about this, and in truth there is a lot that first needs to be understood from Genesis to Malachi in order to fully appreciate all that is represented and signified not only by the Lord’s action of cursing the fig tree, but also the references He makes to the other trees. However, the following brief comments should help provide you with the gist of the issue.

Of the four aspects of Israel’s national existence and experience, the fig tree, (in accordance with man’s use of it in the Garden of Eden), represented Israel’s religious life. That religious life, however, was doomed to failure seeing it was rooted in the performance system of their own works resident in the Law covenant that they had signed with God. As such it rejected the issue of being dealt with by God on the basis of His grace. Their religious life would produce and bring forth fruit, but it would be fruit that God’s Holiness, Righteousness, and Justice could not, and would not, accept. It would be just like the fig tree Adam and his wife used in the garden. God wouldn’t accept it.

As Israel’s religious life pursued the grace-rejecting course of the Law contract, it eventually developed into the completely vain religious system God declared it to be in Isaiah’s day. Later, through Jeremiah, God likened it and its participants unto “vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil,” and He promised that He would treat them accordingly. And, indeed, He began to do so in Jeremiah’s day.

However, it would be in the Lord’s day of wrath, (the final installment in God’s program with Israel during which He would purge His nation of all its religious unrighteous element), that God would finally cut down the fig tree of Israel’s vain religious system and give it to the fire to be burned.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was on the earth in Israel as recorded in the Gospel accounts, He was just as Paul declares in Romans 15:8. He “was a minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.” One of those promises He confirmed was the promised destruction of Israel’s vain, “vile fig” producing, religious system. God the Father promised its destruction, and God the Son confirmed it when He came.

Therefore, when the Lord’s three year ministry was drawing to its conclusion, and the prophesied time of purging wrath was just around the corner on Israel’s time-schedule, the Lord performed the significant gesture of cursing the fig tree in the presence of His disciples. The fig tree of Israel’s vain religious system was set to be judged and destroyed, and the Lord’s gesture confirmed the reality of that.

— Keith R. Blades

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