

YOUTH MEETINGS - 2024, JEHOVAH JIREH, SWINDON, UK
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
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1. **If as Christians we are taught to act like the Bereans (Acts 17:11), ask we are not to add or take away from the Scriptures (Revelation 22:18-19), how was it that in the 'Council of Carthage' individuals were able to decide on 'The Canon' and in doing so were able to take away several books, we know to have existed during the time of Jesus? As Christians today we believe in 'Sola Scriptura' - the Bible as the sole infallible source of authority for Christian Faith, and not 'Papal Infallibility'. How were individuals (gathered around 420 after passing of Jesus) given enough authority to take away Scriptures THEY deemed confusing / contradictory etc? Is this because Jesus came to fulfil the law and so it can be separated? Can this be inspiration from the Holy Ghost upon the individuals? If so, we also know that God is not a God of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33), and not a word of his unfulfilled (Isaiah 55:11), believing the trinity are in union, what authority do these people have to take away from the Word of God?? Note: I understand the Bible, we have, is sufficient to get us to heaven, this is more about understanding more how the faith we have has been shaped by Christians before us.**
- A. Yes, we indeed should, like the Bereans, search the Scriptures. Moreover, we should indeed neither add nor take away anything from the scriptures.

History on deciding the Canon of the Bible: In the original Hebrew Bible there were no additional books other than the 29 books that we have in the Old Testament. The other books were added around 300-150 BC by the Septuagint (LXX) translators while translating the Hebrew Bible into Greek. They are included in the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus. Later, when Jerome translated into Latin the whole Bible (Old and New Testaments), these additional books were added as 'Apocrypha'. The Apocrypha has become part of the later versions of the Bible in English (Wycliffe Bible, Gutenberg Bible, the Great Bible, King James Version of 1611AD) even though the Council of Carthage (Council that met at a city called Carthage in Africa) reaffirmed the Canon of Hippo including some and removing some other books of the Apocrypha). But Later on, the Apocrypha was not included in the Textus Receptus (TR) and it was removed finally from the other translations (Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered by that time) from the Bibles such as in the Revised Version of KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV etc., probably because the divine inspiration of these books could not be established and probably because they were not the part of the original scriptures.

What were the criteria in deciding the Canon: The three-fold criteria for the canon are: 1) divine quality (Luke 24:44), 2) apostolicity (written by an apostle or an associate of the apostle, and 3) universality (acceptable by the universal Church). Puritans used the standard of 'Sola Scriptura' (Scripture Alone) to determine which books to be included in the canon. We believe that God had guided His men with His wisdom and had given them authority to finalise the Canon.

However, the books of Apocrypha are still available and they can be used as a reference if anyone wants to read them but with discretion.

2. Studying Solomon's life and the books he has written, when did he unite them? Before he was fallen or after he has fallen? 1 Kings 11 ends with his fall and heart turning towards idols and his death. Did he repent before he died?

- A. Among the three books of King Solomon, Proverbs is a collection of his proverbs, believed to be compiled by King Hezekiah (Proverbs 25:1). Songs of Solomon were written by King Solomon during the earlier days of his reign. He wrote Ecclesiastes towards the end of his life (around 940 BC).

The conclusions Solomon made in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes about his fear of the Lord and the Judgment of God indicate that he might have been restored to the Lord before his death. More on Solomon's life is considered in the next question.

3. King Solomon was a wise man who searched various facts of life to find fulfilment and in the end after his findings he concludes as all is vanity. This excels in understanding and surely king Solomon experienced for himself to say all is vanity. Why did such a wise king even after experiencing and finding the fulfilment in Christ at the end intermarry and have wives that served foreign gods and he build high places for these foreign gods and burnt incense and became unloyal towards the living God?

- A. Solomon's life is a testimony of an immense emptiness. According to his own words, he had everything in abundance - wisdom, riches, wealth and pleasures. They did not give him fulfilment but they added to his emptiness. The emptiness is clearly because of two reasons - 1) living away from or without God and 2) Only viewing the life "under the sun" (or living for the transient life only, not considering the life after death or eternity).

However, this is one side of his life's testimony (emptiness as seen in Ecclesiastes 1-8) but on the other side, he also had seen how the emptiness can be filled with God (fulness in God as seen in the second part of Ecclesiastes 8-12).

The precious experiences of Solomon therefore teach us valuable lessons (we need not to experiment with our lives since Solomon had experimented and learnt these lessons):

- 1) Riches, wealth, wisdom and pleasure without God are vanity and bring emptiness, (which can be like 'chasing the wind' making you overwhelmed and exhausted the more you go after them) and
- 2) We will have fulfilment, true satisfaction and joy, only in God (or God only can fill the emptiness in man),
- 3) Temptations can make even very strong and mighty people like Solomon fall (this may give us an answer to the second part of this question) and therefore, as Solomon taught us in Ecclesiastes, we need to live our lives with the 'fear of the Lord', 'keeping eternity and judgement of God' in view all the time (Read 1 Corinthians 10:12) and work out our salvation with fear and trembling while depending on the Lord's providence for us to continue in salvation (Philippians 2:12-13).

4. Why was the name given to Naomi's sons, meaning sick and broken heart Chilion and Mahlon? Were they named after the situation they had?

- A. We do not know what led Elimelech and Naomi to name their two sons Mahlon (sick) and Chilion (broken heart) as the Bible does not reveal it to us. Probably their sickness may be because they were born during the famine.

Interestingly in the Bible, the names of the people summarise their life stories. It could be that through their names the Lord forewarned Elimelech and Naomi not to leave Bethlehem. But Instead of staying back in Bethlehem, they took their two sick children to Moab hoping that they may survive there. Sadly they both died along with their father in Moab.

The lesson for us is that we should not leave God and his providence (represented by Bethlehem which means the house of bread) and try to find satisfaction in the world (represented by Moab which means a wash pot).

5. I feel like the Christianity is cultic - where God is sacrificing his own son and the involvement of the blood had to be shed is a bit abnormal. How can you I make someone understand this? This is why I do not have faith or believe or struggle to believe in God. What do I need to overcome it? Why is God's condition "His way" is 'high way'. Because, if I am not up to his condition, I will suffer consequence, but only thing that keeps me close to God is fear of Him. That if I die I will go to hell. I feel that this is only the reason that is making me to come to him. I think that I am a decent person. I am kind and compassionate naturally without God's involvement in my life. But fear of consequences is the reason I need to be with him - hence I cannot give my 100% to him. How is it fair that we punished for Adam and Eve's mistakes if he is omnipotent and omnipresent? He knows everything right, he must have a better solution.

- A. A very honest question. I wish I could speak to you and answer all your queries.

First of all, the Bible deals with the dreadful issues such as "sin" and "death". When you read about the sacrifices and the blood in the Old Testament, it tells us the severity of the sin and its punishment, death. The Bible says without shedding of the blood there is no remission (forgiveness) for sins (Hebrews 9:22). Sin is so dreadful! We cannot obtain forgiveness of sins by any other means. Seeing our helplessness, God sent Jesus Christ to take our sins on him and thereby to be punished in our place. That is God's love (John 3:16). It does not mean that God is cultic and wants a human sacrifice. But it means that the death of a sinless Saviour only can save us from the punishment of sins. All the sacrifices and blood in the Old Testament point to the death of Christ on the Cross. To put an end to death, death has to be eradicated by death only as it is written, ... death was swallowed up in victory (Isaiah 25:8 and 1 Corinthians 15:54). This is exactly what has happened on the cross. Jesus died and obtained victory over death when he rose again from the dead. Because Jesus offered his life as a price for saving us, there is no need for any more sacrifices. Believing in what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross will help you overcome your doubts or feelings. One day you will also overcome death.

Secondly, there are only two ways - God's way and Satan's way. On one side you have a loving God and on the other side, you have a wicked Satan. Which way would you like to take? If we do not follow God, Satan will take us as his captives and finally take us to hell. We need not be afraid of the loving God but be afraid of deceptive Satan. Probably you are seeing God as the one trying to punish you or make you suffer the consequences if you do not follow Him. But, in the Bible God is seen as the one spreading His loving hands and inviting us to go to Him. He does not force or threaten anyone. If we reject him, Satan will take to with him to hell. Once you take the path of God, you are safe in the loving hands of God (Isaiah 65:2). As you follow Him, you will understand His goodness, mercy, love, compassion and grace. Instead of having a detrimental fear of God, you will develop a healthy fear which is a reverential trust in Him and can give your whole self (one hundred per cent as you have mentioned) to God. Instead of seeing the terrible sufferings of hell and coming to the Lord, why not see the glorious heaven which the Lord is preparing for us and follow him?

Thirdly (to the question: How is it fair that we punished for Adam and Eve's mistakes if he is omnipotent and omnipresent? He knows everything right, he must have a better solution), what could have been a better solution in your opinion? On the surface, it looks like unfairness that we are punished because of Adam's sin. But the Bible says, that when Adam sinned, we all have sinned (Romans 5:12). We also would have sinned if we were in the place of Adam.

Moreover, consider this, are you (or anyone) now being punished because of Adam's sin? No, you are being redeemed from it. Redemption is the best solution of God for Adam's sin. Redemption, as a free gift to the whole of mankind, through the awful sufferings of Jesus Christ is the glorious solution of God (please read Romans 5: 15-19 and 1 Corinthians 5:21).

6. Some years ago I made a vow to God to go full time ministry, but I did not go for it, but still I want to fulfil my vow to God. But I don't get faith/courage to go for it. If I don't fulfil my vow, can God forgive me so at the end can I go heaven? If I go for it, how do I know that it is God's will? Deuteronomy 29:9-10, this promise I don't understand, these promises mean God will for me?

A. What made you vow to God for full-time ministry?

It seems you are not sure of the calling. Am I right? You may wait for some more time and pray about it. Moreover, it seems you have the fear that God may not forgive you if you are not fulfilling your vow. While you are waiting in prayer for God's guidance, be assured that you will go to heaven if you have received Jesus Christ as your saviour. Deuteronomy 29:9 means that you need to obey God's word and keep it.

7. We have heard our salvation is secure because of the finished work of Christ on the cross, as it is not dependent upon our works. Is it therefore possible for Christian to be left behind in the rapture after the tribulation period is over. And what does it mean to be ready for the rapture?

- A. Word of assures you of your
- Forgiveness - If you confess your sins, God has forgiven you (1 John 1:9).
 - New Birth - if you have received Christ as your personal Saviour (John 1:12-13).

With this assurance, we persevere in faith by confessing or repenting if we sin. After salvation, we need to move on to sanctification. As we do it, we are ready for the coming of Jesus Christ and will certainly meet Him.

8. What is worship? How do we worship? Difference between worship we do on Sunday and other days? types of worship?

- A. Worship is an act of serving and honouring God. It is an act of expressing the worthiness (greatness) of God in our lives in receiving all glory and honour. It can be expressed in various ways: offering 'praises' to God for what He has done (His great works) or giving thanks (for what he has done in our personal lives) - Please read Hebrews 13:15; 1 Peter 2:5, 9. The more you know the Lord personally the better will be your worship. Therefore the personal knowledge of God is essential in worship (Read the excellent answer of Jesus to the Samaritan woman about the worship in John 4:22-24).

Bible records the worship of the people and the heavenly hosts, for us to learn how we should worship the Lord (Please read Matthew 2:11; Luke 17: 15-16; John 12: 3; Revelation 4: 8-11; Revelation 5: 8-14). The worship of King David and other psalmists (in the book of Psalms) are also excellent examples.

We ought to worship the Lord at all times whether at home or in the church or at any other suitable place. On Sunday or the Lord's Day, we have a special privilege to worship the Lord personally gathering around the Table of the Lord and remembering the death, burial and the resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ. .