

Be Like Noah (Q & A)

by Brett Hickey

My father used to say, “Where God places a period, let no man put a question mark.” The point was that we should reverentially accept the teachings of Scripture instead of doubting or challenging them. Of course, there is more than one way to ask a question. Some questions are inappropriate and disrespectful.

A perfect illustration of the maxim, “Where God places a period, let no man put a question mark,” is the temptation in the Garden. God issued a plain, direct command, and Satan challenged it with a question in Genesis 3:1, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”¹ The point of the question was to begin to undermine God’s command. The follow up from Satan was a flat denial of the command in verse 4: “You will not surely die.” The adversary placed just enough doubt in Eve’s mind that she accepted an alternate “interpretation” of the original command. Beware of alternate “interpretations” to simple straightforward Scriptures.

Paul writes of inappropriate questions in Titus 3:9, “But *avoid foolish questions*, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.” (KJV, italics mine) Again, in 2 Timothy 2:23, “But *foolish and unlearned questions* avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.” (KJV, italics mine) In his *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, Robertson, says the word *ignorant* indicates one who is “Untrained, uneducated” and then references Parry who defined this word to indicate “speculations of a half-educated mind”.

Finally, we have in 1 Timothy 6:3-4, “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes [“questions” – KJV]² and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions...” The *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* reads on this passage, “He is proud--literally, ‘wrapt in smoke’; filled with the fumes of self-conceit while ‘knowing nothing,’ namely, of the doctrine which is according to godliness, though arrogating pre-eminent knowledge. doting about--literally, ‘sick about’; the opposite of ‘wholesome’. *Truth* is not the center *about* which his investigations move, but mere *word-strifes*...”

Burton Coffman cites the following translations and paraphrases of this passage in his commentary:

- “He is blinded with conceit and really knows nothing, but is crazy with discussions and controversies about words” (Richard Francis Weymouth).
- “He is a conceited, ignorant person, with a morbid craving for speculations and arguments” (Edgar J. Goodspeed).
- “He is a conceited, ignorant creature, with a morbid passion for controversy and argument” (James Moffatt).
- (The Phillips translation is so pointed, I opt to omit it from this list lest some be offended.) “As Gould remarked, ‘This is about as close to invective as the apostle ever came!’”

¹ All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² A bracket [] within a quotation is used to note words added that are not in the original quote.

Some types of questions should obviously be disregarded, and yet, we read of Jesus at age twelve in Luke 2:46, "...in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions." While some, like the scribes and lawyers of Jesus' day, use the word of God as a perverse excuse for wrangling, others legitimately seek truth with their inquiries. This morning, we will address legitimate questions raised by viewers, but first, enjoy our song...

Judge Simon Greenleaf, skeptic turned believer and one of the founders of Harvard Law School, expressed the noble sentiment of the genuine truth seeker in the book he wrote with Joseph Salvatore, *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists*, (1846, 21). He wrote, "There should be a readiness on our part, to investigate with candor to follow the truth wherever it may lead us, and to submit, without reserve or objection, to all the teachings of this religion, if it be found to be of Divine origin."

Because there are sincere individuals who desire to know the truth that makes one free (John 8:32), the Holy Spirit has commissioned the Christian to meet them half way. Consider the message of 1 Peter 3:15-16, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." (KJV)

Again, from the New King James Version: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed." Note that this passage is not written merely to Christian leaders, but to Christians in general.

Clearly, the Christian has an obligation to know *what* he believes and *why*, so he can respond with Scriptures and reason when others question him about his beliefs. If you have Bible questions we hope you will relay them to us.

A viewer from the Dallas, Texas area *voiced concern over the words that appear every week on the board to my left, "Be like Noah; save your family."* The gentleman said that this statement is "scripturally untrue," adding, "It is evident that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, not a savior."

We agree that Jesus is the Savior of mankind. Too many Scriptures make this clear. Paul writes in Ephesians 5:23 that "...Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body." Hosea 13:4 reads, "And you shall know no God but Me; For there is no savior besides Me." We embrace this truth. At the same time, we vigorously deny that the statement, "Be like Noah; save your family" is unscriptural. While Jesus is our lone literal "Savior," a number of passages teach that human agents can play a role in the salvation of men. Six examples of such are found below:

- Romans 11:14, "...[I]f by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and *save* some of them." (italics mine)
- I Corinthians 7:16, "For how do you know, O wife, whether you will *save* your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will *save* your wife?" (italics mine)
- I Corinthians 9:22, "...I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means *save* some." (italics mine)

- I Timothy 4:16, "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will *save* both yourself and those who hear you."
- James 5:20, "...[L]et him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will *save* a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins."
- Jude 23, "...[B]ut others *save* with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh."

Obviously, in a literal sense, only Jesus is able to save anyone. In the statement, "Be like Noah; save your family," the word "save" is used in the same way that Paul used it of himself, of Timothy, of husbands and wives.

The most direct Biblical link to the saying, "Be like Noah; save your family," is found in Hebrews 11:7, "By faith *Noah*, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, *prepared an ark for the saving of his household*, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." (italics mine) *Barnes' Notes* reads, "In order that his family might be saved.... The salvation here referred to was preservation from the flood." Noah himself was empowered as God's messenger (2 Peter 2:5) to rescue his family from the flood and warn the rest of the world of their fate for rejecting the God's message.

Each of us has a sphere of influence and can have an impact on the eternal destiny of our friends, families and other associations. Parents of children still at home need to be reminded of Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." While our children must choose for themselves to do right or wrong—to serve God or rebel against him, we can have a profound influence on their moral decision-making. This is why the Holy Spirit established "having faithful children" (Titus 1:6) as a qualification for men seeking to be an elder. Some would consider Noah a failure as a preacher since his congregation was limited, at least initially, to his family of eight, but can there be any greater success than being used as an instrument of God in saving your own family?

The next question comes from a viewer in Southern Missouri: *Does an individual's financial condition indicate whether or not he has the favor of God?* First of all, the Scriptures teach that the people of God who have been blessed financially should acknowledge God as the source of their prosperity. The apostle says as much in I Timothy 6:17, "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy." But, while God "gives us richly all things to enjoy," this does not mean that all Christians will be rich nor does it mean that the most wealthy are the most godly.

In fact, in the same chapter, the Holy Spirit makes this point. We read in I Timothy 6:5b- "...men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." So, God warns against chasing wealth as a journey fraught with great temptation, heartache, and pain.

More than that, though, notice that God speaks, in verse 5, of "...men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain." The *Christian Standard*

Bible renders this passage, "...men whose minds are depraved and deprived of the truth, who imagine that godliness is a way to material gain." The *English Standard Version* has, "people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain." The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary on the Whole Bible* says on this verse, "The *Greek* requires, 'supposing (regarding the matter in this point of view) that piety (so translated for 'godliness') is a means of gain (that is, a way of advancing one's worldly interests...'" So, godliness does not produce great material gain, but, instead, "godliness *with contentment is great gain.*" (italics mine)

In Mark 12:41-44, Jesus pointed out that the most godly individual of the many who were casting in their money in the treasury was the poor widow woman who cast in her two mites. Moreover, Jesus said in Luke 6:20, "Blessed are ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God." He then adds in verse 24, "'But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation.'" If we are going to generalize about the rich and poor, we ought to do so in harmony with Scripture. The Bible says in James 2:5-6, "Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?" In the story of the Rich man and Lazarus, the rich man is spiritually impoverished and the beggar Lazarus is the one approved of God. In 2 Corinthians 8:2, the apostle Paul speaks of faithful Christians who were in "deep poverty." Paul himself was poor despite the fact that he was among the most diligent workers the church ever knew. He says of himself in 2 Corinthians 11:27, "in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness..." The Scriptures are clear: the quality of one's relationship with God is not reflected by their level of material prosperity. The people of God are rich, poor and everywhere in between.

Another question received from Southern Missouri: *Are we commanded to greet one another with a holy kiss when we assemble as the church?* Consider what Wayne Jackson writes in the *Christian Courier*:

"There is absolutely no evidence that the saints of the early church were ever commanded to kiss one another *per se* as a method of greeting, and I know of no scholar who has ever argued that position. Kissing, as a method of greeting, had been practiced for centuries (see Genesis 27:26; 29:13; 1 Samuel 20:41; 1 Kings 19:20; Matthew 26:49). The thing commanded by the New Testament writers was that the practice be "holy" and in "love" (agape —i.e., in the genuine spiritual interest of another). There is not a single passage in which the greeting kiss is mentioned but what the admonition is not qualified by a modifying term (see Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). In view of this, one is bound to conclude that the instruction concerning the "holy kiss" is as binding today as it ever was. No Christian will ever be allowed to greet his brother or sister in lust, treachery, or hypocrisy."

A viewer from Kentucky: "*On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, how could three thousand people have been immersed? They wouldn't have had enough time or water, would they?*" This question addresses whether or not circumstances of Acts 2 demanded that the penitent believers be sprinkled instead of immersed. The *Scriptures are clear that baptism is immersion.* In John 3:23, the Bible says that "John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was *much water there...*" (italics mine) When Philip baptized the eunuch in Acts 8:38, the Bible says, "...they both went *down into the water...*" (italics mine) Both of these details would be odd if sprinkling could be substituted for immersion. We learn further from Romans 6:4-6 and Colossians 2:12 that baptism was a *burial*. This harmonizes with immersion, not sprinkling. Instead of using "*rhantizo*" the Greek word for "sprinkling," we find the word translated baptism. W. E. Vine, in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, defines *baptisma*, "baptism, consisting of the

process of immersion, submersion and emergence (from *the root word baptō, which means to dip*).” Luther, Calvin and Wesley acknowledge that the New Testament practice was immersion.

In an attempt to counter all the evidence that baptism is immersion (or even that baptisms took place at all!), some suggest that there wasn’t enough time or water in Jerusalem to immerse three thousand in one day. First, remember that even if only the twelve were baptizing there would have been plenty of time. Three thousand divided by twelve would be two hundred and fifty. Immersion is not a lengthy process. After hearing the subject confess Christ (five seconds), and statement like “I baptize you in the name of Jesus Christ into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for the remission of sins” (ten seconds), the one baptizing would lower the subject slowly under the water and raise them up again (ten seconds). Then, the next subject could join the one baptizing (30 seconds) and restart the process. In this way, one person could be baptized per minute. Two hundred and fifty could be baptized in about four hours. There would be plenty of time. The fact that they were all baptized in that day shows the extreme urgency of baptism; these people knew that baptism is the where there sins would be forgiven (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

Was there enough water? Yes! Bill Grasham writes in an article entitled “Archaeology and Christian Baptism” in *Restoration Quarterly*, "Over three hundred stepped-and-plastered immersion pools...have been discovered in Israel. Of these, about one hundred fifty have been found in Jerusalem dating from the first century B.C. to the end of the Second Temple period (A.D. 70)." The facts support the Biblical account of immersion in water. Stay with us until after our song, and we'll tell you how you can get a copy of this message...

Thank you for watching *Let the Bible Speak*. If you’d like a free transcript or DVD of this sermon, #815, “Be Like Noah – Q & A,” please write the address to follow. We also offer our free Bible study course to complete at home. Join our group page on *Facebook* for updates on the sermon airing each week. We always welcome your comments and questions. Finally, we echo the sentiment of the apostle Paul when he wrote in Romans 16:16, “*the churches of Christ salute you.*” Until next week, good bye and God bless.

Sermon delivered by evangelist Brett Hickey over “Let the Bible Speak”
July 1, 2011

Sources:

- Coffman, James Burton. *Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus & Philemon*. Austin, Tex.: Firm Foundation Pub. House, 1978.
- Fausset, A. R., David Brown, and Robert Jamieson. *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1961.
- Greenleaf, Simon, and Joseph Salvador. *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists, by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice. With an Account of the Trial of Jesus*. Boston: C.C. Little and J. Brown, 1846.
- Robertson, Archibald T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament 4. The Epistles of Paul*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1960.

Are you searching for the truth of God's word and have a sincere desire to learn about the Bible? Do you want to know what the Bible says about salvation and about Christ and His church? If you are looking for Bible Founded discussion on these topics and many others, then please accept this invitation to explore "Let the Bible Speak" and then contact us for additional studies.

We are members of the church of Christ as found in the New Testament. We are not members of a denomination or earthly religious organization. We are a brotherhood of believers, joined by a common bond, Jesus Christ. We try to live and worship following the patterns found in the New Testament.

For manuscripts of other sermons visit: www.LettheBibleSpeak.com or call 1-800-380-LTBS (5827).

COPYRIGHT © Let The Bible Speak. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

IMPORTANT COPYRIGHT NOTICE:

Express permission is granted to distribute any video, audio, or transcript of any broadcast message as long as the material is: unedited and attribution is given to *Let the Bible Speak*; a hyperlink to LettheBibleSpeak.com is included for electronic distribution; a text reference is included to www.LettheBibleSpeak.com for printed distribution; and the original author receives attribution. An irrevocable, world-wide, royalty free license for distribution is granted as long as such distribution has the intent of: supporting the truth as presented; giving glory and honor to God; and spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.