

Interesting Questions

Who Were the People from “the Land of Nod” Where Cain Got His wife?

Most people get the impression from Genesis 4:1, 2 that Cain and Abel were Adam and Eve’s first and only children, but the Bible does not record all the children born to Adam and Eve. Our first parents lived nearly 1,000 years, and could have had hundreds of children. For instance in Genesis 5:4, “And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters...” Note that the names of these children are not recorded. Therefore, the wife of Cain would have been one of his sisters or a daughter of one of his numerous brothers and sisters.

By the time Cain had killed his brother Abel, the Bible mentions that there was a populated region called Nod, to which he was banished. It is important to understand that Nod was not another race of people. They all were descendants from Adam, and as such, they inherited the penalty of his sin — death. (Romans 5:18) Jesus gave his life as payment for that penalty, and subsequently, Adam and all of his descendants, including Cain and those living in the land of Nod, will receive life again from Jesus’ “RANSOM for ALL.” (1 Timothy 2:3-6)

How Could Creation Have Been Only Seven Days?

Genesis 1:1 states: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Many Christians miss the fact that there is no mention here of a length of time given for this immeasurable act of creation.

Once our planet had taken shape, God’s Word focuses on preparing the earth for habitation: “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.... And the evening and the morning were the first day.” (Genesis 1:3-5) Was this day 24 hours?

Using an important tool of Bible study will help to answer this question — original word definitions in Hebrew and Greek. The Hebrew word “yom,” translated here “day,” can be used to denote not only a 24 hour day, but also much longer periods of time or epochs. As an example, Israel’s forty years in the wilderness is called “the day [yom] of temptation in the wilderness... forty years long...” Note also Psalm 95:8-10 —“Harden not your heart, as in... the day [yom] of temptation in the wilderness...” The logical conclusion must be that each creative day [yom] is a period of time and not 24 literal hours.

So, how long were each of the creative days? Knowing the length of the seventh day is key to discovering the length of the other six days of creation. “By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.” (Genesis 2:2 NAS) Bible chronology indicates that we have been living in this seventh creative day since Adam was created — just over 6,000 years ago. The Bible also indicates that

the seventh day is to end with the millennial reign of Messiah — a 1,000 year day of judgment. (2 Peter 3:8) We can conclude then that the seventh day, being a total of 7,000 years, is logically the length of each of the other creative days.

Where Does the Soul go After Death? Do Animals Have Souls?

The most common belief of all religions is that people possess souls, and at death their consciousness in the form of that soul departs from the body to abide in either a heavenly paradise or a place of eternal punishment. But this erroneous concept was adopted from pagan philosophy. The soul is not a separate entity — it does not go anywhere when we die. When we were created we did not receive a soul, but we became a living soul — a living being — and when we die, the life we had ceases. In the Old Testament the word spirit is from the Hebrew word ruach or breath — the spark of life supported by breathing. When the breath stops, the spirit of life ends. “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” — Genesis 2:7

The idea of an immortal soul has always been contrary to the Israelite faith and is nowhere found in the Old Testament. In confirmation of this fact, The Jewish Encyclopedia (1941, Vol. 6, pp. 564, 566) states: “The belief that the soul continues in existence after the dissolution of the body is... nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture... belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal exponent...”

The Hebrew word translated “soul” is nephesh, which simply means a breathing creature. Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary defines nephesh as “the essence of life, the act of breathing, taking breath... The Hebrew system of thought does not include the combination... of the ‘body’ and ‘soul’ [as separate entities].” In fact, the Hebrew phrase nephesh caiyah, meaning living soul, applies not only to man but to all of God’s living creatures. “To every beast of the earth and to every fowl of the air and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth wherein there is life...” — “they have all one breath” (Genesis 1:30; Ecclesiastes 3:19) and all are considered by God as souls — living creatures.

King David said of death: “His breath [Hebrew—ruach] goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.” (Psalm 146:4) If immortal, the thoughts of a man would not perish, but would go on to another state of being. Solomon said: “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.” The dead are not conscious, for both the body and the mind of a man cease to exist at death. “For the living know that they will die; but the dead know not anything...” Ecclesiastes 9:10, 5

Although the Scriptures do not support the thought that the soul is immortal, they do abound with hope of a resurrection from death in due time. “God will redeem my soul [that sentient being which had been alive] from the grave [sheol—the condition of death].” Psalm 49:15 When Jesus “poured out his soul unto death,” he made “his soul [life, being] an offering for sin.” (Isaiah 53:12, 10) This was necessary, because it was Adam’s life (soul) that was sentenced to

death, and the promise to mankind is a redemption of the soul from the power of death. (Psalm 49:15) As Paul expressed: “As by a man comes death, by a man also comes the resurrection of the dead; for as all in Adam die, even so shall all in Christ be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:21-23) The Scriptures do not teach that Jesus’ sacrifice will apply to animals, but animals will benefit from the blessings promised in Christ’s Kingdom. (Isaiah 11:6-9)

Does God Forgive Suicide?

Mental illness is a highly misunderstood disease and is somehow disassociated from other more socially accepted and common diseases such as stroke, cancer, and diabetes. Mental illness is caused most often by a chemical imbalance which can lead to despair and suicidal thoughts. God’s love would never condemn anyone for suffering from an illness. He understands the weakness of our human mind and body and has provided a solution — the eventual redemption of all mankind from the curse of sin and death. Psalm 103:13, 14; Revelation 21:4; 22:1-3

To be clear, what we are not saying, however, is that it is an acceptable solution for someone to take his or her life. That would be a permanent solution to a temporary problem that can be managed with medical, therapeutic and spiritual support. The ramifications of such an act are quite painful to those loved ones who remain. Therefore, it is far better for everyone that every avenue of assistance be sought to help the one in despair to regain hope and receive help.

To comfort those who have lost loved ones to suicide, it is important to remember that Jesus tasted death for EVERY person. Jesus’ death covers the sin of Adam — not only his original transgression and its penalty, but all the transgressions of his children who have inherited mental, moral and physical afflictions. All who die, including those who have taken their life, wait in their graves in an unconscious, non-living condition until they are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ in his Kingdom. This redemption of the world will be the eventual release from the condemnation of death — even the death caused by suicide. The mentally sick, the morally sick, and the physically sick — all will come forth from their graves, and then, all who avail themselves, will have an opportunity for a full return to life everlasting by learning obedience and righteousness. Isaiah 35:8-10; Revelation 22:17

Yes, Jesus Christ “by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” (Hebrews 2:9) “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (1 Timothy 2:3-6)

Should a Christian Pay Tithes?

Tithing was commanded under the Mosaic Law given to the Nation of Israel. The Israelites were told to give one-tenth of the increase of all they had to Jehovah to be used to support the

priesthood, widows, orphans and other needy. (Deuteronomy 26:12, 13) As a result of keeping the Law, the Lord would assure the prosperity, comfort and safety of the Hebrew Nation.

As for tithing today, Christians have not been commanded to tithe, nor have they been promised health and temporal prosperity as was the Nation of Israel. Christians are not under the Law Covenant given to the Hebrews, for that Covenant was *nailed to the cross* of Christ — coming to an end for those Jews who have accepted Christ. The Apostle Paul said to the Jewish converts: “Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster [the Law].” (Colossians 2:14; Galatians 3:24, 25) Therefore, there was no law of tithing given to the Christian. The Christian is under the law of love — a spirit of giving that would expect nothing in return. Matthew 22:36-40

More important than money, God desires our hearts, our time and our talents. He says, “My son, give me thine heart...” (Proverbs 23:26) A Christian’s entire life and being is given to God — not just a tenth — and he is then to be a steward over all of his time and possessions, to be used in God’s service as He presents opportunities. This does not mean that we should give all we have to a church organization, which may or may not make good use of our free-will offerings. It means that we should determine for ourselves how to best use our time and talents in the Lord’s service as He directs. In exchange, the faithful steward will receive *spiritual* blessings.

But why do the majority of churches promote tithing today if it is not required? Tithing became common in the Christian church by about the third century to finance the large cathedrals and to support the complex organization of the clergy. Although some of the money was put to good use, there was also much corruption in this practice. “The priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money...” (Micah 3:11) “Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain...” Isaiah 56:10, 11 The plea for tithe-money today seems no different, as preachers solicit money to keep their TV evangelism and mega-churches functioning. Many preach the “Prosperity Gospel” — claiming that those who give abundantly to the church will be proportionately rewarded with good health and financial success. They quote Luke 6:38, “Give, and it will be given to you... for with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” By presenting the philosophy of giving so as to get, undue temptation and burden is placed upon many who are already financially strapped, and desperately seeking a way out of poverty and debt.

By contrast, Jesus and his disciples never asked for money to support the Lord’s work. They did, however, receive unsolicited contributions from those who supported their efforts. Yes, it does take money and volunteers to spread the Gospel message today, but we should follow the example of the early church which did not have paid ministers, expensive buildings and large organizational expenses. Instead, we are to learn from the early followers of Christ who met in small fellowships and in simple, unpretentious meeting places.

All Christians must ask themselves — am I giving out of generosity and love, or because I want to receive? “God loveth a cheerful giver,” implies that the gift must be given from the right

motive, or the sacrifice is not acceptable to Him. “Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity [love], it profiteth me nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:3)

Which Church Denomination is the Right One?

The word church was first used in the New Testament and is a translation of the Greek word *ekklēsia*, which means an assembly of those called out of the world. “I have chosen you out of the world.” (John 15:19) Paul called these individuals Jesus’ body members — a sanctified gathering — separated from the world. These study the Scriptures carefully, seeking to glorify God in their thoughts, words and conduct. Hebrews 10:23, 24; John 17:17

In the Apostles’ day, the members of Jesus’ church were not known by a person’s name, but by their location: “Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, ...sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...” (1 Corinthians 1:2) Today, many Bible fellowships still call themselves by their location, and stand separate from sectarianism. They emphasize that the true Church is not a building nor is it a denomination to belong to, but a gathering of sincere believers wherever they may be. For these, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all...” (Ephesians 4:4-6) Therefore, if you have given your life to God in Christ, you have promised him that you will sacrifice with Christ in giving up worldly practices and self-will — seeking, by God’s grace, to set an example and witness to the world. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24)