

Recommended Reading: Great New Testament Questions

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This past week the 29th Annual Bellview Lectures were conducted in Pensacola, Florida. Last year they produced *Great Old Testament Questions*; this current companion volume completes the series, although only a few of the 3,297 questions asked in the King James Version of the Bible could be examined. The forty dealt with here include some of the most important questions ever asked.

Some deal with the nature and mission of Jesus and His kingdom, such as: “How Shall This Be, Seeing I Know Not A Man?” (Luke 1:30). Curtis Cates, director of the Memphis School of Preaching, considers the significance of the virgin birth of Christ and arguments that are used against this historical fact. One of these charges is that the entire account was “**simply pagan and/or Jewish legend and myth**” (151). He highlights the differences between the biblical event and the virgin myths that characterized pagan theology. This discussion is followed by eight points which show the necessity of the virgin birth. Serious students of the Word will want to study and use this material.

Other questions relating to Jesus are: “Where Is He That Is Born King of the Jews?” (Mat. 3:2) and “Son, Why Hast Thou Thus Dealt With Us?” (Luke 2:48). One of the more threatening questions asked of Jesus was: “By What Authority Doest Thou These Things?” (Mat. 21:23). David Brown, editor of *Contending For The Faith*, made an excellent oral presentation, as well as providing pertinent information in the book. He relates the question about Jesus’ authority to the fact that today men likewise (even those who profess to follow Christ) reject His authority. Religious denominations do not appeal to the Scripture for authority—but to “**prayer books, creeds, manuals, catechisms, religious councils, conferences, presbyteries, synods, and the like**” (91). He then demonstrates the connection between authority and love, which is a link that many brethren, elders, and churches have forgotten.

“This is a Hard Saying; Who Can Hear It?” (John 6:60) also treats the subject of biblical authority as it relates to the interpretation of the Scriptures (hermeneutics). It includes a significant statement made by Rubel Shelly to the writer (Lee Davis) in the Los Angeles Airport earlier this year (225).

Other chapters relating specifically to our Lord involve His Deity. One is a question asked of Him by His disciples: “To Whom Shall We Go?” (John 6:68), which recognizes that only Jesus can save us from our sins, and the other one He asked of His critics: “What Think Ye Of Christ? Whose Son Is He?” (Mat. 22:42), which explains how Christ can be David’s son and Lord at the same time. The disciples ask a question of Jesus after His resurrection just prior to His ascension into Heaven, which prompts a discussion of the nature of the kingdom: “Lord, Wilt Thou At This Time Restore Again The Kingdom To Israel?” (Acts 1:6).

Closely related to topics about Jesus are those that relate to faith, two of which are: “Why Are Ye Fearful, O Ye of Little Faith?” (Mat. 8:26) and “Carest Thou Not That We Perish?” (Mark 4:38). Terry Hightower, who is well-known in Florida—as well as for his directing of the Shenandoah lectures for a number of years in San Antonio, Texas—brings to light some interesting facts related to this latter question. He points out that the author of an oft-quoted book, *When Bad Things Happen To Good People*, is actually an agnostic (131-32). He also takes exception to a quote by G. Gordon Liddy regarding the object of his faith (133). He also offers a thorough analysis of the situation regarding the Lord’s disciples and the storm.

Three challenges to the Christian’s faith are made in “How Shall We Escape, If We Neglect So Great Salvation?” (Heb. 2:3), “Who Shall Be Able To Stand?” (Rev. 6:17), and “For What Son Is He Whom The Father Chasteneth Not?” (Heb. 12:7).

Also important are two questions that all of society ought to be asking: “What Is Truth?” (John 18:36) and “Am I Therefore Become Your Enemy Because I Tell You The Truth?” (Gal. 4:16). The former of these involves the definition and design of Truth, as well as its delineation, which includes some material on hermeneutics and homiletics. The latter emphasizes the Christian’s “Dilemma of Responsibility.”

The subject of salvation also receives considerable attention with five related chapters, the most direct being “What Must I Do To Be Saved?” (Acts 16: 30), which considers the full context of the question. “What Shall A Man Give In Exchange For His Soul?” (Mat. 16:26) stresses the idea that all else in comparison to salvation is greatly inferior. Something that some Christians wonder about—especially due to errors being taught on the subject of grace—is, “Shall We Continue In Sin That Grace May Abound?” (Rom. 6:1). Both *grace* and *faith* are defined and explained, and there is a section titled “Changes Wrought By The Gospel,” followed by baptism’s role.

“Lord, Are There Few That Be Saved?” (Luke 13:23), besides taking issue with a recent song by Brooks and Dunn (“Red Dirt Road”) (194), gives the reader a look at why the answer to this question is, “Yes,” which is contrary to the thinking of most Americans. “O Death, Where Is Thy Sting?” (1 Cor. 15:55) is an uplifting chapter that exploits one of the marvelous benefits of being a Christian. It first contains the true story of a woman who tried to escape death—to no avail (362-63)—and then goes on to discuss what the sting is and how Christians bypass it. There are two helpful charts on “Where Are The Dead?” (368-69).

Some “great questions” focus our attention on *fellowship*. B. J. Clarke, director of the Power Lectures, as well as the publication of the same name, works with the question Jesus asked the multitude, “Who Are My Brethren?” (Mat. 12:48). After examining the context, he then outlines the answers others have provided, including Merrill C. Tenney (denominational theologian), William Barclay (commentator), Promise Keepers, Max Lucado (popular author) and Rubel Shelly (current leader of apostasy). None of these hold the biblical view of fellowship (25-37).

“Is Christ Divided?” (1 Cor. 1:13) discusses not only the context of 1 Corinthians 1 but also that of Ephesians 4. “What Fellowship Hath Righteousness With Unrighteousness?” (2 Cor. 6:14) spends time defining what is unrighteous. The writer draws a conclusion from

the text that many elders and congregations have had trouble seeing: “If one is not teaching the truth, we have no right to have him teach, preach, or pray for us” (387). The Bible is so explicit on matters like these that it is sad that such a conclusion must be spelled out—but it does. Many are either glibly or ignorantly fellowshiping those who have (in the past) or who do (currently) deny some of the fundamental teachings of the Scriptures.

The fifth chapter on *fellowship* is “But Why Dost Thou Judge Thy Brother?” (Rom. 14:10). Although a full treatment is provided of the context (Rom. 14), some other matters are also considered, such as the nature and definition of *judging*. Pornography, current “intellectualism,” and even the philosophy of some religious universities are cited. One of these even prides itself on being irreligious (330-31). In some respects, we must “judge” our brothers; attention is given concerning the ways we refrain from doing so. A related topic is “Suppose Ye That I Am Come To Give Peace On Earth?” (Luke 12:51).

Several chapters deal with Christian attributes or conduct, such as “Who Is The Greatest In The Kingdom of Heaven?” (Mat. 18:1) and “Why Stand Ye Here All The Day Idle?” (Mat. 20:6), which contains a lengthy list of ways by which the church is designated in the New Testament (77). “Which Is The Great Commandment In The Law?” (Mat. 22:36) shows that love of God involves loving Christ, which also means loving the body of Christ. Included are some samples of writings of those (purporting to be brethren) who obviously do not have any love for the body of Christ (104-105).

Jesus asked (and it needs to be repeated in every generation): “Why Call Ye Me, Lord, Lord, And Do Not The Things Which I Say?” (Luke 6:46). The writer presents answers with respect to the Lord’s world, His Word, His work, and His worship. David Watson, associate editor of *The Gospel Journal*, provides comprehensive coverage of “Why Sleep Ye?” (Luke 22:46). Besides the consideration of the context, he points out that our country, our Congress, our courts, our colleges, and our congregations are asleep. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book.

Other related chapters are “Are Ye Not Then Partial in Yourselves?” (Jam. 2:4), “Wilt Thou Know...Faith Without Works Is Dead?” (Jam. 2:20), “Who Is A Wise Man Endued With Knowledge Among You?” (Jam. 3:13), and “What Is Your Life?” (Jam. 4:14), which includes the helpful idea of numbering all the excuses that brethren have for non-attendance—so that only the number be given instead of the explanation. One chapter deals with divorce—“Is It Lawful For A Man To Put Away His Wife For Every Cause?” (Mat. 19:3). There are many errors being taught on this subject today, and the writer does an excellent job in setting forth the truth plainly. Brethren have frequently taken two different positions on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; both of those views are presented by different writers (288-305). Other chapters include: “Understandest Thou What Thou Readest?” (Acts 8:30), “Wherefore Then Servest The Law?” (Gal. 3:19), and “If God Be For Us, Who Can Be Against Us?” (Rom. 8: 31).

The 502 pages briefly reviewed above can be ordered from the Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526. The cost is only \$12, plus postage.

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