



The ENJOY THE BIBLE

Quarterly

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Fourth Quarter 2002

Questions and Answers

Our annual issue devoted to Questions and Answers. The following selections have been edited to either conserve space, ensure clarity, and/or remove any personal information.

Genesis 15:13, Exodus 12:40-41, and Galatians 3:17

These three passages seem to be referring to the exact same era of time, but the number of years do not agree. Why is this? Some Bible commentators treat this as a 'mild textual discrepancy,' while many Bible critics point to it as proof that the Bible is not perfect and clearly has errors in it.

Though the same general era of time is in view in each of the passages, the specific issue being referred to and dated within that era in each of the passages is not exactly the same. And this accounts for the difference.

In Galatians 3:17 Paul's dating of 430 years pertains to the span of time between when the covenant "was confirmed before of God in Christ" until "the law" was brought in. This is the specific issue that Paul is dealing with. However it is obvious that this issue is not the exact same issue that is in view back in Genesis 15:13. Though the same general era of time may be involved, the two passages are dealing with two different issues and therefore set forth two differently dated issues within that general era of time.

Paul in Galatians 3 is dealing with the particular issue of "the covenant" aspect of God's "promise" to Abraham. But not only this, Paul is specifically concerned with the point at which "the covenant" was "confirmed." Notice that there are these three issues in Paul's doctrine: the "promise," "the covenant," and it being "confirmed." Simply put, when God first dealt with Abraham, (to which Abraham responded with the hearing of faith), what God said to him was in the form of a "promise." Then God put it in the form of a "covenant." And then even subsequent to doing that God specifically "confirmed" it in a way that made it so that just as with a "man's covenant" "no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto."

So when it comes to Paul's dating he begins it with the point of time at which God did the 'confirming.' This is what he is concerned with for the subject matter that he is dealing with in Galatians 3. And again it is obvious that

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what Paul is concerned with is not the issue that is in view in Genesis 15:13. Neither is it the exact same issue that is set forth in Exodus 12:40-41, even though the time span cited there coincides.

With respect to the dating in Genesis 15:13, the particular issue there has to do with the amount of time involved in Abraham's seed being "afflicted" "in a land that is not theirs." The issue is not the 'confirming' of the covenant as with Paul in Galatians and the span of time between it and the bringing in of the law. So this itself means that we should not expect the time spoken about in the two passages to match up, since the two passages are not talking about the exact same thing.

Moreover note that in Genesis 15:13 the amount of time spoken of is not even specifically for the time of Abraham's seed being "a stranger in a land that is not theirs" and 'serving them.' Hence this also shows that the time referred to here is not supposed to be the same as the time cited in Exodus 12:40-41. Instead the last expression in verse 13 of Genesis 15 specifically states that the time denoted pertains to them being "afflicted" while they are that "stranger." Abraham's seed was not always "afflicted" while they were that "stranger." But during the overall time of them being that "stranger," for "four hundred years" of it they would be "afflicted."

Hence the three passages are dealing with the dating of three different issues during the same general era of time, with the specifics and details related in each passage making this obvious.

Dear Friends of EBM,

You may have noticed that you did not receive the 3rd quarter edition of *The Enjoy The Bible Quarterly*. This was not the fault of the postal system, or an oversight. Rather due to some unexpected complications that arose in the preparation of it we found that we would not be able to have it ready for publication in time. Consequently to avoid complicating things further by endeavoring to publish two editions in a short span of time, we decided to cancel the 3rd quarter edition.

Speaking of time, some recent changes in the lives of our volunteer staff have made it so that the time we have to give to EBM is not only a precious commodity, but unfortunately it is also in short supply. Hence though we do all that we can to respond quickly to orders, phone calls, email, and the like, please be aware that at times we will not be able to do so. Thank you for understanding.

We continue to work on making the necessary changes and alterations to our *Very Simple Survey of The Bible* booklet series so that the project can be completed. At the present time Volumes II through VI of the series have been collected together, reformatted, and are being prepared for printing as a compilation book. Though the work it takes to do all of this sounds simple enough, it is really quite time-consuming and involved. The final stages of this work for Volumes II through VI are now at hand, and we will continue to keep you posted on our progress.

Tithing

Even though I know we live in the dispensation of God's grace, tithing still seems to make sense to me. After all the ministries of a church should be supported.

You are correct in stating that the ministries of a church should be supported, at least one that is functioning as a genuine "pillar and ground of the truth." However tithing is not how God has designed for this to be done in this present dispensation of His grace.

We need to recognize and understand first off that tithing is not the issue of free will giving or a free will offering at all. In fact it is pretty much the exact opposite of that. Tithing is actually an imposed tax in God's program and dealings with Israel. It is a tax of one-tenth that God placed upon the citizenry of Israel for the primary purpose of funding Israel's national theocracy and services, and especially the priesthood, as God's nation.

The tithing regulations and commandments of the law make this plain, wherein 3 specific "tithes" are set forth by which the people of Israel fund their nation, its services, and the priesthood within it. Simply put, these 3 specific "tithes" provide for the Levites' livelihood; for making and having all of the provisions for the feast days; and for the poor of the land. For this reason God speaks to Israel about "all the tithes," for there was more than one. And since tithing was imposed and functioned as a tax upon the citizenry of Israel, God also speaks of them as ones that "pay tithe" and the Levites who collected it as the ones who "take tithes of the people."

In addition to the issue of tithing there was also the issue of, and provision for, free will giving in God's program with Israel. But it is distinctly spoken of as such and it is dealt with separately in the Law. Therefore free will giving is clearly not what "tithing" is all about.

So then because of what "tithing" is, and because of its specific function in God's program with Israel, God through the apostle Paul to us in this present dispensation of His grace makes no mention of, or even reference to, tithing when it comes to us. For not only is God's program and dealings with Israel temporarily set aside and in abeyance while this dispensation is in effect, but God's "new creature," (the "one new man," the church the body of Christ that He is now forming), is not a

nation in God's plan and purpose. It is not a theocracy and/or priesthood like Israel is in God's plan and purpose with them.

Tithing, therefore, has nothing to do with us in this present dispensation of grace. No form of taxation-style giving, or obligatory giving, is part of God's program with us today. Nor is any such giving the kind of giving that God wants to see from His "sons." Instead God through the apostle Paul teaches us (for example in II Corinthians 8-9) the issue of completely free will giving. We are taught the issue of cheerfully responding to a pure and simple grace that is given to us, with giving that is to be motivated by, and done solely on the basis of, our gratitude, thanksgiving, and appreciation for God's marvelous grace unto us. As such our giving is to be done cheerfully, without compulsion, necessity, or obligation, being solely the product of Godly love and charity within us, which has been generated in us by the effectual working of God's word within us.

Prophets

Is it proper for someone to call himself a prophet, or to claim to have "the gift of prophecy," today? There seem to be many who do.

The only ones calling themselves prophets at this time in this present dispensation of God's grace are ones who are self-professed prophets, but not genuine prophets of God at all. The genuine role and function of the prophets at the beginning of this dispensation was because they possessed the gift of prophecy, just as Paul teaches for example in I Corinthians 12-14. This particular gift, along with the rest of the spiritual gifts that were given and functioning at that time, were needed at the beginning of this dispensation until the "more excellent way" arrived with the completion of God's written word and the perfect knowledge status that it would provide. The gifts were only given by God, and only functioned, during the time when "that which is perfect" had not yet come. "That which is perfect," as the context of I Corinthians 13 makes plain, is the perfect knowledge state that would exist when all the doctrine God had to reveal for this dispensation was revealed, and it was written down so that God's written word was fulfilled.

That this would happen during the very lifetime of the Corinthians saints themselves is also clear, for Paul's corrective doctrine on the overall subject of the spiritual gifts prepared them for the time when the gifts would "be done away" and they themselves would be operating upon the "more excellent way" brought in by the perfect, completed written word of God. And the gifts certainly were "done away," just as Paul taught. For though when he wrote I Corinthians he referred to the giving of the gifts as a present tense issue that was going on at the time he wrote, he no longer did this in his later epistles. For example in his later epistle of Ephesians, in particular 4:7-16, (where he specifically deals with the perfect knowledge status of the "more excellent" way that had then arrived), he refers to what Christ had done in giving the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers as a past tense event. Wherefore Paul says, "And he gave some..." in verse 11.

So then the temporary time of the giving and functioning of the gifts was now over. The "more excellent way" spoken about and looked forward to earlier on in I Corinthians 12-14 had now arrived. Therefore that which was in part was now "done away."

For this reason also Paul repeatedly talks in his later epistles about the "all" knowledge and wisdom status that now exists for us, along with the issue of us being 'perfect men' in our edification and no more 'children.' Once again the very immature and partial knowledge state that existed earlier on, which by its nature demanded the giving and function of spiritual gifts, now no longer was in existence. The "more excellent way" had arrived. The full revelation of knowledge for us had arrived, and with Paul's later epistles it was being committed to the written word of God, and the word of God was being "fulfilled" by him, just as Paul states in Colossians 1.

So with this being the case, the gift of prophecy in particular was no longer given by God for it was no longer needed. It had fulfilled its function with the ones to whom it was given at the beginning of this dispensation, and it has been superseded by the perfect, completed written word of God, just as God planned for and designed to take place.

Therefore there have been no genuine prophets, or genuine possessors of the gift of prophecy, in this dispensation of grace since Paul began writing his later epistles. All others throughout this dispensation of grace and down to the present time who would call themselves prophets, or claim to have the gift of prophecy, or are called prophets by others, are either self-deceived or deceived by others into so thinking of themselves as such. Moreover they are also wittingly or unwittingly cooperating with the Satanic policy of evil against the written word of God by their actions.

The next time a genuine prophet of God will exist and function on the earth will be after God concludes this present dispensation of His grace, at which time He will resume and fulfill His program and dealings with Israel. The final installment in God's program with Israel yet to come will see the function of some prophets whose particular role and function will have to do with bringing God's final condemning indictment upon the rebelliousness and contrariness of Israel's apostate religious system.

The Bottles of Heaven

What does God mean when in Job 38:37 He says to Job, "who can stay the bottles of heaven"?

My understanding is that "the bottles of heaven" and the issue of "who can stay" them is something that is more than just a reference to governing the weather, or orchestrating it. Before this specific issue in verses 37-38 is set forth, God has dealt with the fundamental issue of causing "it to rain

on the earth," etc. So I am persuaded that He is not just repeating Himself now in verses 37-38.

My understanding is that all of these questions in this latter portion of chapter 38 have to do with the issue of being able to utilize, even manipulate, the ordinances of heaven and earth. And these ordinances will need to be understood, utilized, and even manipulated, in the day that God reconciles the earth to Himself. The judgments, plagues, and the like, that will need to be brought to pass in that day will require this ability. And this is the very ability that God Himself has, and this is the very thing that He will do in that day.

With respect therefore to "the bottles of heaven," this is part of the specific issue of the ability to both "stay" and provide water when the conditions of verse 38 exist in the Lord's day. Hence the issue of describing them as "the bottles of heaven." A bottle is a container for liquids, especially water, and generally for personal use so that one has water with him and available to him when he needs it. The judgments, plagues, and the like of the Lord's day are going to have an effect upon the availability of water. This will effect both the ungodly, and the remnant of Israel. To be able to produce the necessary judgments, as well as to be able to provide water to the ones to whom God promises it, one will need to be able to do what verse 37 says. That is "number the clouds in wisdom" during that time, and also be able to stop "the bottles of heaven" from proceeding and getting through to certain places, while at the same time seeing to it that they do get through to other places and to other people.

The Book of Mormon

Those who call themselves Mormons, or Latter Day Saints, point to Ezekiel 37:15-20, Isaiah 29:11, and John 10:16 to prove that the Bible prophesied about the book of Mormon. Could you give me some insight into what these passages are talking about?

The verses you cited are the most common verses in the Bible that Mormonism uses to try to show that the coming of the book of Mormon was prophesied about. As you are undoubtedly aware, Mormonism contains many teachings which are contrary to what the Bible says, (e.g. Adam was our God and Father; Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost; men are not spiritually dead by nature in Adam; Lucifer was a spirit brother to Jesus). It also is full of teachings of which the Bible makes no mention, (e.g. their doctrine of celestial marriage; the Army of Redeemers).

However it is also interesting to note that many of Mormonism's cardinal doctrines and teachings cannot be found in the book of Mormon either. For example, the book of Mormon does not speak of 'baptism for the dead'; of celestial marriage; of progression to godhood; or of a host of other essential Mormon teachings, ordinances, and the like. These teachings are found in the subsequent writings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, and in the so-called other revelations given to them through their priesthood.

In truth, though the book of Mormon is by necessity honored by them, it is not their main source of faith and practice. Nor is the Bible. Their other books and writings are actually their main source of faith and practice. Mormons naturally deny this. However their doctrines, ordinances, and practices say otherwise.

In my experience with their doctrines the book of Mormon is primarily used by them as a tool to bridge the gap, so to speak, between the Bible and their other books like "Doctrine and Covenants" and the "Pearl of Great Price," in which their essential doctrines and 'gospel ordinances' are to be found. And what they want converts to Mormonism to do is to pass from the Bible to their other books of revelation by going over the bridge that the book of Mormon functions as. Hence the last of their Articles of Faith

states, "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God." With this statement they first of all pay lip-service to the Bible, while at the same time impugning the reliability of the Bible, since to them it has not been consistently 'translated correctly.' By so saying, they also conveniently leave themselves the ability to discard, disregard, and/or adjust any of its teachings that they don't like, or that they want to adjust to say something different, by simply saying that a particular statement, or verse, or passage in the Bible has not been properly translated. They then translate it, or interpret it, in such a way as fits their needs. So

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though this particular Article of Faith professes the Bible to be the word of God, it does not state this to be so unreservedly.

However no such reservation is made in connection with the book of Mormon. This, the Article states, is simply "the word of God," with no question as to whether it is translated correctly or not. And later on the reason for this becomes apparent when the book of Mormon is used to move a convert's confidence away from what the Bible says, to what the book of Mormon says, and then to move it ultimately to what their books of other revelations have to say. The Bible is honored by them; the book of Mormon is revered by them; but their other books of revelations are what are actually believed and followed.

Nevertheless the book of Mormon is essential to Mormonism. And as such it goes to great lengths to persuade people that the Bible prophesies about its coming; that it is 'another testament of Jesus Christ'; and that it is the testament of Jesus Christ that not only pertains to those in the Americas, but to all men, seeing that (as they teach) it contains the "everlasting gospel in its fulness" and Mormonism is the only "True church on the earth."

Now with respect to the verses and passages in the Bible that Mormonism uses to promote the book of Mormon, an honest handling of them in their particular contexts makes it plain and clear that they do not say what Mormonism says they say. (However Mormonism is not counting on anyone handling the verses honestly within their contexts. It doesn't do this itself, and it figures others will not do so, or be able to do so.) So by paying attention to their contexts, and by paying attention to the outworking of God's program and dealings with Israel, the following briefly and simply sets forth what the verses are talking about.

Re: Ezekiel 37:15-20 — The immediate context of this passage, along with the overall context of the outworking of God's program with Israel, make it plain and clear that "the stick" that is written upon with the words "For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions" is *not* the Bible, and "the stick" that is written upon with the words "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for the children of Israel his companions" is *not* the book of Mormon. Nor does the joining of them "one to another into one stick" in Ezekiel's hand prophesy about the Bible and the book of Mormon becoming the combined word of God in the latter days.

This is basically what Mormonism teaches, but the context forbids any such interpretation. For the context itself interprets what God "meanest by these" in verses 18-25ff, and it is plain

and clear what they mean in the interpretation that it gives.

As verses 18-25 set forth, the “sticks” with the names of the two particular tribes of Israel written on them, along with the reference to the other tribes that became “companions” of either Judah or Joseph/Ephraim, represent the “two nations” “divided into two kingdoms” that the whole nation of Israel had become following the death of Solomon. As I Kings earlier on recorded, the whole nation was divided into two nations, and two kingdoms, after Solomon’s death. This was done in accordance with bringing upon Israel the Second Course of Punishment belonging to the Law covenant, which is set forth and described in Leviticus 26.

Now in the latter part of Ezekiel’s prophesies God is setting before Israel how it is that He will deliver them from all of the effects of the Law’s Courses of Punishment that they have brought upon themselves by their failure to keep that covenant. This God will do when He culminates His program and dealings with Israel, establishing them in their promised land and establishing His kingdom on this earth with them in their land. And in connection with rectifying the effects of the Courses of Punishment, specifically in Ezekiel 37:15ff God is prophesying about the issue of reversing the division of the nation that took place when the Second Course of Punishment was brought upon Israel.

As verse 22 makes plain, the two “sticks” represent the two nations, two kingdoms, status that Israel possesses as the result of Leviticus 26. But in putting the two sticks together into one stick, it illustrates for the whole house of Israel the reversal of this status. God is going to reverse the effects of Leviticus 26 and “make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.”

The prophecy and meaning of the two sticks is self-interpreting in verses 18-25. And as such it is blatantly obvious that what Mormonism says about it is a deliberately corrupt and false interpretation. What Mormonism says is of their own concoction. It is a lie that is dishonestly forced on the passage, and it has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the immediate context, or with the doctrinal role of Ezekiel’s prophecies in the outworking of God’s program and dealings with Israel.

Re: Isaiah 29:11 — According to Mormon publications, this verse is cited to substantiate the book of Mormon being the word of God because

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the book of Mormon is said by them to be “the sealed book of Isaiah, chapter 29, which it quotes and interprets.”

However as a careful reading of verse 29 shows, God through Isaiah is not talking about a book, or producing a book. Rather He is talking about a “vision of all” that He has given to Israel, which He says to Israel is “become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed,...” In other words, a particular “vision” that God has given to Israel becomes unto them “as the words of a book that is sealed”; i.e. though the “vision” is given unto them, it is like a “book that is sealed,” and as such they are not going to be able to understand it, even though they possess it and read it.

Therefore the issue in the verse is not the existence of a book, or the producing of a book, or the coming of a

book. Instead the issue is the particular “vision of all” that God has given to Israel; and the “vision” is being likened unto “a book that is sealed.” Again there is no ‘sealed book.’ The issue of a ‘sealed book’ is only used in the verse as an analogy for the fact that Israel would not be able to understand the meaning of the “vision” that God gave to them through Isaiah.

Now “the vision of all” that the verse refers to is “The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah,” just as Isaiah 1:1 declares that Isaiah wrote about. And as Isaiah 6:9ff previously set forth; and as Isaiah 29:9-10 states immediately before verse 11; God was going to judicially blind Israel so that they could not understand Isaiah’s “vision” right away. And as the context belonging to both of these passages relates, God would do this because of Israel’s apostasy. And it would not be until after He proceeded to do “a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder” by which He dealt with “the wisdom of their wise men” and “the understanding of their prudent men,” that God would lift the judicial blindness from off of Israel and they could understand Isaiah’s “vision.”

The “marvelous work” that God would perform was the cross work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and once it was accomplished God lifted the judicial blindness off of Israel, just as He said He would do and just as the opening chapters of the book of Acts testifies.

This is what Isaiah 29:11 is talking about. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the coming of another book from God called the book of Mormon, (or called anything else for that matter), by which the Bible would be properly interpreted.

Re: John 10:16 — According to Mormon publications, “the promise concerning ‘other sheep’ was realized

by the appearance of Christ to the Nephites,” and it is the book of Mormon that testifies to this. However God’s program with Israel says that John 10:16 means something else.

God had already identified the “other sheep” when He prophesied in Ezekiel about coming to “search my sheep, and seek them out”; when He prophesied about He Himself being “the good shepherd” in contrast to “the shepherds of Israel” who have been cruel to the Lord’s flock; and when He prophesied about setting up “one shepherd” over them when they are no more “two nations.” In Ezekiel 34 God begins prophesying about these things and begins describing His actions as Israel’s “good shepherd.” Then in chapter 37, (where we have already noted that He describes reversing the “two nations” judgment of the Second Course of Punishment of Leviticus 26), God goes on to describe how when all Israel is no longer “two nations” but “one nation in the land,” that at that time “they all shall have one shepherd.” The nation therefore will no longer be “two nations” with two folds of sheep.

So then in view of this prophecy, the Lord in the opening portion of John 10 is describing those aspects of His ‘shepherd ministry’ that were in effect at that time in accordance with the fulfillment of Ezekiel 34. But as He said in verse 16, “other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” In accordance with Ezekiel 37, those “other sheep” are the sheep belonging to Joseph/Ephraim and the house of Israel his companions, who are also known in the Gospel accounts as the Samaritans.

These “other sheep” were not being dealt with at the same time as the rest of the sheep of Israel, because God had said that He would deal with Jerusalem and Judea first. The “other sheep” are the Samaritans, and in per-

fect accordance with the prophesied outworking of God’s program with Israel the time would come in the program when these “other sheep” would be called. But not until the sheep of Jerusalem and Judea were dealt with first.

So then these are the issues that are being spoken about in these three particular passages. It is plain and clear from their respective contexts, and from the outworking of God’s program with Israel, that what Mormonism teaches from these passages is not only false, but a deceitful lie.

Galatians 3:19

What is the point of Paul’s statement regarding the law being “ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator”?

By what the apostle Paul says he is primarily underscoring the fact that in view of the way in which the law was given and was “ordained” it should be obvious that by nature it is a different type of covenant from the one that was earlier on “confirmed before of God in Christ” and set forth by God in Abraham’s day. And indeed the law is just that. It is a different type of covenant with a different purpose to it.

As Paul began pointing out from back at verse 15, by all sound principles of jurisprudence the law cannot be looked upon as fulfilling the same purpose as the covenanted promise to Abraham. Nor can the law be thought of as annulling that previously covenanted promise and/or replacing it, nor being something that was later added to it like a ‘rider clause,’ etc. Legally this is impossible. Even man’s own jurisprudence won’t allow it. (And again this kind of recognition and understanding is just what Paul is after, as verses 15ff make clear, in view of the fact that the law was being deceitfully taught as if it was the means for obtaining justification in God’s sight.)

Moreover, by being “ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” as

verse 19 declares, the law is all the more clearly and legally manifest not to be a covenant of the same kind, (and therefore not for the same purpose), as the one which God had already set forth and confirmed 430 years earlier in Abraham’s day. Again, legally speaking by the nature of its ‘ordaining’ the law covenant is manifest to be of a different variety altogether. Therefore its purpose also has to be different, just as Paul sets forth to be the case in the first part of verse 19.

Being “ordained” as it was, the law clearly is a two-party covenant, since a mediator was involved. And also with angels representing God on His side and being the agency through whom He gave the law to Israel, it was clearly dealing with something different from the issue of justification unto eternal life that God had earlier dealt with Abraham about, and had confirmed to him was resident in and confined to the merits of his singular “seed, which is Christ.”

So then since no angels and no mediator were involved in the covenant “confirmed before of God in Christ” in Abraham’s day, the law covenant obviously must be a different type of covenant with a different purpose. And again that’s exactly what it is.

In essence, and simply put, Galatians 3:15-20 is a legal attestation and certification based upon common principles of jurisprudence, (particularly those pertaining to covenant making), that the law covenant cannot be the means by which the Justice of God justifies men unto eternal life. It is legally impossible for it to be so. God’s Justice would have to be unjust, self contradictory, and corrupt for it to be so. — K. R. Blades

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