

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

ON

THE BIBLE

Bishop Moussa

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

? Is the Bible supposed to be taken literally, that is, word for word?

Yes, it is to be taken literally, but sometimes the Bible means something spiritually. An example of this is when Jesus said, “If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out” (Matthew 18:9), Christ didn't mean this literally, but meant if something tempts you to sin, turn away from it.

? In the book of Genesis, what do the ‘waters’ refer to in the Creation of the world: “Thus God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so” (1:7)?

The waters ‘above’ refers to the rain, and the waters ‘below’ refer to the oceans.

? When God created the world, was each day a period of 24 hours?

No. Creation occurred before the sun and moon were in existence, and each day of creation was a long period of time, for example, we are still living in the seventh day. So do not deal with the days of creation in 24 hour time.

? Why did people in the Old Testament practice polygamy (marriage to more than one wife)?

When God created Adam, He created only one Eve. But due to the sin of the people, the Lord overlooked some of their weaknesses, such as divorce and polygamy.

However, in Christianity, due to the accomplishment of salvation, and the gift of the

Holy Spirit, we have returned to the one Adam, and the one Eve.

? **Is it true that Cain and Abel married their sisters?**

Yes. During the time of the first generation, marriage amongst brothers and sisters was permitted for the purpose of procreation. But gradually, it became forbidden.

? **What is the meaning of the words in the Psalm, “Be angry and do not sin” (Psalm 4:4) ?**

It is the emotions which lead to anger, but it is important to have your anger contained and controlled, so that you do not sin by insulting or swearing or fighting. It is better to be angry with yourself than be angry at others. Please practice self control, through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit.

? **What is the meaning and significance of the three books of King Solomon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Songs)?**

The three books of King Solomon correspond to the three steps in one’s spiritual life: Proverbs is the book of ‘wisdom’, Ecclesiastes is the book of ‘vanity’, and Song of Songs is the book of ‘love’. By ‘wisdom’ we mean the spiritual wisdom from God, not the earthly philosophical wisdom. After gaining spiritual wisdom and being enlightened by God’s divine light, you will come to the realisation that this world is ‘vanity’, because all will vanish. And once you will come to the realisation about the world, you will look towards the Kingdom of Heaven and the King of Heaven, our beloved Lord Jesus Christ. You will devote yourself and your time to Him, and thereby you will be united to Him through love.

? **What is the meaning of the Bible verse “Do not be overly righteous nor be overly wise: why should you destroy yourselves?” (Ecclesiastes 7:16)?**

It means we should be moderate in all things, because if, for example, you exaggerate in your religious life by increasing the number of prostrations you do, etc, it can lead to pride, and thereby harm you instead of doing you good.

? **What does the Song of Solomon symbolise?**

This very holy book speaks about the relationship between our beloved Lord Jesus Christ (the Beloved), and the soul (the Shulamite). It can also be interpreted as the relationship between the Lord and the Church. And thirdly, it can relate to St Mary, in parts. It has been said that if the Old Testament is a holy book, then the Song of Songs is the holiest of holies. There are some people who consider this book to be representing the sensual relationship between a man and a woman, but this book should not be considered this way. We may take it, however, to also symbolise the spiritual and holy union that occurs between a man and woman in marriage, for the love that is shared in marriage is spiritual 'agape' love.

? What is the meaning of the verse, “Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines” (Songs 2:15)?

These 'small foxes' represent the small sins. Sometimes we disregard small sins as being insignificant, but these small sins are actually more dangerous than big sins because they will grow. Therefore we must be alert in order to catch and destroy these small sins before giving them the chance to grow.

? Why did Jesus convert water to wine at the wedding of Cana, if the Bible speaks against alcohol?

The wine which the Lord converted from water was not fermented, it was refreshing grape juice, and for this reason, the master of the house commented, “Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is inferior, but you have kept the good wine until now” (John 2:10).

? What does it mean when Christ says, “To look at a woman lustfully you have already committed adultery” (Matthew 5:28) ?

The point here is that it is wrong to look in order to fulfil some kind of lust, or feed some sort of lust, because if this is the intention, you have already committed adultery in your heart, and eventually you will even commit the sin. But if you are strong, even if you will look, and feel any desire, you will have self control, and making the sign of the Cross, you will overcome. It is natural to have these desires, but through the power and grace of God, you will keep yourself holy at the same time.

? What is the meaning of ‘the world’ in the Bible, because in one place the Lord says, “For God so loved the world”, and then in another He says, “Do not love the world” ?

The word 'world' in the Bible has three interpretations and if we do not understand each meaning, it can lead to confusion: 1. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"(John 3:16). Here the 'world' means the people - 'whoever'. Therefore, God loves everybody in the world, and created us in His own image; you also must love everyone in the world in Christ, in a pure, fruitful, building way. To deal with the world as people equals love. 2. “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). This verse relates to the 'things' of the world; 'things' being sins such as adultery and pride. 3. "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4). This verse emphasises how much the sin of adultery is displeasing to God. Both James and 1 John explain how we must hate the world as sin, but love the world as people. This is because we are servants of the Lord, and members in the huge body of mankind, and it is our purpose to witness in front of everybody for the Lord.

? What is meant by the Bible verse “when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10) ?

It means that in times of weakness I am going to ask for the power of God to help me and strengthen me. We can obtain this power through reading the Bible, reading spiritual books, receiving the Holy Communion, praying from the Agbia, and through repeating over and over, “My Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon me!” This small prayer is called the ‘arrow prayer’ because it pierces the heavens and reaches the Lord, and we receive a reply on the spot.

? What is the meaning of the number of the beast 666 in the Book of Revelation?

It has so many interpretations, but the easiest is that, "it is the number of man",

(Revelation 13:18), because man was created on the sixth day. Through this God is saying, 'My church do not be afraid from your enemies, because your enemies are only men'; 666 representing several powers trying to attack the church, which can be such things as Islam, Communism, and Atheism, but through the power of the Lord, the church will be victorious and shall overcome at last.

? Where in the Bible does it say that people who went to heaven are alive?

In the Bible, God said, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living"(Matthew 22:32). And as we know, at the time of God saying these words, these three people were already dead in the flesh, but alive in the spirit. Also in the Bible, we read the story about Lazarus and the rich man, whom after they died physically, were conversing with Abraham, and the rich man even felt concern for the brothers he left behind on earth. Hence, although dead in body, they are alive in spirit.