

The Brown Street Beacon

"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,

holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)



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Who Will Be Answering Whom?

I recently heard a famous actor being asked an interesting question. The question was, "What if there really is a heaven?" The actor's response was, "If there is a heaven, he (God) has a lot of explaining to do."

I'm not sure what this actor had on his mind when he made that statement, but the thought isn't new. For a long time man has been confused as to who will be answering to whom when this life is over. It is not uncommon for man to think that God has a lot of explaining to do so far as the condition of the world is concerned. It is as if it is God's fault that this world is in a mess, and one of these days, He is going to have to explain how He let all this happen. But there are a few things we need to understand.

First, the mess that the world is in is man's fault, not God's. God created man as free moral agents with the ability to choose how he is going to live. The world is not in a mess because God could not have prevented it. The world is in a mess because God allowed man to make choices. The sinful society in which we live is the result of bad decisions on the part of man. The crime, the wars, the hatred that leads to great violence, even the poverty that exists in many parts of the world, can all be traced back to man choosing to sin. When man chooses love over hate, the result is peace and harmony. When man chooses obedience to God instead of rebellion, the result is blessedness instead of destitution. God cannot be held responsible for the bad decisions of a world corrupted by sin.

Second, the mess that the religious world is in cannot be blamed on God either. Some conclude that if there was really a God, and if the Bible was really an inspired book, there would be religious unity in the world. Since there is division instead, that is proof that there is no God. Surely an all powerful God can prevent such chaos if He wanted to. The truth, however, can once again be found in the free will of man. God gave man an inspired book, but He has never forced him to follow it. He leaves that in the realm of choice. Man's responsibility is to read and understand the Word. The fact that many people read the Bible and still end up divided is not God's fault either. It is the fault of those who take the wrong approach to the scriptures.

Some people are divided in religious matters, not over what the Bible says, but over what it doesn't say. Have you ever heard people argue over what kind of fruit Adam and Eve ate in the Garden of Eden? Or about why Nicodemus came to Jesus at night instead of the day? The Bible doesn't give us the answer to those things; thus, when man argues over them, they are arguing over something not even in the Bible. This happens in more critical issues as well. Man is divided over whether one should be baptized. Is that God's fault? Of course not! God has made baptism mandatory as clearly revealed in the scriptures (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16, etc.). When

man says we do not have to be baptized, he is basing that conclusion on what the Bible doesn't say, not what it says. That's why there is division. No one in their right mind would blame God for that.

At other times there is division because of the "but" philosophy. Someone says, "I know the Bible says this or that, BUT!" That is a problem with one's approach to the Word of God. If we know the Bible is from God, and that it is an inspired book, we should just do what it says without trying to "but" our way out of it.

Well, my point is the religious world is not in a mess because God somehow was slack in His duty. God made man with intelligence and then gave him a book he could understand and told him to follow it. It is not God's fault if man either never looks at it, or decides to take his own way after learning the truth. Yes, both the physical world and the religious world are in a mess. But make no mistake about it: in the end man will have to answer to God for it. It will not be the other way around.

Don

Would You Allow This?

Greg Gwin

A husband was away from home for several weeks. There was no justifiable reason for him to be gone. One day he just left and never came home. Numerous inquiries were made, but his absence remained unexplained. And then one day he wandered back home. He sat down at the supper table and acted as though nothing had ever happened. Would you allow this?

A worker walked off this job. He did not obtain his employer's permission, he just disappeared. He remained gone for a couple of months. Other employees had to take up the slack and fill-in for him, covering his work while they tried to do their own. Then he showed up on a payday. He offered no explanation, asked for all his back wages and proceeded to take up his former position as if everything was normal. Would you allow this?

A student failed to attend classes for a number of weeks. School officials attempted to locate him and discover the cause of his absence, but to no avail. The other students progressed in their studies, leaving the absent student far behind in several important subject areas. The truant student returned one day. He had no excuse. There was evidence that his absence was deliberate and that he had been involved in a good bit of mischief. Amazingly, he expected to be welcomed without question and even requested that the entire class back-track and cover the subject matters he missed. Would you allow this?

A Christian did not attend services for several weeks. The elders, the preacher, and a number of other church members tried to find out what the problem was, but without success. Others had to take up the slack caused by his absence. The congregation proceeded with its program of work and teaching. Then one day he showed up for services again. There was no explanation - no confession of wrongdoing. He wanted to immediately retake to his former status, to be counted as a faithful member, to be called on for prayer and used in the services. Would you allow this? Think!!!