

I appreciate the questions that were submitted for tonight, our first Question & Answer night. Hopefully tonight will give you a better idea of what types of questions will be answered on these nights, and hopefully you'll be encouraged to submit questions for next month and the months to follow. I will do this as long as I have questions so if you enjoy tonight, please submit your questions, but if I don't get any questions then I'll take the hint that nobody likes this at all. The cutoff date will be the evening service of the first Sunday of the month so please get your questions to me by that service if you want your question to be considered.

Just as a disclaimer, please do not think that I have all the answers to any question you might throw at me. I will give you the best answer I can based upon the biblical text. You may disagree and that is fine, but let us all show patience and love in any further discussions we may have from these nights. While there are many black and white subjects within our faith, there are also many subjects that come down to using discernment and wisdom in the decisions we make. I believe that with an open heart and diligent study, we can gain the wisdom to make the most godly and righteous decision on those difficult subjects. Without wasting anymore time, let's begin our questions for tonight.

I. Regardless of the reason, is it sinful to kill another person?

- A. We would all agree that murder is wrong. It was wrong under the Law of Moses (**Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder."**) and it is wrong under the Law of Christ (**Rev. 21:8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."**).
1. Murder is condemned because it is an unlawful taking of someone's life.
 2. All murder is killing, but not all killing is murder.
 3. The government is given the authority to exercise capital punishment against those who do evil. That killing is not unjust but it is actually (ideally) just in nature because it is a punishment for crimes committed. (**Rom. 13:3,4 "For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil."**)
 4. There obviously can be killings done by the government that would be unjust such as the killing of Christians. Those killings are certainly no justified killings, but instead would be murder.
 5. There can be killings as a result of irresponsible behavior or sin that could also be unlawful. Drunk driving or other actions done while being impaired could fall under the category of murder.
- B. I believe this question was asked in light of one's right in this country to protect themselves against those who might cause them harm.
1. So the question might be better asked: "Can a Christian use self protection?" (weapons, firearms/ knives/etc, in the home to protect against intruders or in any other circumstances)
 2. I believe the answer is yes, a Christian may use whatever means necessary to protect themselves or other innocent people from bodily harm. I, also, believe Christians have a responsibility to protect innocent people who cannot protect themselves.
 3. Jesus had swords within His company (Peter at Jesus' arrest, **Matthew 26**), and He told His disciples to have a sword with them on their journeys. (**Luke 22:36 "And He said to them, 'But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one.'"**). They were not trying to take over the world as aggressors, but they had this sword as protection against robbers or animals.
 4. Jesus also taught His apostles that those who live by or take up the sword against others will die by it. (**Matt. 26:52 "Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by it.'"**) This is a warning to those who might be looking for trouble or who might try to harm others that there will be those who will defend themselves.

- C. There are some Christians who are not ok with the idea of having protection that could end the life of another person. That is ok! Do not violate your conscience.

★ No, it is not always a sin to end the life of another person. A Christian can protect himself or herself and those who are innocent. If the person has a conscience against taking the life of another then they can take lesser measures, but they still need to protect those who cannot protect themselves. I pray that this type of situation never comes upon any of us.

II. **Did Jephthah literally sacrifice his daughter to the Lord? If so, how does this not violate God's law to not shed innocent blood?**

- A. This is a great question to consider because it is one of those “proof text” that skeptics use to show that God is immoral and unfair.
- B. The text under consideration comes from **Judges 11:29ff.**
1. Jephthah, a judge of Israel, goes up to battle against the sons of Ammon.
 2. He has already asked them to drop this dispute, but they disregarded his message. **(v.28)**
 3. As Jephthah approaches this battle he makes a vow to the Lord that if He will deliver the victory into Jephthah's hands, then Jephthah will offer unto the Lord the first thing that greets him upon his return to his home.
 4. Sadly, his daughter is the first one to meet him when he arrives home and he is greatly upset by this. **“Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low, and you are among those who trouble me; for I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot take it back.” v.35.**
 5. His daughter is understanding and just asks to go away for two months with her friends to mourn. **(vv.36-38)**
 6. At the end of the two months she returns to father who **“did to her according to the vow which he had made.”**
- C. Skeptics want to know how this could possibly be approved by God, so here are a few possible explanations to their questions.
1. IF, in fact, Jephthah did mean that he would literally offer a human sacrifice then he would be going directly against a commandment of the Law of Moses. **(Deut. 18:10)** Furthermore, it seems strange that God would actually give aid that would lead to a person clearly transgressing one of His commandments. It doesn't make sense for Jephthah to offer up to sin in exchange for God's favor. God offered His assistance anyways, but that still does not mean God approved of the sin. He assisted the Israelites with their choosing of their king even though He did not approve of them having one to start with. God can use the mistakes of people for a higher good without approving of their actions.
 2. Secondly, if, Jephthah did follow through by offering his daughter as a sacrifice then that still does not mean that God approved of his doing so. We have no passage that says God approved of his actions. There are many things that were done throughout the entirety of Scripture that are not plainly condemned by the writer, but that does not mean that they were approved of, either. Jephthas is commended for his faith in **Hebrews 11:32**, but that does not mean that every single action of this life was right in the sight of God. David is named along with Jephthah and we are well aware of his transgressions before God.
 3. So is there an explanation of this situation that we can use to harmonize God's assistance to Jephthah and his subsequent actions. I believe there is and it is this. Jephthah was promising that the first person to meet him upon his arrival would be given as a figurative sacrifice to God as a person who gives their life in service to God. Here are some evidences that support this position.
 - a) There was a position of service that existed at the time with Tabernacle. **(Exodus 38:8 “the serving women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting”)**
 - b) Even in New Testament times there was such a position of service available. The prophetess, Anna **“never left the temple, serving night and day with fasting and prayers.” (Luke 2:37)**

- c) In **Romans 12:1**, Paul charges Christians to “**present their bodies (as) a living and holy sacrifice.**” Paul was not telling them to literally kill themselves, but to figuratively sacrifice themselves to God in all they do. The figurative usage of sacrifice is not uncommon to Scripture.
- d) From the text of **Judges 11**, we see in **v.34** that one of the reasons Jephthah was so upset was because he had other children besides this daughter.
- e) On top of that, it was her virginity that she wept over as she was away for 2 months (**v.37** “**She said to her father, “Let this thing be done for me; let me alone two months, that I may go to the mountains and weep because of my virginity, I and my companions”**). In this position of service, she would not be allowed to marry. Because of this, Jephthah’s lineage would be ended, which was a big deal to the people of Israel. (**Num. 27:1-11; 36:1ff**)
- f) Notice in **v.39**, “**at the end of the two months she returned to her father, who did to her according to the vow which he had made; and she had no relations with a man.**” The tragedy of this whole thing was not that she was dead, but that she could not reproduce and be a mother.
- g) Jephthah and his daughter were not distraught because she would die a virgin, but in actuality, they were sad because she would have to continue living as such and not be able to enjoy the blessings of marriage and carry on Jephthah’s lineage.
- h) Hannah made a similar promise to God by offering up her son as a servant under the priest Eli. (**I Samuel 1:11**)

★ Skeptics use this text to show God is ruthless and immoral, but I believe that this is not a case of literal human sacrifice, but instead it is a case of figurative sacrifice. Jephthah made the promise to give a person in service to the Lord and, unfortunately, that person ended up being his only child. So there was not a violation of God’s law to not shed innocent blood.

III. What happens after we die?

- A. This is a question that has been pondered for centuries. Some would say that nothing happens, you’re just dead all over and cease to exist. Some say that you are reincarnated into a different form or being. We could continue on and on, but I believe the Bible gives us a decent idea of what happens after death. Let’s consider the account of the rich man and Lazarus from **Luke 16:19ff**.
 - 1. There are tons of applications we could get from the text, but I just want to focus on the those pertaining to the question at hand.
 - 2. Some would say that this is a parable, but Jesus never indicates this within the text. Jesus tells this account as if it is a true account of something that has indeed happened. There is no physical illustration that leads to a physical application in this story.
- B. Both die and their souls are sent to what is called Hades (**v.23**) or the Hadean realm.
 - 1. This is the place of the dead or departed souls. We are spirits that are contained in this fleshly body and once this body dies, it needs a new home which is Hades.
 - 2. Normally, Hades is thought of to be an entirely bad place, but we see 2 different sides to Hades here in this text.
 - a) The rich man finds himself in the torment side of Hades known as *tartarus* (used 10 times in the New Testament and is the equivalent to the Old Testament term *sheol*) (waiting place for sinners or temporary torment, **II Peter 2:4** “**...God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell (hades) and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgement**”) which is different from the eternal fire of hell called *gehenna* (used 12 times in the New Testament). The word hell itself can be used for *tartarus* or *gehenna*, but the word Hades is only used to describe *tartarus* and never used for *gehenna*.
 - b) Lazarus is in Abraham’s bosom (being near to Abraham) or comfort. The Greek word for this side of Hades is *elysium*. It is never used in the Bible, but Greek literature and academia teach us that this was the word used to describe this side of Hades.
 - c) There is a great gulf that separates the two sides so that it cannot be crossed. (**Luke 16:24,26**)

- d) They will await in this place until the final judgement day. On that day **Revelation 20:13ff** states **“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they are judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”**
3. The final judgement will happen all at once for all people. Those in the book of life will be in heaven and those not found will be in eternal torment.
- C. Some questions that might be asked:
 1. Why is this judgment necessary if a soul knows its eternal destiny already?
 - There will be a few different types of souls in Hades. Some will know why they are in comfort. Some will know why they are in torment, and then some will have no idea why they are in torment. Judgement is necessary for those confused people to be told why they will not be in heaven for eternity.
 2. Why don’t we go straight to heaven or hell?
 - Judgement must take place before a soul can go to its final resting place. The judgment will happen at one time for all peoples. **(John 5:28,29 & I Cor. 15:35-54)**

★ The soul is sent to its temporary home, comfort or torment, until the judgement day when it will go to its final resting place.

IV. **Where was Jesus during the three days between His death and resurrection?**

- A. Some teach that Jesus went to hell between His death and resurrection. They refer to it as Jesus’ weekend in hell.
 1. Some would say that Jesus went to hell to preach to those who died during the flood. **(I Peter 3:18-20)**
 2. The text doesn’t clearly say that Jesus Himself would preach to the people “in prison.” Besides, what good would that do for them? Their fate was already sealed. It is much more likely that the one doing the preaching was the Spirit who was leading Noah to warn those of the impending judgement of water.
 3. So the question still is, where was Jesus during those 3 days?
- B. I believe we have enough evidence to show that Jesus was in the same place as Lazarus before His resurrection, in comfort.
 1. Jesus, having a spirit, had to have His departed spirit go somewhere before His resurrection. He hints towards His next destination while on the cross. **Luke 23:39-43 “One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!” But the other answered, and debunking him said, “Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? and we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man had done nothing wrong. And he was saying, Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”**
 2. Jesus tells this man that this very day he would be with Him in Paradise. We can infer that this man’s soul would be able to join Jesus in *elysium* after his death.
 3. We can also couple that with what Jesus says in **Matthew 16:17,18. “And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”**
 4. Jesus is saying that the place of the dead will not be able to hold Him down and He will come back to establish His church and give it power.

★ With what we know from the previous question and what we can gather from the words of Jesus, our best educated guess is that Jesus’ soul was in the comfort half of Hades with the other righteous departed spirits.