

- Q3. What do the Scriptures principally teach?
A3. **The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.**

Scripture References: 2 Timothy 1:13, 3:16; Micah 6:8; John 5:39, 20:31, 3:16; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4; 1 John 1:3-4

DQ1: What do the Scriptures teach concerning God?

DQ2: What do the Scriptures teach concerning man?

DQ3: What do the Scriptures not teach us?

DQ4: What do the Scriptures teach that exists between God and man?

DQ5: What does “to believe concerning God” refer to?

DQ6: What does “duties God requires of man” refer to?

DQ7: What is the relationship between faith and works?

DQ8: What do the Scriptures desire between God and man through Jesus Christ? (1 Corinthians 1:9)

Notes:

As seen in QA2, the Scriptures teach who God is, what he desires and how He will carry out His desires. The Scriptures additionally teach concerning faith in God and how such faith comes about, as well as how those with faith in God must live. In other words, the Scriptures teach that faith and works are required of a Christian. Does that surprise you? If it does, why does it surprise you?

“To believe concerning God” refers to “faith” in God. “Duties God requires of man” refers to “works” of man. Both faith and works are required of every believer but it is important to understand how faith and works are related in redemption and redeemed living.

Here, we need to understand the inherent, un-severable and necessary relationship between faith and works as taught in the Scriptures. So, what is the relationship between faith and works? What is the role of faith in our salvation? What is the role of works in our salvation? Are we saved by faith or by works?

It is critical that we examine these questions regarding faith and works. In order to better understand the relationship between faith and works, we must understand the Epistles (or Letters) of Romans and James. The letter to the Romans is written by Apostle Paul and the letter of James was written by Apostle James. It is quite striking that Romans definitively states that no one can be saved without faith and that James definitively states that faith without works is dead. Are the letters of Romans and James teaching opposite truths regarding our salvation? God forbid! They may appear to contradict each other but such is not the case at all.

Simply put, Romans emphasizes that salvation is possible by faith alone, without works. Romans teaches faith as the only way to attain to salvation. It makes it clear that works of man, no matter how noble, honorable and good, is insufficient to attain to salvation. So, Romans is singularly focused on how to attain to salvation, i.e., how to know and enter into a redemptive relationship with God, which is made possible only by and through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, James' emphasis is not on how to secure salvation but rather on how those who have entered into salvation ought to live, i.e., the life after having entered into a redemptive relationship with God. James tells us that faith produces works acceptable to God. This is completely consistent with Apostle Paul's teachings throughout his writings in the NT. Faith alone brings us into salvation period. The saved, however, will naturally and necessarily produce good works as the fruit of faith that grows in the believer. Therefore, an apparent paradox between Romans and James, i.e., faith and works, is resolved. Make no mistake! Without faith no one can please God (Hebrews 11:6). Works must be built upon the foundation of faith in Christ Jesus.

The Scriptures teach how faith comes to the believer. It is by grace and comes as a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). Without the Scriptures, it is impossible to know such things. On your own, please examine Ephesians Chapters 1 and 2 as to why salvation is only possible by faith, not works but why works of Christians are required.

The Scriptures, however, do not teach about everything in life. The Scriptures certainly do not delve into or dictate every detail on how one must behave under a particular situation or circumstance. The Scriptures do not expressly provide detailed explanations of the world events. The Scriptures do not make efforts to explain scientifically every phenomenon that occurs around us. The Scriptures tend to be declaratory and descriptive but not explanatory. Some people feel that they cannot trust the Scripture because of they lack explanations that are understandable to human reason, logic and experiences. In this, we must be reminded of Isaiah 55:8-9. Naturally, many things are explained but seeking answers and explanations to such things as "how-to's" in every day life from the Scriptures stems from lack of understanding of the nature and character of the Scriptures. The Scriptures primarily focuses on who God is, His redemptive plan and the relationship between God and man. It is in this way that one must primarily approach the Scriptures.

God's redemptive desire and works focus primarily on the relationship between God and man. To properly understand the Scriptures then, one must see how the Scriptures deal with the relationship, which became complicated by and embroiled in sin. Without understanding the importance of "relationship," it is impossible to understand the Scriptures. That is why A3 is expressed in terms of "to believe concerning God" and "duties God requires of man" because these phrase are expressions of such a relationship between God and man.

We often think of our relationship with God in a vague and conceptual sense; it is as if God is far removed from the hard realities of life. But, the relationship with God cannot be merely conceptual or imaginary. How then can we be confident that God has forged a redemptive relationship with man?

First, God lives and exists. His being and presence cannot be denied. Simply, God is! God is God because GOD IS. If God needed anything else or anyone else to exist, then God would not be God. If God is less than perfect, then He would not be God. If God is less than totally sovereign, then He would not be God. The God of the Scriptures is the great I AM (Exodus 3:14). He is self-existing, self-sufficient, self-motivated and self-directed. He is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. There is none like Him. And we know these things about God because of the Scriptures. There is no greater evidence of Him found anywhere more clearly than in the Scriptures. We can be confident of who God is if we have our confidence in the Scriptures. If you cannot believe in God, then it probably means you cannot believe in the Scriptures.

Second, God did send His begotten Son Jesus Christ to us, who Himself being God came in the form of man, lived, ministered, beaten, humiliated, nailed to the cross, died, rose again and ascended into heaven. All of this is not merely a story but a true history. Without the Scriptures, both the OT and NT, there is no way we would have known that Jesus came to us as the Christ. The Old Testament Scriptures give painstaking details about the Messiah (or the Christ), who was to come as the Savior to the sinful world. The OT contains hundreds of promises, covenants and prophecies regarding the Messiah who must come as God incarnate, i.e., in the form of a perfect man. Jesus of Nazareth alone fits every one of such promises, covenants and prophecies and is proven to be the Messiah. Apart from the Scriptures, we could not have known that Jesus is Christ. The Scriptures are the very source our confidence that Jesus is our Messiah and Savior. See 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Discover that the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus happened in accordance with the Scriptures. Also, reference Matthew 1:22; 3: 15; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 21:4; John 12:38; 13:18; 15:25.

Third, the Scriptures testify to our relationship with God in very concrete ways. The Scriptures describe numerous different ways in which God enters into the relationship with man. Let's look at six of such different relationships.

- Creator and creature (Jeremiah 18:1-4)
- Master and slave (Romans 14:7-9)
- Shepherd and sheep (John 10:11-18)
- Father and son (Luke 15:11-31)
- Friend and friend (Hebrews 2:11-12)
- Lover and lover (1 John 4:7-12)

The scriptural descriptions of these relationships are not meant to be merely conceptual but real to the people of God. The reality of God was very powerfully demonstrated to the Israelites in the midst of their Exodus and journey through the wilderness on the way to the promise land as the people encountered God in real ways for 40 year. And these relationship are expressed in human terms or anthropomorphically (i.e., language that speaks of God in human terms) so that man could understand God. The fact that Jesus came as man speaks a volume about how much God longs to be in the relationship with His people. God has lowered Himself so that man could relate to Him. The Scriptures tell us of such a God.

Fourth, the Scriptures contain testimonies of many witnesses regarding their relationships with God. Many of the well-known Biblical characters, such as the prophets, kings and priests, testified to their real-life experiences of encountering God within recognizable real historical

contexts. These testimonies are unmistakably and are recorded in the Scriptures to show the God of relationship throughout human history. There are a countless number of testimonies but it would be good to be reminded of the testimonies of Apostle Paul which appears in Acts 9, 22 and 26. In reality, most of the Scriptures contain the testimonies of individuals and God's people.

Fifth, the Scriptures teach that we experience God through the work of the Holy Spirit, who stirs, inspires, draws, empowers, convicts, teaches, leads and motivates us. The work of the Holy Spirit should not be equated to mere stirring of our emotions. The work of the Holy Spirit touches man in every aspect of his life, not just emotions but also physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of man. The Holy Spirit's intervention is real and is clearly identifiable as we reflect our lives upon the Scriptures. We would not have known about the Holy Spirit without the aid of the Scriptures.

Some Christians think of our relationship with God as vague and conceptual. The danger is that such Christians may not necessarily believe in the God of the Scriptures. When people think of God as vague and conceptual, they are likely to be mistaken in their belief. They may not be talking about or worshiping the God of the Scriptures. They may be worshipping an idol or a god of their own making and imagination. God is a personal being, just like you and I, and pursues a definite purpose and relationships. In the same way, a Biblical faith is not vague or conceptual but is as concrete as the relationship with "God Who Is There," to borrow the words of Frances Schaffer.

How concrete is your relationship with God?