

Dear Liz,

Thank you for your questions to the New Haven Bible Students web page.

Your first question dealt with Acts 15: 28-29. You wanted to know what blood we were to abstain from.

Acts 15:28-29 is part of the letter sent by the apostles to the new Gentile Christian converts. The purpose of the letter was to reduce the conflict between Gentile and Jewish Christians. Four key points are mentioned in verse 29. "You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality." Why are these four items, including the reference to "blood," listed as things that the Gentile Christians were to avoid? Obviously, the prohibition against sexual immorality is a universal moral law based on the Seventh Commandment. But, what of the other three items? Were they to apply only to the Gentile Christians in the context of the above-mentioned conflict?

The apostles told the new Gentile Christians not to eat food offered to idols because it might appear that they were sanctioning idol worship. To the monotheistic Jew, no sin was worse than idolatry. Thus eating meat that was taken from a sacrifice offered to idols would be greatly repulsive to them. Therefore, in the spirit of unity, Gentiles should avoid such meat. But why include the eating of blood and of something strangled (thus retaining blood in its flesh) in the list of prohibitions? Because these practices were strictly forbidden in the Law of Moses, they also were especially offensive to first century Jews. That is why Christians were told to avoid them in the interest of love and Church unity. The blood referred to was the blood of animals that were raised for food.

The question for the Christian is, were those dietary items mentioned in Acts 15:29 a directive or simply a suggestion? We find the answer in Romans 14:1-3. "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him." A similar argument is made in 1 Corinthians 8 and 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 regarding eating food after it had been offered to idols. The Apostle Paul declares that although it is not wrong for those who have knowledge that idols are nothing, to eat food offered to them, if the practice stumbles a fellow Christian, then one should not eat such food. We believe the same principle would apply to the eating of blood from animals.

In today's world we are not faced with the above-mentioned issue. Therefore, we feel no compunction to follow the behavioral suggestion. The principle of being aware of our brother's weaknesses and protecting him from unnecessary battles with them (when such a situation is in our scope of influence) is the most important lesson here.

We hope we have answered your question. We will shortly send you another e-mail addressing the second question.

Sincerely

The New Haven Bible Students

Dear Liz,

In your next question to us you stated, "If the Jews still play a role today, how is it they do not believe in Jesus? Did [Jesus] not say that he was the way, the truth, and the life and that no one can come to the Father except through him?"

Although the Jews were in great anticipation of the coming Messiah, they did not understand that Jesus did not come as a king to break the oppressive yoke of the Romans and set up his kingdom on earth at that time. Instead, his mission was to sacrifice his perfect human life as a ransom for Adam and the entire human race so that every human being would have a chance for life either on earth or in heaven.

Because the Jewish nation rejected Messiah, Jesus wept over Jerusalem and proclaimed it to be desolate (Matthew 23:37-39). God removed his favor from the nation in 33A.D. for approximately 1845 years. It was during this period that the Jewish people were scattered among all nations. "So I will throw you out of this land into a land neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor." (Jeremiah 16:13)

Then, in 1878, a truly remarkable event occurred. The fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24:32-34 to restore the fig tree (Israel) began with the establishment of the first agricultural settlement-Petah Tikvah (Door of Hope) that allowed Jews to return to their homeland and culminated with Israel's independence in 1948. God's favor had now returned to Israel. The "dry bones" (Israel) that were scattered for so many centuries had come together to form a skeleton (the reestablishment of Israel as a nation). (See Ezekiel 37:1-14) "I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. . . . I will plant Israel in her own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them." (Amos 9:14-15) Yet the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy has only just begun. The Jews do not yet recognize Jesus as their Messiah. The nation of Israel has bones and sinew, but no breath. The fact that God has restored his favor to Israel, we believe, is part of God's master plan to bring the Jews to the recognition of Jesus. "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. . . . I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people.” (Jeremiah 31:31, 33) “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a first born son.” (Zechariah 12:10) But, in order to bring these prophecies to fruition, a time of trouble will come upon Israel, from which only God’s intervention will save them (Zechariah 14:1-3, Jeremiah 30:1-9). Then they will understand and know their Messiah.

As you can see from the above paragraphs, the Jewish nation is again playing an integral role in God’s plan. Once Christ’s heavenly class is complete and the Millennial kingdom commences, the Jewish nation will be God’s model for other nations. Israel’s patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Daniel, etc.) will return from the sleep of death to lead Israel in the ways of righteousness. God will remove the stony hearts of his people and replace them with hearts of flesh. Subsequently, Israel will be the channel through which all other nations of the earth will look to find blessings. “In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.’” (Zechariah 9:23) The return of Israel to her ancient homeland is the first step or forerunner of a far greater biblical promise for the entire world of humankind returning to life from the captivity of death. (See Micah 4:2-3, Isaiah 35:5-6.)

We hope we have answered your question. We will shortly send you another e-mail addressing your last two questions.

Sincerely,

The New Haven Bible Students

Dear Liz,

In your third question you asked if we believe that Yahweh is God’s name and, if so, do we use it?

Yes, we believe that Yahweh one name for God. Do we use the name Yahweh when addressing him? We may or we may not. Sometimes we affectionately call him Abba Father (Romans 8:15), the Almighty Father, the Almighty God, the Most High, LORD, LORD God, Jehovah or God. Many names for God are used in the Old Testament. Below is a list of some of them.

El Shaddai

El Elyon

Adonai

Jehovah Nissi

Jehovah-Raah

Jehovah Rapha

Jehovah Shammah

Jehovah Tsidkenu

Jehovah Mekoddishkem

El Olam

Elohim

Qanna

Yahweh

Jehovah Jireh

Jehovah Shalom

Jehovah Sabaoth

In the Old Testament times, a name was not only identification, but an identity as well. Many times a special meaning was attached to the name. Names had, among other purposes, an explanatory purpose (e.g., Nabal, whose name means "fool," is the target of Abigail's explanation to David: "For as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him:" ([1 Samuel 25:25](#)). Throughout Scripture God reveals Himself to us through His names. When we study these names that He reveals to us in the Bible, we will better understand who God really is. The meanings behind God's names reveal the central personality and nature of the One who bears them.

We have attached a file entitled, "Names for God in the Bible." We hope it will be helpful to you. You may also log on to www.christianquestions.net. Once there, click on "Archived Programs." Go to 2003, Program #239 "What's in a Name?" (Jan. 26, 2003) and you can listen to the Christian Questions Radio program where the names for God are discussed.

Once again, thank you for your question.

Sincerely,

The New Haven Bible Students

Dear Liz,

In your final question to us you asked what the Armageddon spoken of in Revelation 16:16 was. "Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon."

Armageddon signifies the Hill of Megiddo, located on the southern edge of the Plain of Esdraelon. It commanded an important pass into the hill country. Megiddo was the great battleground of Palestine. Many famous Old Testament battles were fought there: Gideon vs. Midian, King Saul vs. the Philistines, King Josiah vs. Pharaoh Necho; and there Ahab and Jezebel lived, Jezebel there meeting a horrible death.

Armageddon is symbolic of the great and final battle or controversy between right and wrong, between truth and error, between God and mammon. This battle will be a worldwide conflict. Like the last plague in Exodus in which the first born of the Hebrews were saved from death, the Battle of Armageddon will have the effect of letting God's people (the entire redeemed human race) go free from the bondage of sin and death. Although the battle will be great, it is the necessary precursor for a glorious kingdom in which all men shall learn the ways of the Lord so that a restored human race may live together in eternal harmony.

We hope we have answered your question. Please write us again.

Sincerely,

The New Haven Bible Students