

Which of These Three Helped the Girl?

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Once upon a time a 17-year-old girl began to seriously question how God works in a person's life. She became excited as she discovered understandable answers from the Bible.

However, she was puzzled by a theory that contradicted the Bible. She decided to ask some people about the concept of "God's government on earth."

The busy priest

First she decided to visit a priest. She reasoned that, if anyone should know about God's government on earth, certainly the priest would have the answers. Here is how the conversation went.

Girl: Good morning, sir. I have some questions about the Bible.

Priest: We are always happy to help new converts to our congregation.

Girl: I'm not sure if I will be joining your congregation. But I was hoping you would answer some questions for me.

Priest: Oh, so you will not be joining our group? You know, I'm kind of busy right now doing works for God. Let's do lunch sometime.

The honest Levite

Then the young girl decided to ask a Levite. She reasoned that, if anyone would know about God's government on earth, certainly a Levite would have answers.

Here is how the conversation went.

Girl: Good morning, sir. I have some questions about the Bible.

Levite: We are always happy to help a new convert to our congregation.

Girl: I'm not sure if I will be joining— Never mind. Can I ask you some questions about the Bible?

Levite: Sure. We will help you interpret what the Bible really means.

Girl: What scriptures do you use to support the theory that you are God's government on earth?

Levite: Oh, it is not a theory. God has chosen the priests and Levites in our group to administer His government upon the earth.

Girl: Can you show me some scriptures?

Levite: Sure. Deuteronomy 17:8-13 shows the authority of the priesthood to make decisions.

Girl: Since the priesthood has changed [Hebrews 7:12], can you show me some New Testament scriptures?

Levite: Sure. Matthew 16:19 shows that church leaders have the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. We have the authority to bind and loose.

Girl: Priests and Levites in other groups make the same claim. Do they have the same keys and the same authority?

Levite: Certainly not. There can be only one God's government on earth, and it is us.

Girl: Why do you believe it is your group?

Levite: Apostolic succession.

Girl: What's that?

Levite: Apostolic succession is the belief that the authority of the apostles was passed down from Peter through the ages to our group today.

Girl: What makes you think your leaders and your physical headquarters have this authority as God's government on earth?

Levite: Our leaders have told us so.

Girl: What if your leaders are wrong?

Levite: Our leaders can't be wrong, because God has designated them as leaders.

Girl: That sounds like the circular reasoning that supporters of Adolf Hitler used.

Levite: Excuse me?

Girl: Adolf Hitler had an unproven premise: that a divine purpose gave him authority over all the nations. When people asked his supporters for proof, his supporters stated that a divine purpose could not be wrong because it was divine. You had to believe he had a mission from God because he said he had a mission from God.

Levite: Little girl, we are not trying to usurp authority over all the nations of the earth.

Girl: That's true. You just want to exercise authority over all the churches.

Levite: If people do not submit to our leaders and to our physical headquarters as God's government on earth, they will not be in the Kingdom of God.

Girl: What happens if I attend with another group?

Levite: You will have to suffer in the great tribulation before you finally submit yourself to God's government on earth.

After the girl left, she came away with two firm conclusions about the Levite. First, she believed him to be sincere in his beliefs. But she did not think his approach reflected the words and example of Jesus Christ.

The good old Samaritan

When the girl walked down the street, she saw a Samaritan nearby. On one hand, she thought that a Samaritan would not know anything about God's government on earth. Yet, on the other, it was worth a try. So she approached him.

Here is how the conversation went.

Girl: Excuse me, sir. I have some questions about the Bible.

Samaritan: Have you talked with your parents? The roots of religion should begin in the home.

Girl: My parents have talked with me about the Bible all my life. But they want me to prove things for myself. May I ask you some questions?

Samaritan: Okay.

Girl: Where is God's government on earth?

Samaritan: Young lady, what do you mean?

Girl: I believe in God, but I am trying to find out the special place on earth where God reveals His will.

Samaritan: Why do you think God reveals His will only in one place?

Girl: That's what a lot of adults tell me.

Samaritan: Are their explanations convincing?

Girl: No. And do you know what really bothers me? I see these adults arguing about where this special place is. It is like kids arguing in the cafeteria over some dessert. That's a big turnoff.

Samaritan: How does their behavior make you feel about God?

Girl: Oh, their actions do not affect my relationship with God.

Samaritan: So, you have a good relationship with God?

Girl: The best. I talk to Him every day. He answers my prayers. I study the Bible to see what He wants me to do.

Samaritan: That sounds wonderful. So, what's the problem?

Girl: I'm thinking about being baptized, but I don't want to be baptized into any physical group.

Samaritan: Do the various groups say they are baptizing you into their physical group?

Girl: No, they don't say it. According to the words in their baptismal ceremonies, they say they are *not* baptizing a person into any physical group.

Samaritan: So why are you troubled?

Girl: Once they baptize people, they apply all this pressure to be *loyal* to their physical group. They say if people don't submit to them, those people will not be in the Kingdom of God. I hate that.

Samaritan: Good for you.

Girl: Do you have any advice for me?

Samaritan: Not really. You are already doing a good job of not allowing a church to make you feel trapped. You are already doing a good job of keeping your eyes on God.

Girl: Can you give me any reminders?

Samaritan: Okay. Remember this: Your example may be the best sermon that some people ever hear.

Girl: Thanks for your help.

As the girl headed home, she had a twinkle in her eye and a hop in her step.

Which of these three men helped the young girl to draw closer to God?