

TRUTH & RIGHT

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THE PERFECT FOOL

Imagine that you have been given \$2,000, and you are charged to take it and make more money. How would you do so?

Would you go and try to find ways to invest it? Would you use it to buy some tools or some other resources so that you could work and make money with them?

Would you buy property and hope that it would increase in value? At the very least, would you not put it in a savings account at a bank and make interest on it?

What do you expect would happen to you if you did nothing with the money at all? What if you went and spent it on things that did not lead to profit? If the \$2,000 were whittled away to nothing, what could be done?

We can see clearly the consequences of how people handle worldly wealth-- some impoverish themselves by irresponsible living, and others take opportunities provided to

them and become successful in life. The difference is rarely seen in terms of natural abilities; the difference involves what one chooses to do with that which one has been given.

Jesus provides this same scenario in Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:12-27. In these stories, three servants are given sums of money: either a talent or a mina. In each story, two servants take the money and use it profitably, making two to ten times more money than the original sum given. Likewise, each story presents one servant who did nothing with the money at all, and simply gave back to his master that which he received. In both instances, that servant is punished (in Matthew, he is even cast into the outer darkness!), and the purpose of the story is made clear:

"I say unto you, that unto every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him" (Luke 19:26).

Should we say that Jesus is just enriching the already rich? By no means!

The stories are not really about money-- they are about the gifts that God has given us. God has given to each person gifts according to their measures and abilities (cf. Romans 12:6-8). He does not expect everyone to be able to accomplish the same amount or to be exactly alike: diversity of talents and specialties is expected in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-28)!

What God does expect is for us to put our talents to use for His Kingdom! In Luke 16:8, Jesus upbraids the "children of light" because they are not wiser than the "sons of this world." We have plenty of examples of people who have come from relative poverty and have become quite rich because they were willing to use the gifts they had to make money, yet how often are we willing to put our gifts to use for God? What would happen if we applied our talents and energies to promoting God's Kingdom as much and as often as people of

the world apply theirs to gaining money? How much more like Christ would we be, and how many more people would we attract to the faith (Matthew 5:13-16)?

We would never take money and just sit on it. Why do we take the gifts God gives us and let them rot away? God expects us to take what He has given us and use it to advance His will (1 Peter 4:10-11). If we are found to have wasted the talents God has given us, not only will we "have not," but even that which we "have" -- our soul -- will be cast into the outer darkness (Matthew 25:30)! What, then, will you do with your talents?

- Ethan Longhenry

GOD WON'T ASK

God won't ask what kind of car you drove, but ...

He might ask how many people you drove who didn't have transportation.

God won't ask the square footage of your house, but ...

He might ask how many people you welcomed into your home.

God won't ask about the clothes you had in your closet, but ...

He might ask how many others you clothed.

God won't ask about your social class, but ...

People, Places, and Things of the **BIBLE**



DID THE ISRAEL BAN THE NAME ESHBAAL?

Was the proper name Eshbaal—man of Ba'al—banned in Judah after King David's time? A recent analysis suggests that it was.

Ba'al, meaning lord or master, was a common divine appellative in Canaan and neighboring areas during Biblical periods, most frequently referring to the storm god.

Very recently an inscription was uncovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa—a site already famous for a late 11th–10th-century B.C.E. inscription—about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem. According to excavator Yosef Garfinkel of Hebrew University, the site is probably an imposing fortress erected by King David facing the Philistines. The dim five-line inscription in ink on a piece of pottery found there has been widely discussed and variously interpreted—with some claiming it as one of the oldest Hebrew texts ever found.

Very recently two additional inscriptions—far less known—have been recovered at Qeiyafa. Only one has been deciphered so far. A team of scholars is continuing to work on the other one.

The deciphered one is short, but clear. It consists solely of a name: 'Ishba'al son of Beda'.

The name 'Ishba'al or, more commonly, Eshbaal, is well known from the Bible. It means "man of Ba'al." (The name Beda' appears for the first time in this inscription.)

Dating to about 1000 B.C.E., the inscription reads from right to left and consists of whole and partially preserved letters incised into the clay pot before firing. It is in so-called "Canaanite" script, the earliest alphabetic script in the world that was probably developed by Canaanites who were influenced by the writing system of the ancient Egyptians. The skilled hand that inscribed the letters reflects a trained artisan (and at least a partially literate society): The letters are large, clear, evenly sized and evenly spaced.

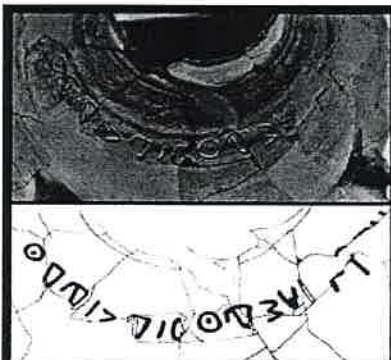
In the Bible various Ba'al names appear of people who lived in King David's time or earlier (Jerubbaal [Judges 6:32], Meribbaal [1 Chronicles 9:40], etc.). But the Bible mentions no Ba'al names after this—neither Ba'al nor Eshbaal.

Ba'al names simply do not appear in the Bible after David's time.

The archaeological situation is a bit, but not completely, different. We have more than a thousand seals and seal impressions (*bullae*) and hundreds of inscriptions from Israel and Judah from the post-David period (ninth–sixth centuries B.C.). The name Eshbaal is not to be found among these names. The situation with the name Ba'al is slightly different; it does occasionally appear in Israel—and of course in Philistia, Ammon and Phoenicia. But not in Judah!

It seems that Ba'al and Eshbaal were banned in David's kingdom. One reason may have been that, at least officially, Judah was monotheistic. Thus, names constructed with a form of a foreign deity's name—especially of Ba'al, who was Yahweh's rival—would not have been considered kosher.

In addition, David's predecessor and rival, King Saul, fathered a son named Eshbaal (1 Chronicles 8:33) who reigned for two years (2 Samuel 2:10)—another good reason to bar the name in David's kingdom.



Top: General view of the inscription from Khirbet Qeiyafa. Bottom: The inscription of 'Ishba'al, son of Beda', from Khirbet Qeiyafa, with existing parts of letters emphasized.

He might ask what kind of class you displayed.

God won't ask how many material possessions you had, but ...

He might ask if they dictated your life.

God won't ask what your highest salary was, but ...

He might ask if you compromised your principles to obtain it.

God won't ask how much money you spent on yourself, but ...

He might ask how much you gave back to Him.

God won't ask how much overtime you worked, but ...

He might ask if your overtime was for yourself or for your family.

God won't ask how many promotions you received, but ...

He might ask how you promoted others.

God won't ask what your job title was, but ...

He might ask if you performed your job to the best of your ability.

God won't ask what you did to help yourself, but ...

He might ask what you did to help others.

God won't ask how many friends you had, but ...

He might ask how many people to whom you were a friend.

God won't ask what you did to

protect your rights, but ...

He might ask what you did to protect the rights of others.

God won't ask in what neighborhood you lived, but ...

He might ask how you treated your neighbors.

God won't ask about the color of your skin, but ...

He might ask about the content of your character.

God won't ask how many times your deeds matched your words, but ...

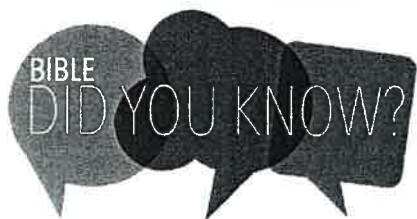
He might ask how many times they didn't.

God won't ask if His Son loved you, but ...

He might ask if you loved His Son.

Do you?

- Anonymous



There are many books written about and by various religions.

But the Bible is the only one which includes the actual words of God. Those who believe the Bible also believe that God inspired various people through the years to write down His actual words for mankind. The Bible says more than 3,000 times "thus saith the Lord." And the words which follow are quotes from God.