

QUESTIONS JESUS ASKED

While explaining his ministry to the Colossians, Paul reminded them that God "**willed to make known**" to them the mystery (Col. 1:27, NASB). God did not reveal the mystery because He was required to do so by the constraints of justice or because the Colossians had earned the right to see it. He revealed it out of His merciful will.

God only communicates with us because He wants to not because we deserve to hear Him. Nothing can be said about "**Questions Jesus Asked**" that brings more to bear upon us than the obvious: Jesus asked questions. Therefore, God is communicated with man.

The Rhetorical Question

Ordinarily, Jesus asked a question for its effect and not in expectation of an answer. Seven out of every ten questions asked by Jesus were rhetorical. When Jesus asked a question, He was not trying to obtain information but make a point. Consider the implications of these questions:

"You* are the salt of the earth, but if the salt is flavorless, then with* what shall it be salted? It is still not strong-enough to be used* for anything, except to be cast outside and trampled by men" (Matthew 5:13).

"And Jesus said to them, The sons of the bridal party {companions or guests} are not able to mourn, inasmuch as the bridegroom is with them, are they? But the days will come, whenever the bridegroom is taken away from them and then they will fast" (Matthew 9:15).

"And if the Adversary casts out the Adversary, he is divided against himself. Then* how will his kingdom stand?" (Matthew 12:26).

Usually, Jesus asked questions--not to learn--but to teach.

A Question Fitly Asked

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver", the proverb says (25:11). There is more to talking than knowing what to say. One must know when to say it. Consider how these three questions "**fit**" the circumstances.

"But Whom Do You Say That I Am?"

Caesarea Philippi is about as far north as Jesus ever travelled. The Pharisees and their scribes were trying to bully Him. He had just reached the high-water mark in His popularity during the Galilean ministry. And many disciples were deserting Him.

Up to this point, Jesus worked to provoke the question of His identity with miracles. After Caesarea, the substance of His ministry shifted from miracles to teaching. Jesus mentioned His eventual suffering before Caesarea (cf. Matthew 9:15; 10:38; et.al.) but His references to the passion were obscure and indirect. At Caesarea, Jesus **"was speaking the word frankly" (Mark. 8:32, MLV)**. And after Caesarea, Jesus spent less time with the crowds in public and more time with His disciples in private.

Clearly, the Spirit presents Caesarea as a turning point in Jesus' ministry.

During the retreat at Caesarea, Jesus asked His disciples, **"Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?"**. His intent was not to consult with His "pollsters" regarding public opinion. But to set up the next question aimed at solidifying His identity in the minds of the twelve: **"But whom do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15)**. Usually, Peter's impulsiveness got him in trouble. This time it got him a blessing. He replied, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt.16:16)**.

"Will You Also Go Away?"

First the crowd wanted Him to heal their sick. Then, they wanted to crown Him king. Now, they want breakfast (John 6:1,2; 15:22-25).

Jesus fed the 5,000 miraculously for the purpose of producing a hunger in them for Him. But it only produced a hunger for more barley bread. Jesus warns them about their puny spiritual appetite: **"Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which remains to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give to you* ; for* him, God, the Father has sealed."** (John 6:27).

Jesus could have fed them breakfast or let them crown Him king. But Jesus did not tailor His mission to the **"felt-need"** expectations of the crowds. God had already dictated His agenda.

After the **"Bread Of Life"** discourse, many disciples left (John 6:66). But Jesus did not apologize for, or adjust His teaching. Rather, He turned to the 12 and asked, **"You* will not also go away, will you*?"**. To which Peter answered, **"Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of everlasting life."** (John 6:68).

"Where are those men, your accusers? Did no one condemn you?"

People were always bringing others to Jesus. But this woman was different. She was not brought to be helped but to be hurt. **"Caught in the very act of adultery", the scribes and Pharisees charged. 'What shall we do with her, Jesus?'**. If Jesus said to stone her, He would offend Rome. If He said not to stone her He would offend Moses. So, Jesus replied, from a stooped position, **"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."** (John 8:7).

The men left one by one, but the woman stayed. It was not her choice to go there. It was her choice to stay. She was dragged there by the tough hands of a mob, but she was kept there by the tender hand of God. Straightening up, Jesus asked, **"Where are those men, your accusers? Did no one condemn you? Now she said, No one, Lord. Now Jesus said, Neither do I judge you. Go-onward. Sin no longer"** (John 8:10,11).

"The Question Jesus Asked the Most"

Entrapment was the aim of the crowd of Sadducees who presented Jesus with their concocted question: **"In the resurrection, whenever they rise* up, whose wife will she be of them? For* the seven had her as their wife."** (Mark 12:23). Two rhetorical questions carry the weight of Jesus' response: **"Are you* not being misled because of this, by not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God?"**

For* whenever they will rise* up from the dead, they neither marry, nor are they betrothed, but are like messengers who are in the heavens. But concerning the dead, that they are raised; have you* not read in the book of Moses, at the place concerning the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob'?" (Mark 12:24 ,25,26).

On seven other different occasions, Jesus asked similar questions to expose the Jewish religious rulers' ignorance of the Scriptures (Matthew 12:3,4; 11:5,19; 21:42; Mark 11:17; John 3:10; 10:34-36).

Some mistakenly conclude that Jesus took the religious rulers to task for being too exacting in their approach to Scripture. But Jesus never chastised them for doctrinal precision. He chastised their lack of doctrinal precision. They were “**legalists**”, not because they loved and defended the truth (they didn't) but because they sought to supplant the truth with their own traditions (Matt. 15:6).

Relying upon the written Word, Jesus marked out precise points of doctrine regarding the nature of God and the resurrection on this occasion. He used the “**book of Moses**” to distinguish between the correct teaching on the subject revealed by the Scriptures and the incorrect teaching held by the Sadducees. With this question,

“***Have you not read?***” (which He repeated often), Jesus championed the careful reading and correct handline of the written Word.

Conclusion

Like the life He lived, the questions Jesus asked help us to come to grips with the frivolity and pettiness that too often characterizes our own lifestyle and conversation

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