



The King's Ransom

Matthew 20:28

Text

Matthew 22:15-46

Topic

Jesus answers a series of loaded questions put to Him by hypocrites hiding their sinister motives

Title

"Frequently Masked Questions"

Introduction

We've learned to GOOGLE-it when we have questions.

What are we asking? The top five questions asked on GOOGLE in 2013 were:

#5 What is Gluten? Gluten is a protein found in all wheat. Some people are allergic to it, but it became trendy to remove it from your diet even if you are not allergic to it.

#4 What is Molly? It's a designer drug, a form of ecstasy.

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Matthew 22:15-46

"Frequently Masked Questions"

#3 *What is DOMA?* It's the Defense of Marriage Act.

#2 *What is Ricin?* Back in April 2013, a Mississippi man was arrested for allegedly sending letters laced with ricin - a toxic substance extracted from castor beans - to President Obama and Senator Roger Wicker.

#1 *What is Twerking?* Thanks to Miley Cyrus' performance on the Video Music Awards, everyone found out it is a type of suggestive dancing.

Here's another way of breaking down the data. A research firm ran hundreds of search questions through Google Trends to determine which words, terms, and questions each state in the United States was searching for more than any other. The results ranged from mildly amusing to completely disturbing.

For example:

ALABAMA: searched for FOX News, God, Impeach Obama, Jesus, Jessica Simpson, Obama Is The Antichrist, and Satan. Their analysis: It's a fire and brimstone kind of state, but with a soft spot for pretty blondes.

IDAHO: searched for Bigfoot, Caramel Corn, Potato, and Unicorns. Their analysis: It's a great state for imaginary creatures hungering for carbs.

MONTANA: searched for Bill O'Reilly, Gun Rights, National Rifle Association, and Meth. Their analysis: So that's how they use the internet in Montana.

CALIFORNIA: searched for Alcoholics Anonymous, Dandruff Cure, Food Poisoning, Kim Kardashian, Meat is Murder, Paris Hilton, Pokemon, Rogaine, and What does Siri look like? Their analysis: Somebody needs to go and check on California.

In our text, three different groups opposed to Jesus come and each ask Him their #1 question. He answers them, then asks a question of His own.

- The questions asked *of* Jesus reveal something about the priorities of those asking.
- The question asked *by* Jesus reveals something about His superiority.

I'll therefore organize my thoughts around two points: #1 What Do Your Questions For Jesus Say About Your Priorities?, and #2 What Does Jesus' Question For You Say About His Superiority?

#1 What Do Your Questions For Jesus Say About Your Priorities?

(v15-40)

On Tuesday of Passover week our Lord's enemies tried to trap Him by using a series of "loaded" questions. They were bent on destroying Jesus, and they hoped to trap Him into saying something that would permit them to arrest Him.

Something else we should note - something important and prophetic. It was customary for the sacrificial lamb to be examined before Passover (Exodus 12:3-6). If any blemish whatsoever was found on the lamb, it could not be sacrificed.

Jesus was God's final Passover Lamb - the One Who would take away the sins of the world. Jesus was being examined publicly by His enemies, and they could find no fault in Him.

Mat 22:15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk.

Mat 22:16 And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men.

Mat 22:17 Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

The Pharisees were the traditionalists; they were the conservatives. They despised Roman rule.

Herodians were Jews who supported Rome and the rule of the Herods.

Normally opposed, they joined together to put Jesus on the spot:

- If Jesus answered, "No," He would not only antagonize the Herodians, but would be accused of rebellion against the Roman government.
- If He said, "Yes," He would seem like a traitor to the common people who were His primary supporters.

Mat 22:18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?

Mat 22:19 Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius.

Mat 22:20 And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?"

Mat 22:21 They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Mat 22:22 When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.

The Jews were a sovereign nation, but for the time being, they were subjected to Roman rule. As a subjected people, they were to be good, even model, citizens. They were to pay their taxes, pray for those in authority, and obey the laws of Rome that did not violate their conscience toward God.

What is sometimes overlooked in Jesus' response is His emphasis on rendering to God "the things that are God's." Here is what I mean: It was precisely because they had failed to render honor and obedience to God that He raised-up Rome to discipline His people.

They created this dual citizenship because of their rebellion against God. The solution was not to rebel against Rome, but, rather, to repent and return to God.

Here is how this applies to us as Christians. We are always in a position of dual citizenship. We are citizens of Heaven and of some earthly country.

Whether our earthly country is godly or ungodly, we are to render its authorities our obedience in that God has raised-up the government. We are to pay our taxes, pray for those in authority, and obey the laws that do not violate our biblical conscience.

We, too, would do well to remember to render to God the things that are God's. If we are being oppressed, our first response ought to be repentance and return to God, rather than rebellion.

Mat 22:23 The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him,

The Sadducees were the religious liberals. They were mostly wealthy, and since they were doing well, in favor of Roman rule. Theologically, they denied any afterlife. In fact, they denied the supernatural in general, saying there were no such things as miracles, angels and demons.

Mat 22:24 saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.

Mat 22:25 Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother.

Mat 22:26 Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh.

Mat 22:27 Last of all the woman died also.

Mat 22:28 Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her."

A little background is in order. According to the Law of Moses, if a husband died childless, it was up to his brother to have children with his widow, so that his line would not cease.

A little deeper background. There is an apocryphal book, the Book of Tobit, that describes a woman named Sarah who (supposedly) lived through this very situation.

As the story goes, she had lost seven husbands to the demon of lust, Asmodeus, 'the worst of demons,' who abducted and killed every man she married on their wedding night before the marriage could be consummated. God sent the angel Raphael, disguised as a human, to free Sarah from the demon.

The Sadducees might have been making fun of this book - it's emphasis on miracles and angels and demons. Since a woman like Sarah could have multiple husbands in life, didn't this prove the silliness of thinking there would be an afterlife? Because, after all, who of the seven would be her husband in Heaven?

Mat 22:29 Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.

Mat 22:30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.

First, they didn't know "the Scriptures." What Scriptures? Well, it would have to be the Hebrew Scriptures regarding marriage and angels.

When God brought the first woman, Eve, to the first man, Adam, it was because he was incomplete, needing a companion to help him; and so they could procreate and fill the earth with their offspring.

In Heaven, we will all be complete and perfect; we will have everyone for companionship; we will have no need of help; and there will be no procreation. In other words, there will be no "marriage" as it was first established by God.

We could add to that something the Sadducees should have known from reading their Scriptures, and that is that God considered Himself a Husband to Israel. So there will be "marriage" in that spiritual sense.

As for angels, The Lord spoke of them matter-of-factly as existing. He did not say humans will become angels; we won't. We will be like them.

A quick survey of angels in the Hebrew Scriptures reveals them as corporeal beings with an eternal existence whose number is fixed in that they do not reproduce.

There is that strange episode in Genesis chapter six where the sons of God somehow impregnate human women to produce an offspring of giants. If those are angels, it's still clear that they do not, among themselves, reproduce in Heaven.

The Sadducees were the ones being silly, thinking that Heaven is a mere extension of life on the earth. No, it is life on a plane we cannot begin to fully fathom.

The resurrection isn't a restoration of things as they were, only better. It is as different as an oak is from its acorn.

Am I saying we won't be married in Heaven? I'm not - **Jesus is**. Again, like God and Israel, Jesus and the church are described as Bridegroom and bride. So, in that sense, we will be "married."

Relationships and intimacy in Heaven are going to be something spiritual we cannot fully fathom; "What God has planned for people who love Him is more than eyes have seen or ears have heard. It has never even entered our minds!" (First Corinthians 2:9).

Jesus also said the Sadducees did not know "the power of God." He elaborates on that:

Mat 22:31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying,

Mat 22:32 'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB' ? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Mat 22:33 And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were long dead by the time God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. But He spoke of them as being alive. He said, "I **am** their God," not, "I **was** their God."

C.S. Lewis said, "If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another." God has put eternity in our hearts. We know, innately, there is something more, something after life. It's Heaven; or it's Hell.

Mat 22:34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.

Mat 22:35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying,

Mat 22:36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

The Pharisees had identified six hundred thirteen commands in God's Word. They saw two hundred forty-eight positive laws, and three hundred sixty-five negative laws. Their careful scrutiny led them into debates about which laws were most important, and which could be overlooked. This lawyer was interested in Jesus' position on the greatest commandment.

It's initially hard to see how this was a loaded question. Perhaps it was intended to side-track Jesus, or pigeon-hole Him. Depending on His answer, He'd be agreeing with some rabbi's, and disagreeing with others. He'd be just another rabbi in the pack, sharing a personal opinion.

Mat 22:37 Jesus said to him, 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'

Mat 22:38 This is the first and great commandment.

Mat 22:39 And the second is like it: 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'

Mat 22:40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 4:4-5 and linked it up with Leviticus 19:18. In doing so He was also giving this Scribe a whole new way of looking at God's Laws. Jesus told him to live by *relationships*, not by *rules*.

- If you love God, you will find yourself keeping His laws.
- If you love God, you will find yourself loving others the way God loves them.

I said earlier that these questions revealed the priorities of the questioners:

- The Pharisees who first approached Jesus had as their priority rebellion against Rome, while the Herodians who appeared with them had as their priority submission to Rome. Instead, both ought to have had as their priority submission to God.
- The Sadducees had as their priority the material world. They were wealthy, successful, and powerful, and wanted to shore-up their position on earth and not think about a future judgment before God in Heaven.
- The lawyer's priority was the self-righteousness that he thought could be gained by obeying the most important Law.

One or more of those might be true of you. If so, *change your mind and adopt new, godly, priorities.*

What *would* you say is your priority in life? Better yet, take a close, analytical look at your life - how and where you spend your time, your talent, your treasure.

What does the evidence say your priorities are? What do you 'search' for the most?

If it isn't Jesus, you can clear your search history and start fresh.

#2 What Does Jesus' Question For You Say About His Superiority?

(v41-46)

I mentioned a few studies ago that Jesus loved to ask questions. He asked hundreds of them. He asks one here, and it's a doozie - not just for His oppressors, but for us.

Mat 22:41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

Mat 22:42 saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David."

They must have gotten a little excited when Jesus asked this question. It was Messiah 101; a softball lobbed up to them. There was no chance of getting this wrong.

Mat 22:43 He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'LORD,' saying:

Mat 22:44 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, TILL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES YOUR FOOTSTOOL" '?

Mat 22:45 If David then calls Him 'LORD,' how is He his Son?"

David himself said that the Messiah would be his Lord - his *adonai*, a word which refers to the Messiah, and a Hebrew name for God.

How could David's God also be David's son? He would have to both *precede* David, and *proceed* from him.

We understand this to be fulfilled in Jesus because He was God and became a man, born through the lineage of David.

Mat 22:46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

No more questions asked; no more questions answered.

Does that mean we cannot question God?

Depends on who you ask. If you were to ask Job, "Can I question God?", I think he'd say "No, better not; not a good idea."

In his suffering, Job had lots of questions and complaints for God. God answered him by saying,

Job 40:2 "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it."

Then God asked Job a series of amazing questions that show the greatness of His power and majesty.

Job responds, saying,

Job 42:2 "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.

Job 42:5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You.

Job 42:6 Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."

In the New Testament, Ananias might encourage you to ask God questions. Confused as to why God was sending him to pray for the healing of Saul of Tarsus, who was coming to persecute Ananias and the Christians in Damascus, The Lord answered him gently, assuring him that He had big plans for Saul.

I want to elevate our thinking beyond questions we have for God. I want us to see the superiority of God so that we don't need to be distracted by asking Him questions, but can more fully enjoy His presence.

A lot of our questions are really our asking Him to explain Himself. The real, rubber-meets-the-road questions are about suffering and affliction and loss and the evil that befalls us.

If you've seen the recent film, "God's Not Dead," you know that a major plot point is this question of why God allows suffering.

We want to know "Why?" We want an explanation.

Short of an explanation, we want to see the good that will come out of the situation. It's almost as if we are letting God know we are willing to endure our pain IF we know some good is going to be done - some new earthly foundation is established to help others, or someone gets saved, or the like.

Well, all things *do* work together for the good. God redeems everything. It's just that He might not do it in our lifetime, or in a way that we can see for many years - if ever. God owes us no explanation.

That's not to say He's cold or distant. Quite the opposite. He is always with us, never leaving us or forsaking us. When I'm suffering, I have a Savior Who has suffered as well, and more than I ever will or could.

And He did it for me, so I could draw from His strength, rest and revel in His love, look forward to His presence forever and ever in a place free of sin, death, pain and tears.

Jesus reminds us in His question that He is the unique God-man Who came into a war-torn world to defeat the devil, conquer death by His own death, and redeem lost mankind along with the ruined, forfeited creation.

He has answers to our questions, but, more importantly, He **is** the answer when we are questioning. It is our relationship with Him, our intimacy with Him, our suffering together with Him, that sustains us.

Since He is the God-man... Since He proved His love for me by dying on the Cross while I was still a sinner, and His enemy... Since my sins are all forgiven and cannot be held against me... Since my name is written in His Book of Life... Since He is building my mansion in Heaven, and has promised to return to bring me safely there... Since He has promised to complete the work He has started in me, and present me faultless to God the Father... Since He has given me the Holy Spirit as a token of our engagement... Since He is my heavenly Bridegroom...

What question do I really have? Can I not simply rest in His love?

I can; I should; but I don't - and that's on me, not on Him.

Just something I'll throw out there for your consideration. Some things are beyond our comprehension. For God to explain them, it would be like a four year old attending a lecture on quantum physics.

Only the four year old would probably better comprehend quantum physics than we can the things that happen to us and around us.

Would you rather have the answers to your questions, or have **the Answer**, Jesus, as your constant companion?

I think you know the 'Answer' to that.