

The Most Important Question Luke 22:63-71

Over these years of my having the honor of presenting God's word, especially within sermons in the church and now here also in these weekly bible studies that we do together, I have often begun my thoughts with a question. "A question!"

That's because this precious word of God is so "Rich" and filled with meaning that within these pages we can find answers to every question we could ever imagine.

And no, our bibles are not an easy reference book that we can quickly flip through the index to find the exact right answer to every question that might enter our mind.

No, God does it a different and better way. He instead tells us to read His word carefully and often, getting to know and to love Him more with each reading. And then as we get to know His Heart personally and intimately, His answers to our questions begin to clearly present themselves to us within His words.

And no, not just anyone is able to read these words and understand them clearly. For us to do that, God requires one more thing of us. Let me pause here for a moment and read about that as God explains it to us in 1 Corinthians chapter 2.

These are words I have shared with you often, but they bear reading again for this question that we'll study about. Listen to these words given by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 13. There He tells us,

¹³This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. ¹⁴The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:13-14)

Here, simply put, we are told that our answers given to us in these scriptures are plain and simple, but can only be understood and accepted by a person who has the Holy Spirit abiding within them.

And that is why these otherwise very learned men of the ruling High Council of the Jewish religion could not understand who they had standing in front of them. And that is why they kept asking Jesus who He was. Listen as I read these words given in Luke chapter 22, beginning in verse 63,

⁶³ Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. ⁶⁴ They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" ⁶⁵ And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.

⁶⁶ When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, ⁶⁷ "If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, ⁶⁸ and if I ask you, you will not answer.

⁶⁹ But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." ⁷⁰ So they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." ⁷¹ Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips." (Luke 22:63-71)

Of all of the questions that could ever occur within the minds of men, this one that is being asked here in these words is, by far, the most important and the most consequential. And for any person who would receive the true answer, and would embrace it, it would be the most rewarding of all the answers they would ever receive.

The question being asked of Jesus by these church leaders is, "Who exactly are you. Are you the Christ, the Son of God, or are you just an ordinary man who wants to be someone he is not?" Their words to Jesus again were . . . "If you are the Christ, tell us." And . . . "Are you the Son of God".

Oh dear Christian, may I say to us again, this question is without doubt the most important question that could enter into a person's mind, but only if they truly have a desire to know who this man Jesus really is.

Sadly, these men, these religious leaders were not really seeking to know the truth of that question. They had already made up their minds.

But may I interject here, that although their voices are not heard in these words, at least two men within that ruling council, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, did truly want to know the answer to those questions! They were

clearly being drawn to God. Nicodemus had even come and met privately with Jesus sometime earlier and Jesus had told him how he could be “born again”.

And we will also see those same two men later on, after Jesus was crucified, coming to claim His body from the cross.

So then, not all of the ruling council members were corrupt, but most of them were. And they had already made up their minds that Jesus was just an ordinary man, a “want-to-be”, a pretender and the best course of action would be for Him to just be done away with.

Their words to Jesus again were . . . “If you are the Christ, tell us.” And . . . “Are you the Son of God”.

Notice here that the answer Jesus gave to these men at first seems odd to us and not in the usual form or manner of response that we are accustomed to hearing. Jesus said to them, “You say that I am.”

I find that the same response translated in the NKJV of scripture adds the word “rightly”, “You rightly say that I am”.

Sometimes, as we read these differing translations, we wonder if one translation is any more accurate than the other, or if perhaps they are both correct.

The bible scholars instruct us to always consider the context of the words we are reading, to carefully consider all of the other scriptures and the conditions that relate to the words in question.

Here, with this particular answer given by Jesus, I have observed that Jesus often responds to question such as this by asking another question.

And while this response is not exactly a question, it does put the response back into the hands of the people who asked the question. He answered them, “You say that I am.” An answer that is intended to provoke a response from them of, “Who do you say, think, believe that I am?”

And that is the question that I would like for us, for you and me, to consider for ourselves today. "Who do we say, who do we think, who do we believe that Jesus is?"

And may we use, as the foundation for our thoughts and answers, words that are given to us in the Book of Hebrews chapter 4? Listen, beginning in verse 12,

¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:12-13)

Each of the words in these scriptures has the special power within them that I mentioned to us a moment ago, that special "Holy Spirit Power" that enables us to understand things that we would otherwise not be able to know.

And that same power would have been especially present as Jesus first spoke them, the power of God's Holy Spirit flowing through every word. And no person, no idea, no philosophy, no belief could hide from the piercing intensity of His words.

And to this question, "who do you say that I am", the discerning power within His words will surely bring one of two very distinct responses from every person who hears them. We, each person, will either accept Jesus for who He truly is, or we will reject Him.

And please understand that our response will not be to simply accept or reject His teachings, but rather our acceptance or our rejection will be of Jesus personally, and that is a very important distinction to understand.

Here in these words, Jesus wanted to put the responsibility for these men's behavior back upon their shoulders. Why? It is because each person truly will be held individually and personally accountable for their deeds.

From the reaction of these church leaders, we know that something within Jesus' voice, told them what they wanted to hear.

Perhaps it was an inference contained within the Greek language, or some other added inference. But whatever it was, those men understood that Jesus was saying straightforwardly that yes, He truly was the Christ, the Son of God. Their response tells us so. They said . . . "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."

And again, here we see the response that I spoke about a moment ago, that each person will either accept Jesus for who He truly is, or they will reject Him. And here, they "rejected" Him, both Him as a person and especially, who He was, the Christ, the Son of God.

And may I say also that even though these men's responses were that of hatred and rejection, it was the Holy Spirit who brought them to make those responses. That is the special power that resides within God's word, the Holy Spirit flowing through each word discerning the thoughts and the intents of our hearts, bringing each person to a point of decision, either a choice of the "narrow path" that leads to life, or a choice of the "broad path" that leads to destruction. We each will make a choice, either a right choice or a wrong choice.

And may I also add that even when we choose "not to choose" or if we "choose to do nothing", as many are apt to do, our non-choice is still a choice.

Here, the Holy Spirit brought these men to the most ultimate of all questions, "Who is this Jesus?" Is He the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of all mankind, or is He a mere man?

And I have no doubt that in those moments, God's Holy Spirit opened the minds and hearts of those religious leaders enough for them to truly understand what they were actually doing, "rejecting the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God", so that in their day of judgment they would be "without excuse".

And yes, I have no doubt that our Lord will at some point in time do the same with each one of us, you and me. He will open each of our minds and hearts enough so that we can make that decision for ourselves, "Is Jesus truly who He says He is, the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of our souls? And will we accept Him or will we reject Him? And then, we too will be without excuse.

I am reminded also of the occasion when Jesus asked His disciples if they knew who He really was. Those words in Matthew 16:13-17,

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. (Matthew 16:13-17)

Note in these words that intellect by itself alone is never enough to make this all-important discernment of who Jesus is. It takes the power of God's Holy Spirit to give that revelation. As Jesus said here in these words, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

Oh dear friends, we really must understand the importance of these words, that just knowing about Jesus and about Him dying on the cross will never suffice for a true knowledge of Him that comes from the Holy Spirit.

Over the years, as I have taken part in evangelism efforts, I find this to be the most common of failings. Most people, when asked if they know who Jesus is, will respond almost without hesitation that "Jesus is the Son of God".

But do they really believe that? Do they really believe that He is the Son of God, and even more, are they willing to receive Him personally to be their Savior and Lord? That is actually the real question being posed, because again, it does no real good to simply know who Jesus is.

Remember, that in James 2:19 we are told that even the demons know and believe who Jesus is, and they shudder because they know that He would not also be their Savior.

As Jesus stood there in the courts of the High Priest, did those men who were striking Him on the face and mocking Him know who He really was? Those words again, verse 63,

⁶³ Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. ⁶⁴ They also blindfolded him and kept asking him,

“Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?” ⁶⁵ And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him. (Luke 22:63-65)

As I read these words, I do wonder at them . . . why these men would busy themselves with such unprovoked cruelty, mocking Jesus, beating Him, blindfolding Him and blaspheming Him. The only answer that I can come to is that they were being controlled from within the demonic world. Because again, the demons know exactly who Jesus is, and they rage against Him because they know what their end will be.

But again, as for the men themselves, though they were probably being strongly driven by demons, they were still able to make choices, and they were being compelled to either receive Jesus for who He truly was, or to reject Him.

All these things, these events, these choices, are all a part of a plan that God put into place long before time began. And now here, with these men, they were simply being given their opportunity to choose.

And unbeknownst to them, they were face to face with the very one who would later sit on that “Great White Throne of Judgment” and would hold them accountable for their choices and their deeds.

But that is also true for you and for me! As you and I read and take these words into our hearts and minds, what is our answer to this most important question that we will ever need to consider.

May I pause here for a moment and say this again, very clearly . . . you and I are also being brought to the point of making a choice. “Is Jesus really who He says He is, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God?” Because if Jesus is who He says He is, then we had better have the right response and make the right choice, or we will be eternally lost!

And yes, this truly is God’s plan for us, to reveal to us through these scriptures exactly who Jesus is, and for us to see who He really is and to receive Him.

And again, to “receive Him” does not just mean that we must believe in the general principles of Christianity and perhaps go to church on Sunday. This is a far more important and demanding choice that is being presented to us.

We are, at every moment, standing in similar shoes to those men who were accusing Jesus and striking Him in the face. And by our response, we will do one of two things. We will either receive Him as our Christ, our Savior and Lord, or else, we will reject Him and our rejection of Him will be for all eternity. The choice is ours to make.

And may I add this very stern warning that is given to us in Philippians chapter 2,
⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him (that is Jesus) and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

This is the real truth about who Jesus is. He is "Lord"! He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Sadly, these words about these men standing up in the face of Jesus, accusing Him, denying Him and mistreating Him is not strange behavior. It is being done all over this earth every moment of every day, some knowingly doing it, others just by a disregard for Him.

But we must understand that there will surely come a day of accountability, a Judgment Day when we will all stand before Him . . . and then what will we say!

May I close with these words from Deuteronomy chapter 30,

¹⁵ "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, ¹⁶ in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live.

¹⁹ I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live. (Deuteronomy 30:15-19)

Pray with me.