

Why Did Jesus Ask So Many Questions *Series*

Questions Jesus Answered

9-13-23

Video Announcement

I. Slide1 Intro:

- A. Slide2 Jesus *directly answers* very few of the **183** questions He is asked.¹
- Two published studies** state that **Jesus** directly answers **only 3** of the 183 questions He is asked.²
- B. Jesus actually seems to directly answers as many as **8** of the questions He is asked.
- But** whichever count you go with, it is an astonishingly **a small number**.
 - Slide3 We've been looking at the **questions** Jesus asks, **but tonight** we're looking at the questions Jesus **answers directly**.
- C. We've said, Jesus prefers to **ask questions** rather than to provide *direct answers*.
- Jesus chooses to **ask** a question **307** times in the Gospel accounts.
 - So even if** Jesus gives **direct answers** to as many as **8 questions**, that still means that *Jesus is almost 40 times more likely to ask a question than he is to give a direct answer*.
- D. If Jesus is *asked a question*, he is much more likely to give an *indirect answer* than a **direct one**.
- So He's **20 x's** more likely to offer an **indirect** answer than a **direct** one.
- E. **First**, we'll look at some of the ways Jesus offers *indirect answers* to the questions He is asked. **Then**, we will turn to the **8** questions He answers **directly**.

II. Slide4a INDIRECT ANSWERS

- A. Some of Jesus' indirect answers are in response to people who are trying to **trap Him** with their questions. [these are some, not all the ways He answers indirectly]
- B. **SADDUCEES**. Trap #1. [a conservative Jewish sect]

¹ Copenhaver, Martin B.. Jesus Is the Question (p. 87). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

² John Dear, The Questions of Jesus (New York: Doubleday, 2004), xxii; Eric Burtness, Lenten Journey: Beyond Question (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2012), 9.

C. At one point, the **Sadducees** press Jesus for details about the nature of the afterlife (Mark 12:18-27).

1. Sadducees do not believe the dead would be raised, so they lay out a scenario in which they try to demonstrate the **absurdity** of any belief in a life after death.
2. Mark 12:19-23, *Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. There were 7 brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.*
 - a) **Jesus' response:** 1st He answers w/a question, 24 *“Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? Then* He answers, *kind of,* 25 *For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are **like angels** in heaven.*
 - b) Jesus says, in essence, that it is only a sticky situation if we imagine our future life as being *just like this life*. But the afterlife will be different, unlike anything we have yet experienced.
 - (1) We will live *like angels*, Jesus says. But He does not answer the unspoken follow-up question: *how do angels live?* His answer is only implied: we cannot know.

D. **Slide4b PHARISEES.** Trap #2 [a group known for the way they *scrupulously* keep Jewish law]

E. Mt.22:15-22 *Is it lawful to **pay taxes** to Caesar, or not?*

F. **Jesus' response:** He answers w/a question, *But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, (Jesus asks a 2nd question) “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said, “Caesar’s.”* When the

Pharisees respond to Jesus' question by saying that it is the emperor's image on the coin, Jesus concludes w/his mystifying answer: *Then he said to them, "Therefore render to **Caesar** the things that are **Caesar's**, and to **God** the things that are **God's**."*

G. Slide4c **PILATE**. [the Roman governor of Judea] *"Are you the king of the Jews?"*

H. Maybe he is not trying to trap him, **but** he is most likely *asking for those* who are trying to **trap Him**. [in John's account, *Do you say this on your own or have others spoken to you about me?*]

1. In Matthew's account Jesus says, *"That's what you say"*. In each instance, *Jesus avoids giving a direct answer*.
2. The rest of Pilates questions, Jesus answers with **silence**.

I. In some instances, Jesus uses *indirect answers* as a **teaching tool**.

J. When a lawyer asks Jesus, *"Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* Lk. 10:25

1. Jesus characteristically responds by asking a couple of questions of his own: *"What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"* The lawyer responds: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your **heart** and with all your **soul** and with all your **strength** and with all your **mind**, and your **neighbor as yourself**."* Jesus affirms the lawyer's answer, **but** then the lawyer has an additional question: *"And who is my neighbor?"*
2. Of course, Jesus could have answered that question directly, perhaps by saying something like, *"Your neighbor is anyone **in need**."* **Instead**, he responds to the question by telling the **parable** of the good Samaritan.
3. **In the parable, 2 respected religious figures** come upon a man who has been beaten by robbers and lies bleeding by the side of the road. **Neither one stops to help. But then** a Samaritan stops to help. (a surprise twist).
4. Jesus concludes his parable with a question: *"Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"* The lawyer responds, *"The one who showed him **mercy**."*

- a) If Jesus had answered the question directly (“And who is my neighbor?”), the lawyer would have had Jesus’ answer. **By contrast**, when Jesus responds to the question **with the parable**, the lawyer is enabled to discover his own answer.
- b) It is **a tool** employed by many of the **best teachers**.

III. Slide5a **DIRECT ANSWERS**

- A. We now get to the **8 questions** to which Jesus gives a *direct answer*.
- B. **4 of the questions** Jesus answers **directly** ... have to do with **THE LAW**.
- C. **PETER ASKS** Jesus if he is required to *forgive as many as 7 times*.
1. Jesus responds: *“Not just 7 times, but rather as many as 77 times.”* (Mt.18:21-22). It may not be the answer Peter is looking for, **but at least he gets a direct answer**.
- D. **Slide5b PHARISEES ASK:** Jesus if he agrees with Moses that a husband may divorce his wife for *“any reason.”*
1. Jesus responds: *“I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery”* (Mt.19:3-9). The Pharisees may be trying to trap Jesus into contradicting Moses, **but in this instance** that does not prevent Jesus from giving a **direct answer**.
- E. **Slide5c A RICH YOUNG MAN ASKS:** Jesus, *“Teacher, what good thing must I do to have eternal life?”*
1. Jesus responds: by asking another question in return, *“Why do you ask me about what is good? There’s only one who is good.”* **But then** Jesus immediately follows that response with **a more direct answer:** *“If you want to enter eternal life, keep the commandments.”* (Mt.19:16-22).
- F. **Slide5d THE SCRIBES ASK:** *“Which commandment is the most important of all?”* (Mk. 12:28-34).
1. Jesus responds: *“The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all*

your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

2. Actually, at first reading this *may not seem* to qualify as a direct answer, because when Jesus is asked which is the greatest commandment, he does not simply offer **one**. Instead, he names **two** commandments.

a) But Jesus' answer here is **both direct** and **nuanced**. He is making the point that the commandments to **love God** and **love neighbor** are as *inseparable* as *2 steps of the same dance*.

G. **4 of the questions** Jesus answers **directly** ... **DO NOT** have to do with **The Law**.

H. **Slide6a TRANSFIGURATION** (Mt.17)

I. Right after **Jesus, Peter, James, and John** go down the mountain.

1. **A man** has brought his **epileptic son** to be healed by **Jesus**, and in his absence, the disciples try to help as they have seen Jesus do on so many occasions, **but to no avail**.

2. When Jesus hears about what has happened, he asks 2 exasperated questions. *"You faithless and crooked generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I put up with you?"* But then **Jesus cures the boy instantly**. Later, when they are alone, the disciples want to know **why they were not able to wield the same healing power**. Jesus gives an answer as direct as an arrow speeding to the bull's eye: *Because you have little faith*

J. **Slide6b PASSOVER MEAL, WHERE?** (Mrk.14:12-16)

K. When Jesus and his disciples approach Jerusalem, they ask him *where he would like to eat the Passover meal*.

1. **Jesus' response:** (quite detailed) *"Go into the city. A man carrying a water jar will meet you. Follow him. Wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher asks, "Where is my guest room where I can eat the*

Passover meal with my disciples?” He will show you a large room upstairs already furnished. Prepare for us there.”

2. Jesus’ answer is cloaked in *some mystery*, but it is a **direct answer** nonetheless.

L. **Slide6c PASSOVER MEAL, WHO?** (Jn.13:21-30)

M. **Jesus** is then at table with His disciples when he announces that *someone at that table will betray him*. The disciples look around the table and cannot imagine that any of them would be the betrayer. Peter, who is next to Jesus, leans in and asks, *“Lord, who is it?”*

1. **Jesus’ response:** though He **does not** offer a name, but he does give Peter a **direct** answer: *“It’s the one to whom I will give this piece of bread once I have dipped into the bowl.”* Then Jesus takes a piece of bread, dips it in the dish, and hands it to **Judas**. The *other disciples* do not pick up on the significance of the gesture, and we are not told if **Peter** fully understands, either.

N. The **last** direct answer Jesus gives is in response to a question that in other instances he seems determined to **avoid** ... *who He was!*

O. **Slide6d JESUS BEFORE THE COUNCIL** (Mark14:53-30)

P. When Jesus is asked by *the high priest of the temple*, *“Are you the Christ, the Son of the blessed one?”*

1. **Jesus’ response:** is as direct and pointed as any he offers: **“I AM.”**
 - a) Full answer: *“I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”*
2. In those **2 words**, is a claim, **as big as the universe**. We can only imagine why Jesus is **so direct** in His answer.
 - a) Perhaps it is because **the time is short**. Perhaps Jesus is simply annoyed by the goading and posturing of the temple officials and so he decides to **let it rip**.

Q. From Jesus' answers we learn: something about **how He interprets the law**. His understanding of **the central role of faith is reinforced**. **And His identity as the Messiah is affirmed**.

IV. WRAP UP

A. Well, that's it. That is the complete catalogue. Those are the **8 questions** to which Jesus offers a **direct answer**.

B. **What if we only had Jesus' answers?** **And** particularly if we only had His **direct answers** - **we would be missing so much**.

1. We prefer direct answers from **a mechanic** who is repairing our car, **or** from **an accountant** who is preparing our tax return, **or** from **a teenage son** when he is asked, *"What time did you get in last night?"*

2. In other circumstances, however, **direct answers are not enough**.

a) **In the end**, an **Answer Man Jesus** is just not all that compelling.

b) **Instead**, it is **the questions** Jesus asks, that have **particular power to engage us**, especially **over time**.

c) **They are evocative** - *that is*, **able to evoke something in us**. The questions have a **power to move us**, and often to **a place we have not been before**.

C. **So, yes**, it is important to consider the **answers** Jesus offers. **But instead**, it is really the **questions** Jesus **asks** that are **central to His teachings**.

D. Keywords: questions, answers, indirect, direct.