

Revealing Questions to Jesus

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Date: 11 October 2020

Preacher: Nigel Anderson

[0 : 00] As we look at the passage that we read, as we see what we might describe as revealing questions to Jesus, with the three headings, the three sub-points, if you like, the Lord to whom the questions are asked, the surprise of all who ask the questions, and the verdict to all who ask the questions.

Well, for the past month plus of Sunday mornings here in this building, we've been concentrating on questions that Jesus asked others.

But this morning we're going to look at questions that others asked Jesus. Questions uttered at the end of time, but questions, of course, that are eternally applicable to each one of us now, and will be until the Lord returns.

Questions relating to Christ's return. And just as, you know, many of us follow a church calendar. We look at the birth of Christ.

We look at the death of Christ. We do so regularly. I think it's so important that we have a regular remembrance of the promised return of Jesus. So let's look then at the passage.

[1 : 20] Let's look at the questions that were asked of Jesus, or are asked of Jesus. Let's look firstly at the Lord, because in the passage the reference is to the Lord who's asked these questions.

And here we see Jesus giving one of his last teachings to his disciples before he's arrested, before he's put on trial, and before his crucifixion.

And in the three years that Jesus has been with his disciples, he's taught them. He's taught them concerning the way of truth. He's taught them of the only way to glory and eternal life is found in him and in him alone.

He's taught his disciples about the response of faith demonstrated in actions. He's taught the disciples how they're to conduct themselves as they seek to follow him.

And now in this closing address that he's given to his disciples, he's giving them another lesson in faith and in the evidence of faith. And this teaching then is concerning how Jesus' followers are to live for him.

[2 : 33] How they're to show the evidence of their faith. And in so doing, how they're to treat those who are poor, the underprivileged, the needy, the marginalized.

That conduct that has a direct bearing on indeed how they treat Jesus. So that display of faith in action that's got eternal consequences for us all.

And so here's Jesus giving, as we say, one of his last teachings as he takes his disciples, as it were, into the future. He's, as it were, painting this picture of a future time.

This vivid picture of his return. Yes, Jesus hasn't yet died and risen again. But he has that assurance that just as he came from heaven to earth the first time when he came in human form. So he'll come again a second time. And he'll come as judge. He'll come to deliver the justice of God and on all of humanity.

[3 : 42] And exercising that justice in relation to what we've done with Jesus. And as we read there in the passage, in that return of Jesus, he's going to separate humanity.

In that great judgment, that judgment that will mark the end of time, will mark the end of sin. And bring in the new heavens and the new earth. And that separation of humanity for judgment.

Well, Jesus speaks of that in terms of the agricultural practices of today. As happened when Jesus was on earth. The sheep and the goats that often grazed together.

Now, even though we're in the 21st century, we can still understand. We can still follow, of course, what Jesus was saying. Jesus speaking of separation of two sides, if you like.

And Jesus giving this picture. This wonderful picture of his return. Of his coming back in his glory. And with all the vast number of angels with him.

[4 : 46] And Jesus seated in that posture of judge there on that throne of glory. And as Jesus tells us, before him, all of humanity. And a great separation taking place.

Just as, from our perspective, 2,000 years ago, sheep and goats grazing together. And then, in the evening time, being separated. Being separated for particular reasons.

And so, Jesus separating two sides of humanity. The righteous in him on his right. And the unrighteous to his left.

And Jesus here, he's speaking. He's speaking with authority. Not just the authority of a judge. But with the authority as king. In, we use the word olden days.

Kings would dispense justice. So, he's the king judge. Or the judge king, if you like. And there are no appeals. There's no second chances. There's no miscarriage of justice.

[5 : 50] But Jesus gives final verdicts. Based on what we've done with Jesus. So, two sides. Two sides before Jesus.

And Jesus addressing each side in turn. We see the first group. The first side, if you like. The sheep. The flock. Jesus' flock. Being told that their works of mercy towards the needy.

Towards the underprivileged. The suffering. He's saying that was the evidence of your faith. That faith blessed. With eternal life in the kingdom of God.

For us, on the other hand. The absence. The absence of these works of mercy towards the needy. Showing the evidence of no saving faith.

That, as Jesus tells us. Will result in that eternal condemnation. That eternal separation. Those who have not given their lives to the Lord Jesus.

[6 : 51] And shown by the works that God has given us to do. Then the punishment. Given. Along with the devil and the angels. And in each of these addresses that Jesus gives.

There. There's a response. There's a response from humanity. And it's a response in the form of questions. And we really do need to look at these questions. And ask ourselves each one.

As you have to ask yourself. Which side are you on? Are you with Christ and his flock, his sheep? Or are you with the devil and his flock?

His flock of goats? Well, let's look then at the surprise. The surprise that we see here. And the questions that are asked.

Well, both sides address Jesus as Lord. Do you notice that in the passage? Both sides. Those on the right of Jesus. Those on the left. Both call him Lord.

[7 : 52] And of course, that's exactly what the Bible tells us will happen. We go to the Apostle Paul. When he's writing to the Romans. He's actually quoting from Isaiah in the Old Testament.

And Paul tells us of this to come. Romans 14, 10 to 12. Where he tells us that we're all going to stand before the judgment seat of God.

And he says, For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to me. And every tongue shall confess to God. And each of us, as Paul says, Will give an account of himself to God. Every knee bound to Jesus. Now you know very well there's an awful lot of knee bowing going on at the moment. Particularly at the start of particular sports events.

That posture of recognition of what's happening at the moment in the Black Lives Matter campaign. I'm going to make no comment on that, obviously. There are many different opinions on that.

[8 : 53] Most bow. And some, for very good reasons, don't bow. But what I will make a comment on is this. That there'll be a moment when every knee will bow.

And not for a campaign. And not just to make a public statement. But every knee will bow in reverence before the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings.

And whether it's the righteous on the right hand side of Jesus. Or the unrighteous on the left of Jesus. Everyone will come before the Lord.

And recognize that yes, Jesus truly is the Lord. The majestic one. Everyone paying homage to the Lord Jesus.

The atheist who denied Jesus in life. Will acknowledge Jesus. The agnostic who denied the evidence of God. No longer is going to question the existence of God.

[9 : 55] Because God the Son will be there in judgment. There'll be no atheists or agnostics on the day of judgment. Because everyone is going to see the Lord Jesus.

Everyone is going to bow before him. Everyone, yes, confess that he is Lord. And then on one level. On one level. There's a sameness to the questions that both sides ask.

It's the same opening part of the question that each side directs to Jesus. When did we see you? Both sides ask. Look at the first side if you like.

The righteous Lord. When did we see you? Hungry and feed you. Or thirsty and give you drink. When did we see you? A stranger and welcome you. Or naked and clothe you. When did we see you?

Sick or in prison. And visit you. And listen to those on the left side of Jesus. Lord, when did we see you?

[10:51] Hungry or thirsty or a stranger. Or naked or sick or in prison. And did not minister to you. Did not serve you. When did we see you? Those on the right of the King.

Those on the right of Jesus. They're surprised. They're surprised. It's news to them that they ever saw Jesus. That they ever saw the glorious Lord before them.

In a state of hunger or thirst. Or someone who needed accommodation. Somebody who needed to be clothed. Somebody who was sick. Someone who was in prison. And so it's a massive surprise to the righteous.

That before them the King, the Judge, the glorious Lord. Should be commending them for what they did to Him. But the clue.

The clue to their being found in favor with the Lord Jesus. That favor that warrants eternal life. The clue is actually seen in two connected things that we see in the passage.

[11:53] The first, that those who are on the right of the Lord are called righteous. And secondly, that they're surprised at what Jesus has said to them.

Let's think of these two connected things. Jesus speaks of them as righteous. In other words, that designation that comes from what God has done for them.

Righteous, not in themselves, not for anything they've done. But righteous because of the work of the one who's righteous in himself.

Excuse me, the Lord. The Lord Jesus. Jesus, who in his death on the cross. When Jesus took the sins of his people and himself as our substitute. Jesus dying.

And those for whom he died. Been clothed with his righteousness. When he took our sin upon himself. He gave his people that wonderful transaction.

[12:53] The gifting of righteousness. So you, who are in him made righteous. And acceptable to God. And you, who know the Lord Jesus as your Savior.

You've got that privilege. Don't ever forget that privilege that you have been called righteous. That status that crowns you with life. That life in him.

That everlasting life in all its fullness. It's a status that comes from the love of God. The love of God for sinners. That gifted righteousness that means on that last day.

On that day of days. That day when the Lord Jesus returns. You will be referred to as righteous.

Yes, utterly undeserved. Yes, utterly undeserved.

But all of grace. Think of that even now. Even now as you're giving thanks to God the Lord. Thanks for the gift of the Lord Jesus. Thanks for the gift of salvation.

[13:53] Thanks for that gift of righteousness. Give thanks to him. To the one who is the God of all grace. Jesus. But then there's that associated surprise of the righteous.

In regard to what they've done to and for Jesus. And that surprise when they say, Lord, you know, when did we see you? It's that surprise that tells us that, you know, salvation doesn't depend on good works.

Because what the righteous did, what the righteous do, isn't for sale. What they do for others isn't to gain reward. But it's because of what that response, that response to God.

That response to what God has done for you. And so the works, the actions of the righteous, evidence of true faith, saving faith in the Lord.

You don't do anything to merit your salvation. But you do what you do as an outcome of your saving faith. Because of what Jesus has done for you on the cross.

[15:04] And just ponder that. Just reflect on that. Even, you know, just reflect even on your own witness. And your own work for the Lord. But you don't go, I know you don't go around looking to help others to gain, as it were, merit points from God.

You don't go around seeking to make a difference to somehow gain favor from God. No. No, it's the love of God in your heart that constrains you. You do the good works that God has given you to do.

Because that's what you were created for. That's what you were recreated for. That's what Paul mentions in Ephesians 2, verses 8 to 10. When he tells us that by grace you've been saved through faith.

That's not your own doing. It's the gift of God. Not the result of works that no one may boast. So let's just pause there for a moment. It's not the works that saves.

It's the grace of God that's received by faith. And so there's no boasting. There's no boasting in salvation. There's no boasting in any kind of self-righteousness.

[16:09] You're made righteous, declared righteous, declared righteous by God in his great gift of salvation. And you've been made righteous for a reason, as Paul continues in that part of his letter.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. And that's the works of righteousness.

The works of the righteous that the righteous are commended for. That evidence of saving faith.

The feeding the hungry. The giving sustenance to the thirsty.

Welcoming the stranger. Clothing the naked. Visiting the sick. Visiting the imprisoned. It's not whether you've got a theology degree or not. It's not whether you can recite large sections of scripture.

It's not whether you can memorize the 107 shorter catechisms. It's what you've done in showing the character of the Lord Jesus.

[17:16] In the way that you've lived. Especially to the needy, to the less privileged, to those less privileged than yourselves. That giving of yourself to others. And in so doing, giving of yourself to the Lord Jesus.

That's what Jesus tells us here. He indicates that to the righteous. And the king will answer them.

Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these, my brothers. You did it to me. You did it to me.

The righteous didn't know that they were. It was as if they were feeding and sustaining the Lord Jesus in their works, what they did. Jesus is assuring the righteous.

It's their works, your works of righteousness that are for him and to him. So what are you doing?

What are you doing that demonstrates a righteous heart?

Think of even the circumstances of the current time that we're living in. And the times we're living in, aren't these an opportunity to show forth the love of God? And reaching out to the poor.

[18:21] Whether it's those who are physically poor. Even spiritually poor. Spiritually hungry. Spiritually thirsty. Are you making the most of every opportunity that God's giving you?

To show your faith in action. To show your faith by what you do. That's what the Apostle James tells us. Faith without works is dead.

But what about the unrighteous as Jesus describes here in this passage regarding the great judgment? Because it's the same question as the righteous asks.

Lord, when did we see you? When did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and didn't minister to you? The surprise.

You see that in verse 44. The surprise in the voices. It's as if they're saying, you know, if only we had known it was you, we would have served you.

[19:18] We would have helped you. We didn't know it was you. And by their sin of omission, they're condemned. As we read in verse 45, then he'll answer them, And truly I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.

Isn't that a stark warning for us all? The omitting of goodness. Because the omitting of goodness is just as sinful as the committing of evil.

And it's something we really need to ponder on so much. Because we're so often conscious of particular acts of sin, the committing of sin, even in our own lives and our own hearts.

As we know that when we commit sin, we're acting contrary to God's law and God's word. What of the good that we omit to do? What of the good that we fail to do?

That failure to feed hungry lives, hungry souls. That failure to give sustenance to those who are truly thirsting, whether physically or spiritually, emotionally.

[20:30] The failure to clothe the unclothed. Ignoring the plight of the sick and the imprisoned. It's that mindset, isn't it, that really says, you know, so long as I've got enough for myself, it's all that matters.

That mindset that says that self is first and that self is king rather than acknowledge the Lord Jesus as king, as Lord. And it's an affliction, we might say, a sinful affliction that certainly we're all guilty of. And we all need to repent of and act upon. The Apostle Paul was very aware of that in his own life. Read in Romans 7, 19, I do not do the good I want.

He's lamenting even the sinfulness of his own heart. But he goes on to say, But the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. And so pray then.

Pray for the forgiveness of God. The forgiveness of the Lord. Yes, for all that you've omitted to do. As each one of us has to pray and come before God and confess our sins of omission.

[21 : 36] Omitting. What we ought to do and ought to have done in his service. But then, finally, what are the verdict that we read here? The verdict to all who asked these questions and who asked these questions.

We're told that there are two sides before Jesus. Two sides before the Lord in that great day of judgment. And as there are two sides, there are two verdicts.

Verdicts. There's the flock of the righteous. And the verdict given. The verdict of blessing. And it's captured. That verdict of blessing is captured in one word.

Verse 34. Come. Come. Then the king will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

But to those on his left, the goats, the command that's given, well, is God's final word. In verse 41.

[22 : 37] It's not come. It's depart. Depart from me, you cursed. Come or depart from me. What will the Lord's word be to you on that day of days?

Are you going to hear the verdict of life? The verdict that gives life? That verdict that tells of life in the kingdom of God eternally? Or are you going to be given the verdict of death?

Eternal death in the place of darkness. As Jesus tells us, that place of eternal fire. The fire of hell that will never go out. It's a place.

It's just as heaven as a place. Then there's the place of eternal punishment. But of course, there are places, but they've got that infinite difference. As we see in the passage.

There's the glorious heavenly paradise. That place where the righteous will enjoy that kingdom prepared for them. The joys of eternal life known eternally.

[23 : 40] But then as Jesus tells us in verse 46, there's that place of eternal punishment prepared for the devil and his angels. Now these are solemn words.

But the words that have got to be spoken, words that have got to be heard and listened to and acted on. Which side are you on? Are you with the Lord and his righteous servants?

Or the devil and his unrighteous followers? And if by the enabling of the Holy Spirit, you know in your heart that you're with the Lord and his flock and his people, then truly rejoice and give thanks and continue to show your thanksgiving by doing the works that God has given you to do.

What you've been created to do, recreated to do. But if in your heart, you know that you're as yet outside of Christ, come to him.

Come to him by faith. Repent of your sins. Receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior. And go on your way rejoicing. Rejoicing that salvation has come to your house.

[24 : 52] Amen. And let us pray. Lord, our God, you have given us much to ponder on, much to reflect on. And you've given us your word to hear and heed and obey.

Lord, may it be that all who have gathered here this morning, all who are watching on, will know the rejoicing of salvation. And know the words that Jesus will give to them on that day.

Come. Lord, hear us as we continue then before you in worship. Continue, Lord, to bless and to keep and to make your face to shine upon us and keep us safe.

Hear us, Lord, as we continue before you now. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.