

Jesus Is Questioned

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: When the Jewish leaders questioned Jesus to trap Him, He answered all of their questions from the authority of God's Word and amazed all who heard.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Mark 12:13-40

I recently heard a story about an elderly screenplay writer in a coffee shop who overheard a couple of film students arguing over the deeper meaning of one of his films. He listened with great amusement as they picked apart each scene, bemoaned their frustration with the film critics they thought wrongly assessed this film, and debated what the film must really be about, all while ignorant of the writer's presence.

The writer decided to interrupt their heated discussion and said, "I think I can help you with this plot."

To his surprise, one of the students sharply responded, "What are you, a film critic? No offense, but the last person I want to hear from is another old film critic."

The writer, jarred by the student's response and entertained by the growing irony, gave a sly smile, apologized for eavesdropping, and departed.



How might this story parallel some people's thoughts about Jesus?

Group Time

Point 1: Jesus teaches the reality of resurrection from God's Word (Mark 12:19-27).

¹⁹ “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife behind but no child, that man should take the wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁰ There were seven brothers. The first married a woman, and dying, left no offspring. ²¹ The second also took her, and he died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. ²² None of the seven left offspring. Last of all, the woman died too. ²³ In the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be, since the seven had married her?” ²⁴ Jesus spoke to them, “Isn’t this the reason why you’re mistaken: you don’t know the Scriptures or the power of God? ²⁵ For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven. ²⁶ And as for the dead being raised—haven’t you read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God said to him: I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead but of the living. You are badly mistaken.”

The Sadducees, a Jewish sect, did not believe in an afterlife and rejected the concept of resurrection (Mark 12:18), but Jesus, an increasingly popular rabbi, taught these very things. They considered Jesus a threat to their position in Judaism and local Roman politics, so they attempted to trap and discredit Him with a theological riddle, a disingenuous question about marital relations in the “supposed” resurrection.

Jesus’ response relied on the authority of Scripture as He appealed to the Law to correct the Sadducees’ misunderstanding. Jesus explained that the resurrection is not just a continuation of our normal life; it is a wholesale transformation of our lives by the power of God, wherein marriage no longer applies. And the resurrection is proved in the Law when God said, “I am,”—not “I was,”—“the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Authority of Scripture: Since the Bible is the _____ Word from God, it is the ultimate _____ of authority for the Christian. We are to believe and obey God by believing and obeying His Word.



How should we respond to the fact that Scripture is authoritative?

Point 2: Jesus teaches the primacy of love from God's Word (Mark 12:28-34).

²⁸ One of the scribes approached. When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, “Which command is the most important of all?”

²⁹ Jesus answered, “The most important is Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. ³¹ The second is, Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other command greater than these.”

³² Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, teacher. You have correctly said that he is one, and there is no one else except him. ³³ And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

³⁴ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And no one dared to question him any longer.

The topic of the most important command in the law was another hot debate amongst the Jews, particularly the scribes. It was a popular belief that if one obeyed the law perfectly, one could earn God's love. So the scribes tried to identify the most important commands from which all the others stemmed so that a reasonable attempt could be made to obey them all.



What are some Old Testament commands you would identify as most important?

Jesus responded first by quoting the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which begins not with a command but with a proclamation about who God is—He is the one true God—followed by the command to **love God** with all that we are: heart, soul, mind, and strength. Then Jesus went on to add a second command from Leviticus 19:18: we are to **love others** as ourselves. Jesus upended the entire Pharisaical system with this answer: we don't obey to earn God's love but we love God and others because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).



Why is it important that we remember we love because God first loved us?

Point 3: Jesus teaches the deity of the Messiah from God's Word (Mark 12:35-37).

³⁵ While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he asked, "How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David?" ³⁶ David himself says by the Holy Spirit:

The Lord declared to my Lord,
'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'

³⁷ David himself calls him 'Lord'; how then can he be his son?" And the large crowd was listening to him with delight.

Those who had hoped to trap Jesus have given up. Now Jesus gets to ask a question of His own. The scribes, experts in the Scriptures, knew the Messiah would be a descendant of David, a "son of David" (see 2 Sam. 7:12-16). But was the Messiah simply a conquering king who would liberate them from the Romans and take His seat on the throne of David as ruler over the promised land? Jesus pointed out that David himself had something to say about that.

To challenge the scribes' presuppositions about the Messiah, Jesus referred to Psalm 110, which was written by David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The psalm as a whole speaks about the destruction of the enemies of God and His people, but Jesus focused on the first line, specifically the wording of that introduction. David's intentional and inspired words reveal the Messiah's *divinity*, for while He is the human "son of David," He is also David's "Lord."

Voices from the Church

"Our trust in the Bible stems from our trust in Jesus Christ: the man who is God, the King of the world, the crucified, risen and exalted rescuer ... I love him, and I've decided to follow him, so if he talks and acts as if the Bible is trustworthy, authoritative, good, helpful and powerful, I will too ... even if some of my questions remain unanswered, or my answers remain unpopular."¹

—Andrew Wilson

Inerrancy of Scripture: Scripture is completely _____, without any mixture of error, in all its teachings, no matter what subject it addresses. Scripture is an infallible guide to _____ and it is truthful in _____ that it affirms.



How are you encouraged by the truth that God's inspiration of Scripture extends to the very words used by the human authors of the Bible?

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Mark 12:13-17

For the Pharisees and the Herodians, this was about much more than tax policy. Paying taxes to Rome was somewhat of an open sore for the Jews. After all, they were supposed to be God's free and redeemed people. To add salt to the wound, the Jews were taxed by the Roman Empire to help pay for the Roman army that was occupying their promised land. Needless to say, this tax was loathed by the Jews.

Their question to Jesus about the lawfulness of Jews paying a Roman tax was their vain attempt to get Him in trouble before the temple crowd. If he said yes, the Jews would reject Him as a Roman sympathizer. If He said no, they could turn Him in to the Romans as a rebel.

Jesus' response was brilliant. He refused to be crammed into a political box. Therefore, He answered with wisdom, emphasizing the priorities of life: Give Caesar his tax, but don't give him ultimate authority over your life; honor the law, but honor preeminently the Lord above the law.



How do you need to shift your priorities to honor the Lord above all?



Voices from Church History

"We are God's money. But we are like coins that have wandered away from the treasury. What was once stamped upon us has been worn down by our wandering. The One who restamps his image upon us is the One who first formed us. He himself seeks his own coin, as Caesar sought his coin. It is in this sense that he says, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's,' to Caesar his coins, to God your very selves."³

—Augustine (354-430)

Day 2: Read Mark 12:18-27

The Sadducees tried to set a theological trap, but Jesus revealed that the basis of their misguided question about marriage in the resurrection was flawed. Marriage is something that will not continue in the new heavens and new earth. At first glance, this might rub happily married readers the wrong way. Is Jesus minimizing the beauty of marriage? Far from it! We know from Ephesians 5 that Jesus Himself is the archetype for understanding the meaning of marriage. Instead, Jesus is expanding their categories of what heaven will be like.

In heaven, the relationships we have with the Lord and our fellow saints will mysteriously surpass any form of love we experience here on earth. This is the “power of God” that Jesus referred to. He invited the Sadducees to see that God’s wisdom and power are so much greater than we could imagine, and the glories that will be revealed on the other side of eternity will be more magnificent than we could ever dare hope.



Why is it important that we listen to the Scriptures rather than other sources for our understanding of what heaven will be like?

Day 3: Read Mark 12:28-34

Jesus cited what the Jews call the Shema from Deuteronomy 6. “*Shema*” is the Hebrew word for “listen” or “hear,” the first word in the Shema. This passage is one of the most well known passages of all the Old Testament Scriptures. At the time the Shema was written, there were many false gods and religions competing for the belief of the people. In the middle of all this religious confusion, the Lord revealed through the prophet Moses who He really is: “The LORD is one.” In other words, He is different, unique, and set apart in His nature and character. He is all-sufficient and all-powerful. He is the one true God.

We should consider it a great gift that God would be kind enough to reveal Himself to us and tell us something about how to relate to Him and to others.



What distractions surround you as you go throughout your day, and how will you listen to and obey the one true God in the midst of those distractions?

Day 4: Read Mark 12:35-37

With a knowledge of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus' listeners understood there was a Messiah who would come one day to make everything right again, and this Messiah would be a descendant of David.

Jesus quoted from Psalm 110 to challenge their assumptions about this Messiah. The popular belief was that the Messiah would be merely a human descendant of King David. If that were so, Jesus asked, then why did David call the Messiah his "Lord"? The only way to make sense of Psalm 110 is if the Messiah was not just a man but also God. Jesus revealed that according to this familiar psalm, the Messiah would be God's Son coming through David's lineage.

Jesus invited His listeners to abandon what they thought or assumed He should be like and to see Him for who He really is according to the Scriptures.



What are some ways you will show honor to Jesus as your Lord?

Day 5: Read Mark 12:38-40

In these three verses, Jesus gave a scathing rebuke to those with hypocritical devotion—they appear to be devoted to God on the outside but are actually far from Him on the inside.

Jesus provided five marks of hypocritical devotion:

1. A focus on the external over the internal
2. A drive for the applause of others
3. A craving for positions of power and privilege
4. An abuse of power for personal gain at the expense of others
5. An outward religion that doesn't match inward reality

We tend to think of others as hypocrites and not ourselves, but such thinking must be resisted. We are all prone to hypocrisy and guilty of it to some degree. Few on this side of the resurrection read the Bible and decide to be self-righteous Pharisees on purpose, but we all drift easily in that direction if we take our eyes off of Jesus.



Which of the marks of hypocritical devotion do you struggle with, and how will you fight to resist that drift?

UNIT 25

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3. David Wenham, *The Parables of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1989), 101.

SESSION 3

1. Amanda Bible Williams, in *She Reads Truth*, by Raechel Myers and Amanda Bible Williams (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2016), 6–7.
2. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 107.
3. Quoted in “Only one life, ‘twil soon be past...” by Thomas and Elizabeth West, *The West London Life*, December 31, 2018, www.thewestlondonlife.com/single-post/2018/12/31/Only-one-life-twil-soon-be-past.
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2. Athanasius, “Homily on the Resurrection of Lazarus,” quoted in *John 11–21*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, vol. IVb in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 13.
3. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament*, vol. 1 (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2001), 334.

UNIT 26

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3. Louie Giglio, *The Air I Breathe* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2003), 22.

SESSION 2

1. Andrew Wilson, *Unbreakable: What the Son of God Said About the Word of God* (IOPublishing, 2014) [eBook].
2. Kim Huat Tan, *Mark*, in *New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015) [Wordsearch].
3. Augustine, *Tractate on John* 40.9.13, quoted in *Mark*, eds. Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, vol. II in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 3

1. John Stott, quoted in “Between Two Worlds: An Interview with John R. W. Stott,” by R. Albert Mohler Jr., August 8, 2011, albertmohler.com/2011/08/08/between-two-worlds-an-interview-with-john-r-w-stott.
2. Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1967, reprint 2008), 73.
3. Anne Askew, *The Latter Examination of Anne Askew (1547)*, ed. John Bale; quoted in *Luke*, ed. Beth Kreitzer, vol. 3 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015) [Wordsearch].
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SESSION 4

1. See “Diamonds Unearthed,” by Cate Lineberry, *Smithsonian Magazine* (December 2006), www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/diamonds-uneearthed-141629226.
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4. Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1999), 487.

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