

Date: 29th June
Reading: Matthew 22:15-46
Speaker: Robert Houston
Subject: Questions for the Lord.

Every week in Parliament, there is Prime Minister's Questions, where the Government and Opposition try to score off each other. These verses draw our attention to a similar attempt by the enemies of the Lord to belittle Him by asking questions which they thought impossible to answer. They forgot that they were dealing with God manifest in flesh and therefore it was impossible to catch Him. In Isaiah 40:12,13 the question is asked: “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or *being* his counsellor hath taught him?”

The Lord asked Job, “Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct *him*?” (Job 40:2).

Jesus Himself pointed out: “a *greater than Solomon is here*” (Matthew 12:42).

There are four questions in this passage, three asked by the enemies of the Lord and one by the Lord Himself.

1. The Question of Tribute

The Pharisees took counsel, like the rulers spoken of in Psalm 2. They used deceit to try to flatter Him, but they exposed their own wickedness. If their words were true, why did they not believe. They proved their lies by their actions. In contrast, they came to the One Who is the Truth (John 14:6). He cannot speak anything but truth. He knew their lies because He knew what was in man (John 2:24,25). He knows the heart of man (Jeremiah 17:9,10).

They asked “What thinkest Thou?”. They forgot that the thoughts of God are higher than the thoughts of men (Isaiah 55:8,9). They also failed to recognise that He had no thought of pride only of humility (Phil 2:6,7)

“Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar?”. He knew their hypocrisy. Seven times in Chapter 23, He exposes the hypocrisy of their thoughts and actions. This is the character of the religion of men. God hates it because it is full of pride and hypocrisy.

The Lord's answer was to ask for the tribute money, the Roman denarius. He asked whose image was on the coin. What a challenge to our lives. Whose image is seen in us? Man was made in the image of God, but the image is blurred by sin. While we were the offspring of God because He is our Creator, this is not true morally. It can only be possible if there is conversion and a new birth into the family of God. The question is, have we taken that step?

The response was that we should render to Caesar what belongs to him. This is the consistent teaching of the New Testament (1 Peter 2, Romans 13). The second challenge is that we should render to God what is His. While we may pay our taxes and honour the authorities in the Lord, we need to realise that there is a higher authority to which all will answer. What does He require?

1. Ourselves – recognition of our sin and the need for forgiveness (Isaiah 53:6)
2. Our bodies – as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1)
3. All that we are – failure to give is to rob God (Malachi 3:8)

2. The Question of Resurrection

The Sadducees knew the Scripture but did not believe. Both Job (Job 19:26) and David (2 Samuel 12:”3) recognised the certainty of resurrection, but these men refused to believe. The High Priest was a Sadducee (Acts 5:17) which is why he was so opposed to the Gospel. They failed to know the Scripture or the power of God. The resurrection is the evidence of the Power of God in the Gospel to save and change lives and destinies (Romans 1:4,16; John 11:25; Romans 10:9).

3. The Greatest Commandment

A lawyer asked “What is the greatest commandment?”. He expected to hear one of the Ten Commandments quoted. The Lord pointed him to the root of all, “Thou shalt love”. What a contrast to the world today, where there is so much hatred in every sphere. God is looking for love firstly for Himself, then for all men. This is not a contradiction of the other commandments, but rather every other commandment is encompassed in this.

4. What Think ye of Christ?

The Pharisees stated that Christ was the Son of David, but He then asked why David called Him, Lord. (Psalm 110:1). This silenced them as they had not answer to this.

A second question, on which eternity hinges, is recorded in Matthew. In Chapter 26:22, the question is “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ”?

Between these questions, eternity is settled. We must recognise that Jesus Christ is Lord (Romans 10:9; Phil 2:11) and we must receive Him (John 1:12)