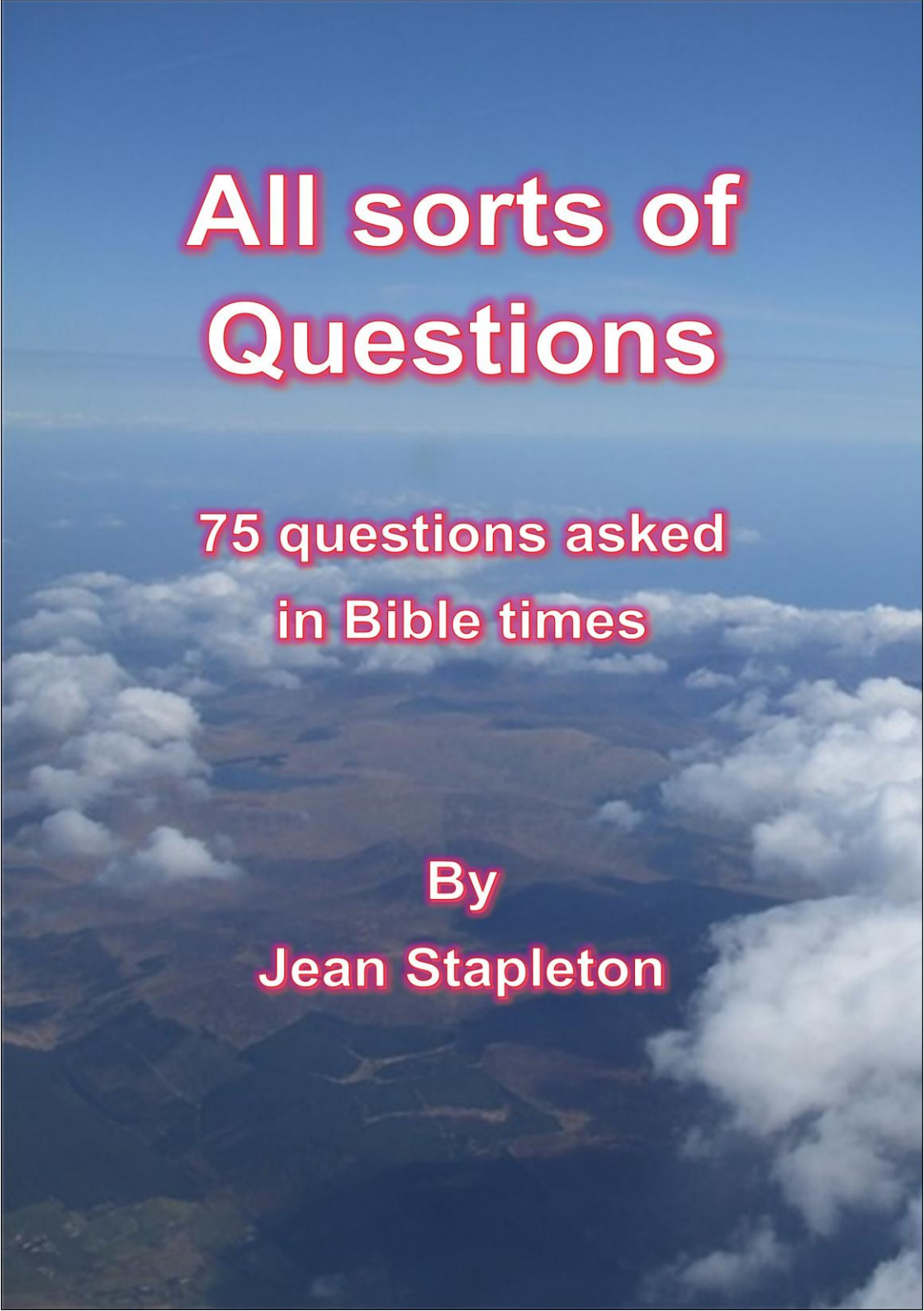


An aerial photograph of a vast, mountainous landscape. A winding river flows through the valley, surrounded by rolling hills and mountains. The sky is a deep blue, and there are scattered white clouds. The overall scene is serene and expansive.

All sorts of Questions

75 questions asked
in Bible times

By
Jean Stapleton

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**By
Jean Stapleton**

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INTRODUCTION

It is not only small children who ask lots of questions: we find all sorts of questions in the Bible, asked by all sorts of people.

The first question we read, shows us Satan persuading Eve, the first woman, to question God's words. We find challenging questions, questions from those who doubted God's power to help them in their troubles and questions from the genuinely perplexed. There is the wonderful question asked by a jailer – "what must I do to be saved?" So many questions linked to so many experiences and so many answers to help us in our own particular circumstances.

Chapter 1 - The Bible's first Question

“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat
of every tree of the garden’?”
(Genesis 3: 1)

Who asked the Question?

Satan, using a serpent.

Who was being spoken to?

Eve, the first woman.

The Time and the place of the Question

This question was asked after God had placed the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden.

The Reason for the Question

Satan's aim was to make Eve question God's goodness. He planted in her mind the idea that God was withholding something good from her.

The Effect of the Question

Eve listened to the serpent. She should have considered how good God was, to have provided a beautiful place for her to live, with everything that she and her husband could possibly need. Instead, she disobeyed God's instructions. Eve took some of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and shared it with Adam.

What happened after

Adam and Eve were ashamed to look at each other and, worse still, they were afraid of God's presence in the garden. They had been warned that if they disobeyed God they would die. Their bodies did not die immediately, but they experienced a different kind of death. That part of them that could respond to God and enjoy His presence had died. Their sinful disobedience had made a barrier between them and God. Before their sin they had enjoyed having God with them: now they were afraid of God.

We read the sentence that God passed on the serpent, the woman and the man, in Genesis 3: 14-19.

Everyone born into the world since Adam's sin, has a sinful nature. The only exception is the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who never sinned in thought, word or deed. There was no way for men and women to remove the barrier of sin between them and God. But when the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He took sin's punishment for everyone who trusts in Him.

Read: Genesis 2: 15-25 and 3: 1-13.

A Question for you

Some people say that what you have just read in Genesis chapters 2 and 3 is just a story with a meaning: it never really happened.

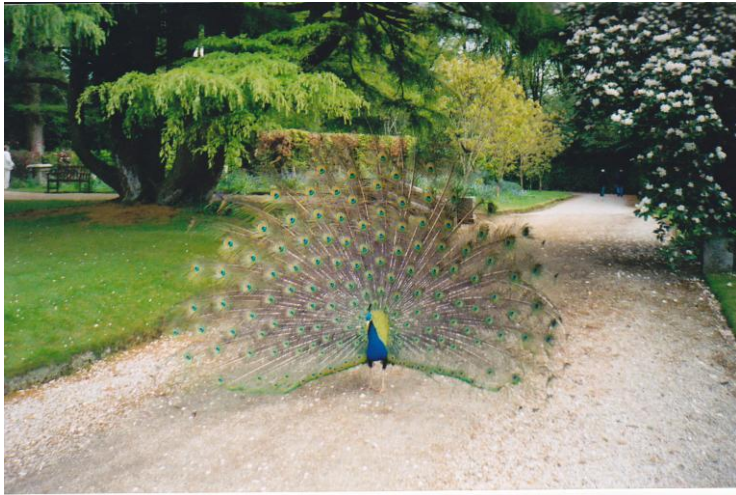
Are they right? Look up these New Testament verses which will help you to answer that question:

Read: Matthew 19:4 and 5 (compare these words of the Lord Jesus with Genesis 2: 24)

Romans 5: 12 & 19

1 Corinthians 15: 21-22

2 Timothy 3:16



Chapter 2 - A Question for a brother

“Where is Abel your brother?”
(Genesis 4: 9)

Who asked the Question?

God.

Who was being spoken to?

Abel's brother, Cain.

The Time and place of the Question

We do not know exactly where Adam and Eve lived after they were sent out of the Garden of Eden. We do know that it was after they left the garden that Cain and Abel were born.

The Reason for the Question

Cain and Abel must have been taught by their parents that the punishment for sin is death. Adam and Eve understood that God would send a Saviour who would overcome Satan and sin. Before the Saviour came, God accepted the death of an animal instead of the sinner. We call this a sacrifice. It could not take away sin, but it showed that the person knew that they needed a Saviour and believed in the Saviour who would come.

One day, Abel offered a lamb from his flock as a sacrifice. Cain brought some of the produce of the land as his offering. God accepted Abel and his offering, but He did not accept Cain and the

offering he brought. Cain had tried to come to God in his own way instead of in God's way.

Instead of putting things right, Cain became angry with Abel. When they were out in the field together, Cain killed his brother.

The Effect of the Question

Cain asked his own question, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" Of course, Cain told a lie and tried to cover it with an excuse. He had committed murder and now he added a lie to his sins. God knew exactly what Cain had done, but He had given him the opportunity to confess, just as He had done when Adam and Eve sinned.

What happened after

God placed a curse upon Cain. A curse is the opposite to a blessing. It meant that Cain could no longer expect to experience God's goodness and kindness.

Cain moved east of Eden. He married and had a son. He also built a city which he named Enoch, after his son.

Read: Genesis 4: 1-17 & Hebrews 11: 4

A Question for you

In Cain's life, anger led to murder and lies. What should he have done when his sacrifice was not accepted and even after he had murdered his brother?

Here are some verses that will help you with your answer:

Read:

Psalm 38:18

Psalm 51: 3–4

Proverbs 28: 13

1 John 1: 9

Chapter 3 - A Question about God's promises

“What will you give me, seeing I go childless..?” (Genesis 15: 2)

Who asked the Question?

Abram, whose name was changed by God to Abraham (Genesis 17: 5). (His wife, Sarai 's name was changed to Sarah (Genesis 17: 15).)

Who was being spoken to?

Abram was speaking to God.

The Time and place of the Question

Abram had just returned to the land of Canaan, after rescuing his nephew Lot, who had been taken captive in a battle.

The Reason for the Question

When God had told Abram to leave his country and travel to a place that He would show him, He promised that from his descendants, a great nation would come. He also promised that good would come to all families in the world through Abram (Genesis 12: 1-3).

Time was passing and Abram and Sarai his wife were getting older. Still they had no children. How could God's promise of many descendants be fulfilled?

The Effect of the Question

God renewed His promises and Abram believed God. God then told Abram that he would live to old age and have a peaceful death. God said that Abram's descendants would live in another land for a time, where they would have to serve another nation. But they would return to Canaan and God would give them that land.

What happened after

The time when Abram questioned God, became the time when he expressed his faith in God (Genesis 15: 6). However impossible his situation appeared, he believed that God was able to do exactly what He had promised.

When Paul the apostle wrote to the Christians at Rome, he used Abram's faith to explain what it means to be a Christian. When someone becomes a Christian, it is not because of the good deeds they have done, but because of God's grace. Grace means kindness which we do not deserve. We become Christians by believing that our sins are forgiven because the Lord Jesus died in the place of everyone who trusts in Him.

Paul explains the grace of God by quoting the words of Genesis 15: 6.

Read: Genesis chapter 15; Romans 4: 3

A Question for you

If our sins are forgiven because of God's grace, does that mean that it does not matter what we do, because God will forgive us? Here are some verses that will help you to answer the question.

John 14: 15; Romans 6: 1-2; 1 John 2: 4; 1 John 3: 2-3.

Chapter 4 - A Question about God's justice

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18: 25)

Who asked the Question?

Abraham.

Who was being spoken to?

Abraham was speaking to God.

The Time and Place of the Question

Abraham asked this question after God had told him about the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Reason for the Question

Abraham was afraid that God would appear to be unjust, if he destroyed good people along with the wicked, in the city of Sodom. He was concerned that God should be seen to be right and just in all His actions.

Of course, Abraham also knew that his nephew Lot was living in that city.

The Effect of the Question

God responded by saying that He would not destroy the righteous with the wicked.

What happened after

Abraham had already asked whether God would spare the city if there were fifty righteous people there. He continued speaking with the Lord, asking if God would spare the city for the sake of forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty and even just ten righteous people. The Lord promised that he would spare Sodom if ten righteous people were found there.

Abraham's nephew, Lot was living in Sodom with his family. Two angels warned him that he and his family must leave before the city was destroyed. Not even as many as ten righteous people were found in that place. But the angels led Lot with his wife and two daughters out of Sodom. Other members of Lot's family took no notice of his words of warning and so only four people escaped the destruction. Sadly only three people reached safety. Lot's wife disobeyed the angel's instruction and this cost her life.

Read:

Genesis 18: 16-33 and 19: 12-29

Some Questions for you

1. Abraham was visited by three strangers. We know that two were angels (19: 1). The third is described as the Lord and could only have been an appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What was the great concern that Abraham expressed in his question (18: 25)?

2. Find two reasons why Lot was rescued (19: 16 and 29)?

Chapter 5 - A Question about a sacrifice

“Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”
(Genesis 22: 7)

Who asked the Question?

Isaac.

Who was being spoken to?

Isaac’s father, Abraham.

The Time and Place of the Question

God had instructed Abraham to take his son Isaac to the land of Moriah. He was then to make an offering of his son, in a place that God would show him. On the third day of their journey, Abraham left the servants to mind the donkey, whilst he and Isaac went on together. It was then that Isaac asked the question.

The Reason for the Question

Isaac saw everything necessary for an offering, except the lamb to be a sacrifice. Why had his father set out on this long journey, without anything to offer to God?

The Effect of the Question

Abraham’s answer was that God would provide a lamb for the offering.

What happened after

When Abraham and Isaac reached the place God had told Abraham about, it soon became clear to Isaac that he was to be the sacrifice. An angel spoke to Abraham and stopped him harming his son. Abraham had showed his willingness to obey God whatever God asked of him.

Behind him, Abraham saw a ram caught in the bushes. He offered the ram as a sacrifice. God had provided the lamb.

Abraham had obeyed God without delay. The New Testament helps us to understand Abraham's ready obedience. He knew that God would keep His promise that he would have many descendants through Isaac. He had such faith in God that he believed that God would even raise Isaac from death (Hebrews 11: 17-19).

Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb?" has its final answer in the New Testament (John 1: 29). A Saviour had been promised when Adam and Eve sinned. Until the Saviour came, God accepted the death of an animal instead of the person who had sinned. These sacrifices could not take away sin but were a picture of what the Lord Jesus would do when He became the final, perfect sacrifice for us.

In Abraham's willingness to offer his much-loved son as a sacrifice, we have a picture of what God would really do (John 3: 16).

Read:

Genesis 22: 1-19; Hebrews 11: 17-19

A Question for you:

Why doesn't God just forgive us when we do wrong? Why is God's way of forgiveness through sacrifice?

Read - Genesis 2: 17; Leviticus 19: 2; Habakkuk 1: 13 (first sentence); Romans 6: 23; Revelation 21: 27.

Chapter 6 - A Question about choosing to do right

“How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”
(Genesis 39: 9)

Who asked the Question?

Joseph, Jacob's eleventh son.

Who was being spoken to?

The wife of Potiphar, Joseph's master.

The Time and the place of the Question

Joseph was in Egypt. His home was in Canaan, but his ten older brothers, who hated him, had sold him to traders. He became a slave in the home of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh.

The Reason for the Question

Potiphar trusted Joseph and put him in charge of his household. Potiphar's wife wanted Joseph to act as if he was her husband. Joseph refused because of the trust his master had in him, but more importantly, because he knew that to do as she asked would be to sin against God. (Genesis 39: 8-9).

The Effect of the Question

Potiphar's wife was not satisfied with Joseph's answer and continued to repeat what she had

asked. Joseph tried to avoid being alone with her but one day he found he was with her in the house and not one of the servants was there. He got away from her as quickly as he could, and she was very angry.

What happened after

Potiphar's wife waited for her husband to come home. She then told lies to him about Joseph. Potiphar put Joseph in prison, although he had done nothing wrong. Even in prison God was with Joseph. He was trusted enough to be put in charge of the other prisoners.

Joseph's decision not to do wrong had other consequences that he would never have imagined. During his imprisonment, God enabled Joseph to give the meaning of dreams which troubled two of the prisoners.

When one of these men was given back his work for the Pharaoh, Pharaoh himself was troubled by dreams. This caused the servant to remember Joseph, and so he told Pharaoh about him. Word went to the prison that Joseph must appear before Pharaoh. Quickly he was supplied with clean clothes and tidied up. He was taken from the prison straight into the presence of the ruler of Egypt.

Read: Genesis 41: 1-14

A Question for you.

We are all tempted at times to do something we know is wrong. What was it that kept Joseph from giving in to the temptation?

Some verses to help you with your answer:

Genesis chapters 39: 9

Psalm 1

Psalm 51: 4

John 14: 15 – Think about how these words of the Lord Jesus can help us to say “no” to temptation.

Chapter 7 - A Question about finding the right man for an important job

“Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?”
(Genesis 41: 38)

Who asked the Question?

Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt.

Who was being spoken to?

The servants of Pharaoh.

The Time and place of the Question

In Egypt possibly 1700 BC. The question may have been asked in Pharaoh's palace: we are not told the exact location, but his servants were present.

The Reason for the Question

Pharaoh told Joseph about two dreams that had troubled him (we read about the dreams in Genesis 42: 17-24). Joseph explained that God had shown Pharaoh what was about to happen. Egypt would experience seven years of good harvests, followed by seven years of famine. He went on to advise Pharaoh about what should be done to prepare for the famine. The interpretation of the dreams plus the wise advice, caused Pharaoh to ask the question.

The Effect of the Question

Pharaoh answered his own question. He was convinced that God had given wisdom to Joseph and he immediately promoted him to the highest position in the land apart from himself.

The effect for Joseph was dramatic: from prison to high position.

What happened after

Joseph took charge of the food supply for the land of Egypt. He made sure that storehouses were filled during the seven years of good harvests. He then arranged for the people to buy grain during the years of famine. As well as the Egyptian people, people came from the surrounding countries which were also affected by the famine.

In the land of Canaan, Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt. He sent ten of his sons to Egypt, keeping only Benjamin, his youngest son, at home. Joseph recognised his brothers, but they did not recognize him, as he had the appearance of an important Egyptian. He did not make himself known to them at their first visit. They came a second time and he then put them in a situation where he could determine whether they had really changed.

Read: Genesis 41:15-41 and 44:18-34. (The account of how Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy grain is found in Genesis chapters 42-44: read these chapters if you can. Then you will

understand why Benjamin, the youngest of the brothers, was threatened with having to stay in Egypt as a slave. Joseph's reunion with his brothers is recorded in Genesis chapter 45.)

A Question for you

Joseph's brothers had treated him cruelly. He wanted to be sure that they had changed. Why did his brother Judah's words convince him that there had been a change?

See: Genesis 43: 8-9; 44: 18-34.

Chapter 8 - A Question about caring for a baby

“Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?” (Exodus 2: 7)

Who asked the Question?

Miriam, the baby's sister.

Who was being spoken to?

The daughter of Pharaoh.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked beside the river in Egypt. It was at a time when a new Pharaoh had forgotten about all that Joseph had done for the people.

The Reason for the Question

Pharaoh made a cruel plan to have all Israelite baby boys killed. Because of this, Jochebed hid her baby for three months. After this she placed him in a water-proofed basket in the reeds by the river. While the baby's sister watched to see what would happen, Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe. She was sorry for the baby, and it was then that Miriam asked the question.

The Effect of the Question

Pharaoh's daughter agreed to Miriam's suggestion. Miriam brought her mother, and the princess said that she would pay her to look after the child.

What happened after

Jochebed was able to care for the baby knowing that he would be protected from any harm. She knew that when he was older, she would have to hand the child over to the princess. When the time came to do this, Pharaoh's daughter named the child Moses and brought him up as her son. Moses had all the advantages of belonging to Pharaoh's family, and yet he knew that his people were the Israelites. When he was forty years old, he decided to try to help his people. He thought that God wanted him to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. In fact, another forty years would pass before this could happen.

Miriam's simple question had long-lasting consequences. Having been brought up in the palace, Moses was well prepared for the time when God did send him to Pharaoh to secure freedom for his people.

Read:

Exodus chapter 1 & 2: 1-10

Acts 7: 20-25

Hebrews 11: 23-26

A Question for you

The Israelites were treated as slaves in Egypt and also suffered the death of some of their children. Christians are persecuted (ill-treated) in many countries today. What can we learn from Exodus 2: 1-10 about how God looks after His people in such very difficult times?



Chapter 9 - A Question about being able to do as God asked

“Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Exodus 3: 11)

Who asked the Question?

Moses.

Who was being spoken to?

God.

The Time and place of the Question

Moses had been away from Egypt for forty years. He had settled down in the land of Midian (on the eastern side of the Gulf of Aqaba). Looking after his father-in-law's flocks, he had led them to the western side of the Gulf and was near Mount Sinai (also called Horeb). It was while Moses was near to Mount Sinai that he questioned what God was asking him to do.

The Reason for the Question

When Moses was forty years old, he wanted to help his people, the Israelites. He saw an Egyptian man beating an Israelite. Defending the man who was being beaten, Moses killed the Egyptian. It was when this became known to Pharaoh, that Moses left Egypt. Now God was telling him, at eighty years of age, to return to Egypt, speak to

the Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out. Moses asked his question because he could not see how he could do such a thing.

The Effect of the Question

Moses' question did not alter God's purposes, or His choice of Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses told God why he thought he could not do as He asked. God patiently answered each excuse that Moses made.

What happened after

Moses learned that it was not what he felt that mattered. The important thing was that he had God's promise to be with him. God enabled Moses to do certain miraculous signs, so that the Israelites and the Pharaoh, would know that it was God who had sent him. God also said that Moses' brother Aaron could go with him and speak for him, as Aaron was a more able speaker.

Moses accepted God's answer and knew that he must obey. He did return to Egypt and, with Aaron, he did go to Pharaoh with a request to let the Israelites go three days journey into the wilderness, to hold a special feast to the Lord.

Read: Exodus chapters 3 and 4: 1-18

A Question for you

There are times when we have to do things that we think will be too difficult for us. What can we learn from Exodus chapters 3 and 4 that will help us?

Chapter 10 - A Question of pride

“Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?” (Exodus 5: 2)

Who asked the Question?

The Pharaoh.

Who was being spoken to?

Moses and Aaron.

The Time and place of the Question

Pharaoh's palace in Egypt, about 1490 BC.

The Reason for the Question

Moses and Aaron had told Pharaoh that God said he should let the Israelites go, to hold a feast in the wilderness. Pharaoh responded by making it clear that he did not know God, so why should he obey Him?

The Effect of the Question

Moses and Aaron simply repeated what they had already said.

What happened after

Pharaoh's position was unchanged. The Egyptians had their false gods that they worshipped. He had no intention of obeying the true God. His question had expressed his pride, and in his pride he decided to make life even harder for the Israelites, particularly in their task of

making bricks. To strengthen the bricks, they had been supplied with straw. Now they must find straw wherever they could and still produce as many bricks as before. Some of the Israelites were beaten because less bricks were being produced. They became very discouraged and complained to Moses and Aaron, that things had become worse for them since they spoke to Pharaoh.

Moses spoke to God about what had happened. God assured Moses that he would certainly bring the Israelites out of Egypt. He would fulfil the promise He had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give the land of Canaan to their descendants.

Pharaoh's question was the beginning of his fight against God. This would bring much trouble to the land of Egypt. Moses and Aaron were sent back to Pharaoh many times. Each time when Pharaoh still refused to obey Him, God sent a "plague" to show the Egyptians that their idols were useless to help them. God demonstrated His great power and after the terrible tenth plague, Pharaoh commanded the Israelites to leave.

Read: Exodus chapter 5 and 6: 1-13

Questions for you

Events do not take God by surprise. What do we learn about God from Exodus 3: 18-20?

What do we learn about God from Exodus 6: 2-8?

(A covenant is a promise, or agreement, between two people or groups of people. God's covenant with Abraham is recorded in Genesis 12: 1-3 and 15: 13-16.)

Chapter 11 - A Question about the meaning of a ceremony

“What do you mean by this service?”
(Exodus 12: 26)

Who asked the Question?

This was a question that God knew would be asked by children in the future.

Who was being spoken to?

Children would ask their parents why, once a year, they had a special meal together.

The Time and place of the Question

The question would be asked when the Israelites were living in their own land, as God had promised.

The Reason for the Question

The Passover was (and still is) a yearly feast held to remind the Israelites of how God had brought them out of Egypt. Each time Pharaoh refused to let the people go, God sent a “plague” on the land. We read about this in Exodus 7: 14 – 12: 33. The tenth and last plague came during one night, when the oldest child of every Egyptian family died. You will be reading about this in Exodus chapter 12.

When he realised what had happened, Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and told them that the

Israelites and all their possessions, must go. Ever since that night, the Jewish people have kept the annual Feast of Passover as a special family meal. It would be at that meal that a child would ask the question.

The Effect of the Question

Every year this question gave the adults in the family the opportunity to tell again the true story of what happened on the first Passover night.

What happened after

At Passover time, every Jewish child would learn this very important part of their nation's history. But there was something else to be learned from what happened on Passover night. Something that God would teach the Israelites more about before they reached their promised land. This was that as God had accepted a lamb on the first Passover night, so He would accept the sacrifice of a lamb to deal with the people's sin. The death of an animal could not take away sin but was a picture of what the Lord Jesus would do when He died on Calvary. Sin could be forgiven in Old Testament times because the person offering the sacrifice believed in the Saviour that God promised to send.

Read:

Exodus chapter 12

John 1: 29

1 Corinthians 5: 7 (last sentence)

A Question for you

Explain in your own words how the Passover was a picture of what the Lord Jesus would do when He died on the cross.

Chapter 12 - A Question in a time of danger

“... have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?” (Exodus 14: 11)

Who asked the Question?

The Israelites.

Who was being spoken to?

Moses.

The Time and Place of the Question

The question was asked when the Israelites had almost reached the Egyptian border. They were camped at Baal Zephon near the Red Sea.

The Reason for the Question

The Israelites saw that Pharaoh and his army were coming after them. With the Red Sea before them and the Egyptians behind them, they became very afraid. They complained to Moses that it would have been better for them to remain in Egypt, than to die in the wilderness.

The Effect of the Question

Moses was not affected by the people's fear. He was able to assure them that God would save them and that they would never see the Egyptians again.

What happened after

Moses told the people not to be afraid. God would save them. The pillar of cloud that went in front of the Israelites, moved to be behind them. It was then between the Israelites and the Egyptians. It gave light to the Israelites but darkness to the Egyptians.

In the morning, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, as God had instructed him. God used a strong east wind to divide the water. The Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground.

The Egyptians followed the Israelites, but God told Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea again. This time, the water returned and covered the Egyptians and their chariots. The whole army was drowned in the Red Sea.

Moses led the people in a song of praise to God (Exodus 15: 1-18). This great event not only saved the people but also showed them the power of their God. They had seen the terrible plagues God had sent in the land of Egypt. Now they had seen a tremendous miracle at a time when they were unable to save themselves. God had shown them that the idols that other nations worshipped were completely powerless. The miraculous crossing of the Red Sea should have taught them never to copy the nations around them. Sadly, they did not always remember this great lesson.

Read:

Exodus chapter 14

A Question for you:

What do we learn from this chapter about:

The Israelites

Moses

The Egyptians

God?

Chapter 13 - A Question about a great sin

“What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?”
(Exodus 32: 21)

Who asked the Question?

Moses.

Who was being spoken to?

Aaron.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked while the Israelites were camped in the Sinai wilderness.

The Reason for the Question

After God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites, He told Moses to come up into Mount Sinai. Moses did so and remained there for forty days, as God had many instructions to give him. The people became impatient and asked Moses' brother Aaron to make a “god” for them. Aaron collected all their gold earrings and made them into a golden calf. This was really an idol and yet Aaron said that on the next day they would hold a feast to the Lord.

God knew what the people had done and he told Moses He must go down to them. Moses knew that idolatry was breaking the second

commandment (Exodus 20: 4-6). The people had promised God that they would obey Him, but they had very quickly become disobedient. This was why, when Moses came down from the mountain, he asked Aaron the question.

The Effect of the Question

The effect on Aaron was that he made excuses. He blamed the people for being determined to do wrong. He also spoke as if he had nothing to do with actually making the calf (compare Exodus 32: 4 with Exodus 32: 24).

What happened after

Aaron had been responsible for the people while Moses was on the mountain. He had shown great weakness. He had given in to them instead of reminding them of their promise to obey God's commands. Moses prayed for the people and for Aaron. Now he had to supervise the punishment of those who had acted in such a sinful way, dancing around their idol just as the nations around them would do. The men of the tribe of Levi helped Moses, and many Israelites were put to death.

Read:

Exodus chapter 32

Exodus 20: 1-6

A Question for you

Why is idolatry such a serious sin? In what way is it possible to have idols in your life, even if you never bow down to an image?

Chapter 14 – Questioning God

“Why has the Lord brought us to this
land to fall by the sword...?”
(Numbers 14: 3)

Who asked the Question?

The Israelites.

Who was being spoken to?

Moses.

The Time and place of the Question

After their long stay around Mount Sinai, the Israelites continued their journey towards the land of Canaan. Nearing the land, they camped at Kadesh Barnea in the Wilderness of Paran.

The Reason for the Question

God had instructed Moses to send twelve men to spy out the land of Canaan. After forty days, the twelve spies brought their report to Moses and the people. They all agreed that this was a good land for fruit and crops to grow. Ten spies went on to say that the people of the land were very strong and lived in well-fortified cities. They convinced the Israelites that they would not be able to overcome these people. Two spies, Joshua and Caleb, assured the people that God would be with them and enable them to take over the land which He had promised them.

It was after the spies had given their report, that the question was asked. It was asked because the people did not have faith in the God who had brought them out of Egypt and led them through the wilderness. They had seen His power in the plagues of Egypt and the miracle at the Red Sea. In spite of all this, they were not willing to enter Canaan. Only Joshua and Caleb had faith in the God who had so clearly shown His power to help them.

The Effect of the question

God was very displeased with the Israelites because of their disobedience. Moses pleaded with God on behalf of the people and God said that He would not destroy them, but that none of those disobedient people would ever enter Canaan.

What happened after

God explained to Moses that the Israelites would remain in the wilderness for forty years. During that time, all those of twenty years old or over except Joshua and Caleb, would die. Only the younger people, plus Joshua and Caleb, would live to enter Canaan.

The people were very sorrowful when Moses told them what God had said. They attempted to go into Canaan but were driven back by the Amalekites and Canaanites.

Read:

Numbers 13: 1 and 17-33; 14: 1-10, 24-31.

A Question for you

What was it that made the difference between Joshua and Caleb, and the other ten spies?

Chapter 15 - A warning Question

“Why has the Lord done so to this land?”
(Deuteronomy 29: 24)

Who asked the Question?

This is a question that God said other nations would ask. Moses recorded God’s words.

Who was being spoken to?

Moses was telling the Israelites what God had said.

The Time and place of the Question

The forty years in the wilderness was coming to an end. The Israelites were in the land of Moab and would soon enter Canaan.

The Reason for the Question

Moses was an old man and he knew that he would not lead the Israelites into the land God had promised them. He made sure that those who were to take over the land of Canaan knew God’s law. He told them of how God would bless them if they were obedient. He also warned them of what would happen if they were disobedient.

The land of Canaan was given to Israel by God. If the people disobeyed God and turned to idol worship, the land would be brought to such a sorry state, that the nations around would ask the question.

The Effect of the Question

This warning made clear to the people that turning from the true God would have bad consequences. God would not bless them and allow them to think that their idols were helping them.

What happened after

In the book of Joshua we read about the Israelites entering Canaan with Joshua as their leader. The people who lived in Canaan were idol-worshippers and did many evil things. God had given them many years to change their ways, but they had not changed. God helped the Israelites to take over the land. But in the Book of Judges we read of times when the people disobeyed God and turned to the idols of the land. When trouble came, they called on God and He raised up leaders, called Judges, to help them.

Sadly, this turning to idols happened many times, as we also find in the Books of Kings. In fact the question other nations would ask, was repeated when God warned Solomon what would happen if the people turned away from Him (1 Kings 9: 8).

Read:

Deuteronomy 28: 1-4 and 58-59.

A Question for you

Idols are lifeless, useless things. Why do you think the people of Israel turned to idols many times, instead of trusting in the God who had been so good to them?

Chapter 16 - A Question about twelve stones

“What do these stones mean to you?”
(Joshua 4: 6)

Who asked the Question?

It was a question that children would ask.

Who was being spoken to?

The Israelites who remembered that God had made a way for them to cross the River Jordan.

The Time and place of the Question

The question would be asked when the Israelites were settled in the land of Canaan.

The Reason for the Question

The time had come for the Israelites to enter the land of Canaan. To do this they needed to cross the River Jordan. God gave instructions to Joshua, and Joshua told the people what they must do.

The priests approached the river first, carrying the Ark of the Covenant (a gold-covered box that was the sign of God's presence with His people). As the feet of the priests touched the water, the water upstream stopped flowing, and all the people were able to cross. The priests stood on dry land in the middle of the river, until all the people had reached the other side. Joshua told twelve men to carry one stone each from the

riverbed where the priests had stood. They carried these twelve stones on their shoulders to Gilgal, a place where they camped for the night. God said that in future, when their descendants asked what the stones meant, they must tell them how God had held the waters back so that the people could cross over.

The Effect of the Question

The effect would be that all the Israelites would know about the miracle at the River Jordan. Children born years after it happened, would still see the twelve stones and ask what they meant.

What happened after

God told Joshua when it was time for the priests carrying the Ark to come out of the river. When they were all on dry land, the River Jordan began to flow normally again.

From that time, the Israelites knew that just as God had chosen Moses to lead them out of Egypt, Joshua was now the man who God had chosen to lead them into Canaan.

People living in the land of Canaan heard about what had happened at the River Jordan and became very afraid of the Israelites.

Read:

Joshua 3: 14-17, 4: 1-8

A Question for you

Why was it important for all the Israelites who would live in the land God had promised them, to know about the way their people had entered the land?

Chapter 17 - A question of being able to carry out a task

“O my Lord, how can I save Israel?”
(Judges 6: 15)

Who asked the Question?

Gideon.

Who was being spoken to?

Gideon was speaking to the Angel of the Lord.

The Time and place of the Question

It was a time of great difficulty for the Israelites. They had started to worship the false gods (idols) of the people of Canaan. Because of this, God caused them to be troubled by the Midianites. These people destroyed the crops of the Israelites and they became very afraid of them. In their trouble, they called on God to help them. God sent a prophet to tell the people that they were in such trouble because of their idolatry. Then God spoke to Gideon.

The Reason for the Question

The Israelites were so afraid of the Midianites that they hid in caves, or in the mountains. When God told Gideon that He was sending him to save Israel, Gideon asked his question, because he did not think he could do this.

The Effect of the Question

God assured Gideon that He would be with him and that he would defeat the Midianites.

What happened after

Gideon prepared an offering and the Angel of the Lord brought fire out of the rock to burn up the offering. In the night, God spoke again to Gideon. He told him that he must destroy his father's idols and altar to the false god, Baal. He must then build an altar to God and offer a sacrifice there. Gideon obeyed.

After this, Gideon did defeat the Midianites with just three hundred men. He did everything according to God's instructions, taking only a small number of men, so that the Israelites would know that it was God who was helping them.

Read:

Judges 6: 11-16; 7: 1-8 and 19-22.

Some Questions for you

Why do you think God told Gideon to destroy his father's idol and altar, before he led his men against the Midianites?

Why did God instruct Gideon to take such a small number of men against the very large number of Midianites?

Chapter 18 - A Question of identity

“Is this Naomi?” (Ruth 1: 19)

Who asked the Question?

The women of Bethlehem.

Who was being spoken to?

Naomi.

The Time and place of the Question

Naomi had just returned to Bethlehem after being away at least ten years.

The Reason for the Question

Naomi had left Bethlehem with her husband and their two sons, at a time of famine. While she lived in the land of Moab, she had great troubles. Her husband died and her two sons also died. The people of Bethlehem were excited about her return, but the sadness of her life in Moab must have changed her, causing the women to ask the question.

The Effect of the Question

The question caused Naomi to tell the women what she really felt. The name Naomi meant “pleasant”. She said she should no longer be called by that name: her name should now be Mara, which means “bitter”. She explained that God had given her a very bitter experience. Her faith in God was still strong, but she believed that

it was God who had brought great trouble into her life.

What happened after

Ruth was the widow of Naomi's son Mahlon. She had promised that she would always stay with Naomi even though this meant leaving her own country. Ruth and Naomi settled down in Bethlehem but were very poor. They were both widows with no-one to support them. They could not even afford to buy the food they needed. But God had taught the Israelites to provide for the poor people. In the Book of Leviticus we find instructions about how this was to be done. When harvest time came, grain was to be left in the corners of the field. The same applied to fruit, such as grapes. The vines were not to be left completely bare. The poor people were allowed to pick up what was left for them. This was called gleaning.

As it was the time of barley harvest, Ruth asked Naomi if she could go into the fields to glean. When Ruth began her work, she did not know who owned the field that she was in.

Read:

Ruth chapter 1
Leviticus 19: 9-10

A Question for you

What do we learn about Ruth from Ruth 1: 16-17?



Chapter 19 - An Everyday Question

“Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work?” (Ruth 2:19)

Who asked the Question?

Naomi.

Who was being spoken to?

Ruth.

The Time and place of the Question

This question was asked in Bethlehem at the time of the barley harvest, when Ruth had been gleaning.

The Reason for the Question

Ruth had come home after her first day of gleaning, bringing a good supply of grain. Naomi realised that someone had been kind to Ruth, who was a stranger in the area. She was interested in finding out exactly whose field Ruth had worked in.

The Effect of the question

Ruth's answer caused Naomi to express her thankfulness to God. Without knowing anything about the owner, Ruth had been gleaning in a field belonging to Boaz. Boaz was a close relative of Elimelech, who had been Naomi's husband.

What happened after

Naomi was concerned about Ruth. She wanted to see Ruth settled in her own home and well provided for. Ruth continued gleaning in Boaz's field right through the barley and wheat harvest. Naomi then told Ruth what she should do, so that Boaz would see that he had a responsibility to fulfil. An Old Testament law stated that when a woman became a widow, a near relative of her husband could marry her and take over her first husband's property. The relative doing this was known as a kinsman redeemer, one who redeemed (bought back) the property of the dead husband.

Ruth followed her mother-in-law's instructions and Boaz agreed to be the kinsman redeemer to Ruth, when the one relative closer than he was, refused to take the responsibility.

Ruth and Boaz were married and had a son who they named Obed. This was a great joy to Naomi, who was so happy to look after the little boy. When Obed grew up, he became the grandfather of David, Israel's greatest king. From this same family, many years later, the Lord Jesus was born.

Read:

Ruth 4 (If you have time read chapters 2-4.)

Deuteronomy 25: 5-6

Matthew 1: 5-6 & 16

A Question for you

What can we learn from the life of Naomi, that will help us when we go through difficult times?

Ruth 1: 20-21 and Ruth 4: 14-16 may help you.

Chapter 20 - A Question that expressed surprise

“Why then do you speak like this to me?”
(1 Samuel 9: 21)

Who asked the Question?

Saul who belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.

Who was being spoken to?

Samuel, who was the last of the Judges and also a prophet.

The Time and place of the Question

This question was asked in the town of Zuph, which was probably a little over 20 miles north of Jerusalem. It was asked at the time that Israel was asking for a king.

The Reason for the Question

Saul was searching for his father's lost donkeys. Unable to find them, he was inclined to return home. But the servant who was with him encouraged him to see whether Samuel could help them.

The day before Saul spoke to Samuel, God had told him that He would send a man to him the next day. God said that this man would be king over Israel, and Samuel must anoint him.

When Samuel saw Saul, God told him that this was the man. Samuel told Saul that the lost

donkeys had been found. He went on to make it clear to Saul that he was the man that Israel needed. It was then that Saul asked his question, because he did not understand why the prophet was speaking to him in such a way.

The Effect of the Question

Samuel did not answer Saul's question. He led Saul and his servant into the hall and gave them a place of honour among his guests.

What happened after

Samuel provided a meal for Saul and his servant, and they stayed there that night. The next morning, as they were leaving, Samuel asked Saul to send the servant on ahead. He then took a flask of oil and anointed Saul. In this way he showed that God had chosen Saul to be Israel's first king. Later, Samuel called the people together, to show them the man who would be their king.

Read:

1 Samuel 9: 15-27; 10:1

A Question for you

A prophet was a man who God spoke to, so that he could give God's message to the people. Find the verses in today's reading, that show clearly that Samuel was a prophet.

(Samuel was known as a "seer", a word that was used before the word prophet came into use.)

Chapter 21 - A Prophet's Question

“What have you done?”
(1 Samuel 13: 11)

Who asked the Question?

Samuel.

Who was being spoken to?

King Saul.

The Time and place of the Question

Saul had been king over Israel for over two years. He was preparing for a battle with the Philistines, who had gathered a large army to fight against Israel.

The Reason for the Question

Saul's reign began well, as he led the people to a victory over their enemies the Ammonites. But there came a time when he disobeyed God's instructions which had been given to him by Samuel. He had been waiting for Samuel to come and offer a sacrifice before a battle with the Philistines. Saul was afraid that his men would scatter because of the delay. He took it upon himself to offer the sacrifice. God had chosen the tribe of Levi for this task and Saul should not have done this. Samuel's question gave Saul the opportunity to confess his wrong action.

The Effect of the Question

For Saul, the effect of Samuel's question was for him to try to justify what he had done: he made excuses. He said that he had felt that he must make the offering.

What happened after

Samuel told Saul that because of his disobedience, no future kings would come from his family. God had already chosen the man who would be Israel's king after Saul.

Another occasion showed that Saul had still not learned to obey all God's commands. Once again Samuel gave God's instructions to Saul. He was to destroy the Amalekites completely. They had been enemies since Israel came out of Egypt. Saul did not carry out God's instructions fully. We would say that he partly obeyed. Saul was slow to admit his disobedience, telling Samuel that he had done as God commanded. After it was made clear to him that God had rejected him, he did finally admit that he had sinned.

Read:

1 Samuel 13: 1-14

A Question for you:

Obedience is important. The Lord Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14: 15). How did Saul differ from Samuel as far as obeying God was concerned?

Chapter 22 - The Prophet asks another Question

“Are all the young men here?”
(1 Samuel 16: 11)

Who asked the Question?

Samuel.

Who was being spoken to?

Jesse, who had eight sons.

The Time and place of the Question

Samuel had gone to Bethlehem, where God had told him that he must anoint one of Jesse's sons as Israel's next king.

The Reason for the Question

Jesse brought seven of his sons to Samuel, but Samuel knew that none of them was God's choice. He therefore asked the question whether those were all his sons.

The Effect of the Question

Jesse replied that his youngest son was looking after the sheep. Samuel told Jesse to send for him.

What happened after

When David, Jesse's youngest son, was brought to Samuel, God told him that this was the

one he must anoint, and Samuel did so. From that time, God was with David in a very special way, but God was no longer helping Saul. At times, Saul was very troubled and his servants suggested that music would calm him. David was known for his skill on the harp and so he was sent for. Whenever Saul became distressed, David would play the harp and Saul was helped to feel better.

It would be many years before David was made king over Israel. Saul was jealous when he realised that his son would not follow him as king. He became David's enemy, and David had to move from place to place knowing that Saul was planning to kill him. Eventually, Saul was killed in a battle with the Philistines and then David became king over the southern part of Israel. After seven years, he became king over the whole country and reigned for forty years.

Read:

1 Samuel 16: 1-13

A Question for you

What is the difference between the way God sees us and the way other people see us? Which is more important? (see 1 Samuel 16: 7).

Chapter 23 - A Question concerned keeping of a promise

“Is there not still someone of the house
of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness
of God?” (2 Samuel 9: 3)

Who asked the Question?

David.

Who was being spoken to?

Ziba, a servant to Saul's family.

The Time and place of the Question

David asked this question when he was king in
Jerusalem.

The Reason for the Question

Saul's son Jonathan had been David's loyal
friend. He knew that David would be king after his
father, but unlike Saul, Jonathan was not jealous,

Jonathan had asked David to promise that he
would always show kindness to his family. David
promised to do so. The time came when he
needed to know who there was from the family of
Saul who he could help.

The Effect of the Question

Ziba told David that Jonathan had a son who
was lame.

What happened after

David sent for Jonathan's son, who was called Mephibosheth. The reason that Mephibosheth was lame, was that he had fallen when he was only five years old. His nurse had just heard the news that Saul and Jonathan had been killed in battle. Hurried away by his nurse, the little boy had a fall, and his injury caused permanent lameness. When he came to the king, he bowed down. No doubt he was afraid that David would take revenge on any descendant of Saul, the king who had sought to kill him.

David told Mephibosheth not to be afraid, because he would be kind to him for his father's sake. Mephibosheth was given all the land that had belonged to his grandfather, King Saul. David arranged for Ziba and his sons to farm the land for Mephibosheth, but Mephibosheth stayed at Jerusalem. There he was invited to have his meals at the king's table every day.

Read: 2 Samuel chapter 9

A Question for you

God is kind to those who do not deserve it: we call this God's grace. In what way does David's kindness to Mephibosheth show us something about "the kindness of God"? (verse 3).

Chapter 24 - A Testing Question

“Ask! What shall I give you?”
(2 Chronicles 1: 7)

Who asked the Question?

God.

Who was being spoken to?

King Solomon.

The Time and place of the Question

David's son Solomon had become King over Israel. He reigned in Jerusalem about 1000 BC, but God asked this question whilst he was in a place called Gibeon.

The Reason for the Question

Early in his reign, King Solomon led the people in offering sacrifices at the tabernacle. That night, God gave Solomon the opportunity to ask for what he most wanted God to give him.

The Effect of the Question

Solomon asked God to give him knowledge and wisdom, so that he would be able to rule over the people.

What happened after?

Solomon showed by his request that he knew that ruling the people well was more important than wealth, honour, or long life. God promised to

give him the wisdom he had asked for and also the wealth and honour that he had not asked for. Solomon became known for his wisdom in dealing with difficult situations. He also became known for his great wealth.

God had told King David that he was not to build a temple at Jerusalem. This would be for his son to do in more peaceful times. Solomon did build the temple and there was a time of great rejoicing when the building was completed, and the temple was dedicated. Solomon prayed that God would always hear and answer the prayers made at the temple. God promised that He would do so. He also warned Solomon that if the people began to worship idols like the other nations, then He would take them away from the land He had given them.

Read:

2 Chronicles 1: 1-12

A Question for you

In what way did God's question test Solomon's character and his fitness to be king of Israel?

Chapter 25 - A King asks for advice

“How do you advise me to answer these people?” (1 Kings 12: 6)

Who asked the Question?

Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

Who was being spoken to?

The men, known as the elders, who had advised King Solomon.

The Time and place of the Question

Rehoboam was at Shechem, where the people had gathered to confirm that he was their king.

The Reason for the Question

The people told Rehoboam that King Solomon had made their lives hard. They had come to ask Rehoboam to make life easier for them. They promised that if he did so, they would serve him.

Rehoboam sought advice. He asked his question twice. Once to the elders, who were men of experience. Then he asked the young men who he had grown up with (1 Kings 12: 8-9).

The Effect of the Question

The elders advised Rehoboam to be good to the people and then they would be loyal to him. The young men told Rehoboam to tell the people that he would treat them in a harsher way than his father had done.

What happened after

Rehoboam rejected the good advice that the elders had given him. When the people came to him for his answer, the king spoke roughly to them. He informed them that he would make life harder than his father had done.

The tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin remained loyal to Rehoboam, but the ten northern tribes rebelled. Rehoboam began to prepare an army against the northern tribes, but God sent a man named Shemaiah to tell him that he must not fight against them. The northern tribes took Jeroboam as their king and became known as the kingdom of Israel. The southern part of the land was known as Judah.

Read:

1 Kings 12: 1-17

A Question for you

Sometimes we have difficult decisions to make. What can we learn from Rehoboam about knowing the difference between wise (good) advice and foolish (bad) advice?

Chapter 26 - A Question for the prophet

“How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me?” (1 Kings 18: 9)

Who asked the Question?

Obadiah, trusted servant of King Ahab.

Who was being spoken to?

The prophet Elijah.

The Time and place of the Question

The northern kingdom of Israel after three years of famine.

The Reason for the Question

Ahab and his wife Jezebel worshipped the false god, Baal. Elijah had told Ahab that the land would have no rain. Of course, this would lead to famine. God did withhold the rain because of the people's idolatry, but Ahab was angry and blamed Elijah. He had sent people to search for Elijah, but no one could find him. When Elijah met Obadiah, he told him to inform the king that he was there. Obadiah was afraid that Elijah would not remain where he was. If he did not appear before the king, Ahab might put Obadiah to death for bringing a false report.

The Effect of the Question

Elijah assured Obadiah that he would meet with Ahab that day. Obadiah then told Ahab where Elijah was and Ahab went to meet him.

What happened after

When Ahab met with Elijah, he called him a “troubler of Israel”. Elijah informed him that it was Ahab himself who had brought trouble to the land. Ahab had married Jezebel who was a worshipper of the false god, Baal. He joined with his wife in idolatry, even building a temple to Baal. Elijah told Ahab that it was his idolatry and disobedience to God’s commandments that was the cause of Israel’s trouble. Elijah then told him to gather the people together at Mount Carmel, including the hundreds of false prophets. Ahab did all that Elijah asked him to do.

Read:

1 Kings 18: 1-20

A Question for you

Obadiah had an important position in the household of an evil king. How had he shown his faithfulness to God? How can Obadiah’s example be of help to us?

Chapter 27 - A Question meant to lead to a right decision

“How long will you falter between two opinions?” (1 Kings 18: 21)

Who asked the Question?

Elijah.

Who was being spoken to?

The people of the northern kingdom of Israel.

The Time and place of the Question

The Question was asked on Mount Carmel, where Ahab had gathered the people. It was after three years without rain.

The Reason for the Question

Elijah understood that the people thought they could worship God and their own idols. Of course, they should have known better: God had given them clear instructions about this (Exodus 20: 2-6).

The Effect of the Question

Faced with a direct question from God's prophet, the people had no answer to give: they were silent.

What happened after

Elijah was in full control of the situation, even though he faced 450 false prophets of Baal. He instructed them to prepare a sacrifice and then call on Baal to send fire. Elijah spoke with the authority given to him by God, and these men did all that he said. They spent hours calling on their false god, with no success.

As it came towards evening, Elijah called the people to come nearer to him. He built an altar and prepared a sacrifice. He then had water poured on the sacrifice and the wood it was laid on. After the frenzy of the false prophets, how calm Elijah was in calling upon God to make it known that He alone is the true God.

Fire fell upon the offering in response to Elijah's prayer. The people bowed themselves, saying, "The LORD He is God". The false prophets were put to death. Ahab went to enjoy a meal. Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel to pray until God sent the long-awaited rain.

Read:

1 Kings 18: 21-46

Psalm 115: 3-8

A Question for you

Think of at least two reasons why the people of Israel repeatedly turned from God to idols.

Chapter 28 - A Question for a weary prophet

“What are you doing here, Elijah?”
(1 Kings 19: 9 and 13)

Who asked the Question?

God.

Who was being spoken to?

The prophet Elijah

The Time and place of the Question

The Question was asked at Mount Sinai, where Elijah had fled after King Ahab's wife Jezebel had heard that the prophets of Baal had been put to death.

The Reason for the question

Jezebel had threatened to have Elijah killed. He immediately set off to Beersheba on the southern border of Judah. From there he travelled on for forty days to Mount Sinai. Elijah had acted with great courage at Mount Carmel. Why had he left Israel so quickly because of Jezebel's threats?

The most likely answer is that it was not fear for his life that caused him to go away, but great sadness after all that had happened at Mount Carmel. The people, including King Ahab, had seen the uselessness of idols and the power of the true God. Had Ahab stood up to his evil wife after

this? No, nothing had changed and Elijah could well have felt that his ministry was over.

The Effect of the Question

Each time the question was asked, Elijah replied that he alone had remained true to God in Israel. Now his life was threatened.

What happened after

Elijah had spent the night in a cave and that is where God first questioned him. After Elijah's reply, God told him to stand on the mountain before Him. God showed his power in a very strong wind and an earthquake and a fire. This was followed by what the Bible calls "a still small voice". Elijah stood in the entrance of the cave when he heard the voice and covered his face. Then God's question came to him a second time, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

God gave Elijah to understand that there was still work for him to do. He must anoint two kings and he must anoint a man named Elisha. God explained that Elisha would be a prophet after Elijah.

Elijah found Elisha ploughing and he threw his cloak over him. This was a sign that his work would pass to Elisha. Elisha followed Elijah and became his servant.

Read:

1 Kings chapter 19

A Question for you

Find two ways in which God provided help for the weary prophet. (1 Kings 19: 5-8 and 15-16)



Chapter 29 - A Request for help in battle

“Will you go with me to fight at Ramoth Gilead?” (1 Kings 22: 4)

Who asked the question?

Ahab, king of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Who was being spoken to?

Jehoshaphat, king of the southern kingdom of Judah.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked in Israel when Jehoshaphat went to visit Ahab.

The Reason for the Question

Ahab wanted to take the city of Ramoth Gilead back from the Syrians. He asked Jehoshaphat for help in the battle that would follow.

The Effect of the Question

Jehoshaphat agreed that he and his people would help.

What happened after

Jehoshaphat was very different from Ahab. In ruling over Judah, he encouraged the people to obey God. He knew that a battle should not be started without first seeking guidance from God.

He asked Ahab to inquire what God's will was in the matter.

Ahab gathered a large group of "prophets" who assured the two kings that God would give them victory. Jehoshaphat obviously realised that these men were not true prophets. He asked Ahab whether there was any "prophet of the Lord" still in the land. Ahab told Jehoshaphat that there was one such prophet, Micaiah, a man who he hated. Of course, the reason Ahab hated Micaiah was that he was the one man who told the king the truth.

The false prophets continued making a great show of prophesying victory. Only Micaiah made it clear that this would not be the case. Micaiah was taken away to prison and the battle began. Jehoshaphat almost lost his life: Ahab was killed.

When Jehoshaphat returned to Judah, the prophet Jehu met him. He told the king that he should not have helped those who hate God.

Read:

2 Chronicles 18: 1-13 and 28-34.

2 Chronicle 19: 1-4

A Question for you

Why was it wrong for Jehoshaphat to help Ahab? What was the great difference between these two men?

Chapter 30 - Two questions for a widow

“What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?” (2 Kings 4: 2)

Who asked the Questions?

Elisha the prophet.

Who was being spoken to?

A widow who was in debt.

The Time and place of the Questions

In the Northern kingdom of Israel when Elisha was the prophet.

The Reason for the Questions

The widow was in a very serious situation. She could not pay her debt and so the creditor (the man she owed money to) was going to take her two sons to be his slaves. In her trouble, she turned to Elisha, who then asked her the two questions.

The Effect of the Questions

The widow told Elisha that the only thing she had was a jar of oil.

What happened after

Elisha told the widow to borrow as many empty pots as she could from her neighbours. She must

then shut the door on herself and her sons, and they must pour oil into all the empty pots. The widow did exactly what Elisha had told her to do. She poured the oil from her own pot into the pots her sons passed to her. At last every pot was full of oil. This was a miracle: God had increased her oil so much that it was enough for every pot she had borrowed.

The widow told Elisha what had happened. He told her to sell the oil and to pay her debt. Any money left over would provide for her and her sons.

Read:

2 Kings 4: 1-7

A Question for you

What two things that the widow did show that she believed that Elisha was able to help her?

How do we show that we believe the words of the Lord Jesus? (John 14: 15)

Faith leads to obedience, but what does lack of faith (unbelief) lead to?

Chapter 31 - A wise question for an angry man

“...if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it?” (2 Kings 5: 13)

Who asked the Question?

The servants of Naaman

Who was being spoken to?

Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army.

The Time and place of the question

Naaman had travelled from Syria to Israel, to the house of the prophet Elisha.

The Reason for the question

Naaman suffered from leprosy. His wife had a maid who had been brought as a captive from Israel. She had told her mistress about a prophet in Israel who could heal Naaman. When Naaman eventually arrived at the prophet's house, he was not treated as he had expected to be. Instead, he was given a message from the prophet that he should wash seven times in the River Jordan, and he would be healed.

Naaman was angry and would have returned home, but his servants persuaded him to do as he had been told. Their question led to the suggestion that he should do this very simple thing.

The Effect of the question

Naaman recognised the wisdom of all his servants said. He did go to the River Jordan and dipped seven times in the water.

What happened after

After he had obeyed the prophet's instructions, Naaman found that every sign of leprosy had gone: he was completely healed. He decided to return to Elisha's house with a gift for him.

Naaman told Elisha that he knew now that the God of Israel was the only true God. He then asked him to receive a gift, but Elisha refused to take anything. Naaman tried hard to persuade him, but with the same result. It was important for Naaman to understand that it was God who had healed him, and that he could not do anything to pay for his healing. Naaman promised that in future he would no longer make offerings to the false gods of Syria.

Read:

2 Kings 5: 1-19

Questions for you

What do we learn from today's reading about:

1. The captive servant girl?
2. The King of Israel?
3. The prophet Elisha?

Chapter 32 - A prophet's question to his servant

“Where did you go, Gehazi?”
(2 Kings 5: 25)

Who asked the Question?

The prophet Elisha.

Who was being spoken to?

Elisha's servant, Gehazi.

The Time and place of the Question

After the healing of Naaman, Gehazi had left the prophet's house for a time. Elisha questioned him when he returned.

The Reason for the Question

Elisha knew exactly what his servant had been doing. He gave him the opportunity to confess what he had done.

The Effect of the Question

Sadly, the effect of this question was not honest confession, but a lie. Gehazi replied that he had not been anywhere.

What happened after

After Gehazi gave his dishonest answer, Elisha made it clear to him that he knew he had been to meet Naaman and why he had done so. This was

very serious. Elisha wanted Naaman to realise that it was God who had healed him: he could not pay for this. Now Gehazi had done the very thing that Elisha refused to do: taken a gift as if Naaman had been healed by Elisha's power and could give him some payment for it. Worse still, Gehazi actually said that it was Elisha who had sent him to receive something from Naaman. Gehazi was punished for his sinful behaviour. He became a leper.

Leprosy was a terrible disease, but we all suffer from an even worse condition. We all have sinful hearts, and our sin separates us from God. The punishment for sin is death, but the Lord Jesus has taken that punishment for everyone who trusts in Him. If we ask God to forgive our sin, He will do so if we are trusting in the death of the Lord Jesus in our place.

The healing of Naaman reminds us that we cannot pay for forgiveness. Some people try to do this by doing "good deeds". They think that their own goodness will be enough to satisfy God. But God says that all our goodness is like dirty rags in His sight (Isaiah 64:6). We need to honestly confess our sins to Him. We will then know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and Friend.

Read:

2 Kings 5: 20-27

Romans 6: 23

Ephesians 2: 8

A Question for you

Why was it important to Elisha that he received nothing from Naaman?

Sin is worse than leprosy. Can we pay for forgiveness? (see Ephesians 2: 8; 1 Peter 1: 18-19)

Chapter 33 - A frightened servant questions his master

“Alas, my master! What shall we do?”
(2 Kings 6: 15)

Who asked the Question?

Elisha's servant.

Who was being spoken to?

The prophet Elisha.

The Time and place of the question

The question was asked in the city of Dothan in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It was asked at a time when the city was surrounded by the Syrian army.

The Reason for the Question

The servant was afraid of the Syrian army. He was sure that he and his master were in great danger.

The Effect of the Question

Elisha told his servant not to be afraid. He prayed that God would open the young man's eyes. God answered Elisha's prayer and his young servant saw that his master was surrounded by horses and chariots of fire.

What happened after

When the Syrian soldiers came to Elisha, Elisha prayed that God would cause them to go blind. God answered Elisha's prayer and as they could not see where they were, he was able to lead the soldiers to the king of Israel. Then Elisha prayed that God would restore the men's sight, and He did so.

When the king of Israel saw the Syrian soldiers, he asked Elisha whether he should kill them. Elisha told the king that he should not kill the men. In fact he said that the king should give them food and then send them away.

The king took Elisha's advice and made a feast for the Syrian soldiers. After they had eaten, he sent them back to Syria. Elisha's advice was good. If the Syrian soldiers had been killed, the Syrian army might have come to take revenge. Instead of this, the result of treating the men well, was that the king of Syria stopped sending raiding parties into Israel.

Read:

2 Kings 6: 8-23

Psalm 34: 7; Psalm 125: 2

Hebrews 13:5-6

A Question for you

Christians are not promised a life free from troubles. What can we learn from what Elisha's servant saw and from the verses in Psalm 34, 125 and Hebrews 13?

Chapter 34 - The King questions the leaders of Israel

“Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the LORD?”
(1 Chronicles 29: 5)

Who asked the Question?

King David.

Who was being spoken to?

The leaders of the people of Israel.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked at Jerusalem where King David had called all the leaders of the people together. This was towards the end of his forty years reign.

The Reason for the question

King David knew that it was his son Solomon who would build the temple at Jerusalem. It had been David's desire to do this, but God had said “no”. So David set aside many things for the work: gold, silver, bronze, wood, iron and precious stones. David's question was to see if others were willing to give to this work.

The Effect of the Question

The leaders willingly offered gold, silver, bronze, iron and precious stones for the building of the temple.

What happened after

The king and the leaders rejoiced because they were able to offer the things that would be needed for the temple. David then prayed. First of all he praised God for who He is: the great and powerful God who reigns over everything. David then thanked God that he and his people had received so much from God, that they were now able to offer back to Him, things needed for the temple. He expressed the joy he felt when he saw the people so willing to bring what they could. He prayed for his son Solomon and then there was a time of worship and offering sacrifices. At that time Solomon was anointed as king in place of his father. He began the building of the temple in the fourth year of his reign and the work took seven years.

Read:

1 Chronicles 29: 1-15

2 Corinthians 9: 7

A Question for you

What do we learn about giving to God's work from today's reading?

Think of ways in which we can give to God's work today.



Chapter 35 - A question asked while praying

“But will God indeed dwell with men on the earth?” (2 Chronicles 6: 18)

Who asked the Question?

King Solomon.

Who was being spoken to?

Solomon was speaking to God

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked when Solomon prayed, at the time when many of the people were gathered together at the completed temple building.

The Reason for the Question

King Solomon knew that God was the great Creator of heaven and earth. Was it possible that this great God would really be among His people at the temple they had built?

The Effect of the Question

Solomon answered his own question. He understood that God is so great that He cannot be “contained” in any one place. We say that God is “omnipresent”: He is present everywhere. But Solomon continued to pray that God would have a special interest in the temple at Jerusalem: that He

would always hear the prayers of His people, even as they looked toward the temple.

What happened after

Solomon was concerned about the ways that the people might sin against God in future days. He prayed that God would always hear them when they prayed for forgiveness, whether it was an individual who had sinned, or the nation suffering famine or defeat in battle because of their sin. Solomon even foresaw a time when the people would be taken captive and removed from their own land because of their sin. He prayed that when, in a foreign land, the people repented and called upon God, that God would hear and forgive.

The dedication of the temple took place at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a time of rejoicing when the harvest was gathered in. So it was a very wonderful time and when the people returned home, they were so glad to think of how good God had been to Israel.

Read:

2 Chronicles 6: 1-31 and 7: 1-3.

A Question for you

Solomon's prayer contains many examples of how the people might act sinfully. What request does he make in each situation? (See verses 24-25; 26-27; 28-30.)

Chapter 36 - A Challenging Question

“Who is among you of all His people?”
(2 Chronicles 36: 23)

Who asked the Question?

Cyrus, King of Persia.

Who was being spoken to?

The question was part of a proclamation to all his kingdom.

The Time and place of the Question

The people of Judah had been living in captivity. God had said that the captivity would last seventy years. It was as those years came to an end that Cyrus made his proclamation.

The Reason for the Question

Cyrus said that God had commanded him to build Him a temple at Jerusalem. He was therefore willing to send the people of Judah back to their own land, to build the temple.

The Effect of the Question

The leaders of the people of Judah, the priests and Levites, and many others, prepared for the journey. King Cyrus gave them the treasures that King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the original temple, so that they could be used when the temple was rebuilt.

What happened after

About 50,000 people set out on the journey to Jerusalem. their leader was Zerubbabel, a descendant of King David. The people moved to their cities in the land of Judah, but when the seventh month of the year came, they gathered at Jerusalem. There Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel built the altar, so that sacrifices could be offered according to God's instructions. The people also kept the Feast of Tabernacles which took place from the 15th day of the seventh month, for a week.

Work began, building the foundation of the temple, where Solomon's temple had stood before it was destroyed by the Babylonians. The people gave thanks and praised God when the foundation was completed. While some people shouted for joy because the temple was being rebuilt, others were sad. These were old people who remembered the first temple, that beautiful building lined with gold.

Read:

2 Chronicles 36: 1-23

Ezra 3: 11-13

A Question for you

What lesson did the returned captives need to learn from what happened to Solomon's temple?

Chapter 37 - A Hostile Question

“Who has commanded you to build this temple and finish this wall?”
(Ezra 5: 3)

Who asked the Question?

Tattenai the Governor.

Who was being spoken to?

Zerubbabel and the people who were building the temple.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked at the site of the temple at Jerusalem, when the work had restarted after King Artaxerxes had ordered the work to stop.

The Reason for the Question

The people of Judah had enemies who wanted to stop the building of the temple. Some of them had written a letter to Artaxerxes, king of Persia. They said that Jerusalem was a rebellious city and that it should not be rebuilt. The king had agreed and the order had been given to stop the work.

God sent two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the Jews and so the work began again. It was then that the question was asked.

The Effect of the Question

The leaders of the Jews explained that King Cyrus had ordered the rebuilding of the temple. They would not stop the work until Darius, the Persian King who came after Artaxerxes, had been told about the matter. So a letter was sent to the king.

What happened after

King Darius ordered a search to be made and the decree of King Cyrus was found. He therefore sent a letter to those who had complained about the Jews. They were told that they must not stop the work. In fact the cost of rebuilding was to be paid from the taxes people paid. Also, the Jews were to be given everything they needed for the offerings at the temple, and they were to pray for the king and his sons.

The governor and others who had wanted to stop the rebuilding had to obey the command of King Darius. There was great rejoicing among the Jews when the temple was completed. They kept the Feast of the Passover, which reminded them of the time God brought them out of the land of Egypt. Now God had brought them back once again to their own land, the land of Judah.

Read:

Ezra 6: 1-15

Haggai chapter 1

A Question for you

When Haggai spoke to the people of Judah, what sort of things were going wrong for them? Why did Haggai say that these things were happening?

Chapter 38 - A Question expressing royal concern

“Why is your face sad, since you are not sick?” (Nehemiah 2: 2)

Who asked the Question?

Artaxerxes, King of Persia.

Who was being spoken to?

Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked in the palace of the King of Persia after Nehemiah had received bad news from Jerusalem.

The Reason for the Question

Nehemiah was responsible for the king's wine. He would be expected to wait on the king, without ever showing that he had any troubles of his own. On this occasion, Nehemiah's sorrow over the state of Jerusalem showed in his expression.

The Effect of the Question

Ever since Nehemiah had heard about the broken down walls of Jerusalem, he had prayed. Now the king's question gave him the opportunity to tell the king of his sorrow about the city he loved.

What happened after

Following Nehemiah's words about Jerusalem, the king asked a second question, "What do you request?" Kings who ruled over vast empires were very powerful. It must have been unusual for such a king to take an interest in one of his servants. This could only have been an answer to Nehemiah's prayers.

Silently Nehemiah prayed, whilst he answered the king. Nehemiah asked the king to send him to Judah, so that he could rebuild Jerusalem. The length of time that Nehemiah could be away was agreed. Letters were given to him, so that no-one could hinder his journey and so that he would be given wood for the building work, from the king's forest.

Nehemiah did arrive safely in Jerusalem and he was able to organise the rebuilding of the city wall.

Read:

Nehemiah chapter 1 and chapter 2: 1-8

Some Questions for you

Several months went by after Nehemiah had news of Jerusalem, until he had the opportunity to speak to the king. How had he prepared himself when the opportunity came?

Look at Nehemiah's prayers (1: 5-11). Which verses were about:

1. The God he is praying to?
2. Confession of the sins of the people?

3. Reminding God of His promises?
4. His requests?

Chapter 39 - A Mocking Question

“What is this thing that you are doing?”
(Nehemiah 2: 19)

Who asked the Question?

Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, enemies of the Jews.

Who was being spoken to?

Nehemiah and the builders.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked at Jerusalem when the Jews' enemies heard about the rebuilding of the walls.

The Reason for the Question

The Jews' enemies wanted to discourage Nehemiah and stop the work.

The Effect of the Question

Nehemiah replied that God would help them and that they would build. He reminded them that they had no rights as far as the city of Jerusalem was concerned.

What happened after

With Nehemiah's leadership, the people were organised for the work of rebuilding the city walls. The enemies of the Jews, who wanted to stop the

work, continued to mock them. But when they saw the work going well, they were angry and planned to attack the builders.

When their plotting was known to the Jews, they prayed for God's help and also set men to keep watch over the work day and night. Nehemiah encouraged the people to remember the greatness of their God. The builders worked with their swords ready to defend themselves.

The enemies of the Jews had not succeeded in hindering the work by mockery or attack. They then tried to draw Nehemiah away from the work by inviting him to meet them. They sent the invitation four times, but Nehemiah refused to leave the work. They also tried making false accusations against Nehemiah, but he sent a reply saying that their accusations were untrue. In spite of many difficulties, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt in just fifty-two days. Nehemiah knew that their enemies and the nations around could see that God was with the Jews: the building was His work.

Read:

Nehemiah 2: 9-20, and 4: 7-18

A Question for you

What can we learn from Nehemiah about how Christians should react when their work is mocked and even meets with opposition from non-believers?

Chapter 40 - A Question from an angry king

“What shall we do to Queen Vashti... because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus?” (Esther 1: 15)

Who asked the Question?

Ahasuerus, king of Persia.

Who was being spoken to?

The King’s advisors.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked at a time of feasting in the palace of King Ahasuerus.

The Reason for the Question

The king wanted to show his beautiful queen to the many guests he had invited to seven days of feasting. Queen Vashti had also made a feast for the women. When the king’s command was brought to her, she refused to come, to be shown off to the king’s guests.

King Ahasuerus was very angry. He turned to his advisors for help in knowing what he should do in response to the queen’s disobedience.

The Effect of the Question

The king’s advisors were troubled by the queen’s behaviour. If other wives heard about the

queen's refusal to obey, they would no longer obey their husbands as they were expected to. They told the king that Vashti should be removed from being the queen. The king should then appoint someone better than Vashti to take her place. The king's advisors thought that when this was made known throughout the empire, all wives would respect their husbands.

What happened after

The king agreed to the advice he had been given and he sent letters to every province of the empire. The letters said that every man should be master in his own house.

After a time, when the king was no longer feeling angry, he began to think about what had happened to Vashti. The king's servants then advised him to choose a new queen from among the beautiful young women who would be brought to him.

Among the young women who were brought to the palace, was a beautiful Jewess whose name was Esther. She had no parents but had been brought up by her cousin, Mordecai. King Ahasuerus chose Esther to be the queen in place of Vashti.

Read:

Daniel 6: 1-10

Acts 4: 18-20

A Question for you

Do you think that Queen Vashti was right on this occasion, to disobey her husband, and if so, why?

There are people who we should obey: our parents, our teachers and also our government. Is there a time when it would be wrong to obey them?

(See Daniel 6: 1-10 and Acts 4: 18-20.)

Chapter 41 - A Question about disobeying an order

“Why do you transgress the king’s command?” (Esther 3:3)

Who asked the Question?

The servants of King Ahasuerus.

Who was being spoken to?

Mordecai who was Esther’s cousin.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked near to the king’s palace. It was at the time that the king had promoted a man named Haman to a high position in the empire.

Reason for the Question

The king had given an order that people should show respect to Haman by bowing down to him. Mordecai would not bow down.

The Effect of the Question

The question did not change Mordecai’s behaviour: he still refused to bow down to Haman.

What happened after

The king’s servants told Haman about Mordecai and he was very angry. When Haman was also told that Mordecai was a Jew, he was not satisfied

with punishing him. He planned to destroy all the Jews throughout the empire.

Haman belonged to the people called Amalekites who were enemies of the Jews. They had attacked the people of Israel when they left Egypt. God had said that he would destroy the Amalekites because of their wickedness. This could be one reason why Mordecai would not bow down to Haman. The other possible reason was that Haman expected people to worship him, in a way that to someone taught to worship only God, was quite wrong.

Haman made a plan to have all the Jewish people destroyed on a particular date. He persuaded the king that there were people throughout the empire who refused to keep the king's law. Haman did not explain who these people were but said that they should be destroyed. The king agreed to Haman's plan.

Read:

Exodus 17: 8-16

Deuteronomy 25: 17-19

Esther 3

A Question for you

The Bible does not tell us exactly why Mordecai would not bow down to Haman. Using the verses from Exodus and Deuteronomy, explain why you think he behaved as he did.

Chapter 42 - A King's Question to a Queen

“What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request?
(Esther 5: 3)

Who asked the Question?

King Ahasuerus.

Who was being spoken to?

Queen Esther.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked at the palace of King Ahasuerus at a time of great danger to the Jews.

The Reason for the Question

Mordecai had told Esther that she should go to the king and plead for her people.

The Effect of the Question

Esther invited the king to come with Haman to a banquet that she had prepared.

What happened after

Esther knew that it would not be an easy thing to tell the king that Haman, his favourite, was the enemy of her people. When the king brought Haman with him to Esther's banquet, she asked that they return the following day. Then she

promised to make her request: to tell the king what it was she wanted.

Haman was so proud that he was the only person invited to go with the king to the queen's banquets. But he still could not bear to see Mordecai refusing to honour him. His wife suggested that Mordecai should be hanged on a gallows the following day. Haman determined to see that this was done. The following day was very different from how Haman had planned it. Instead of putting Mordecai to death, the king had decided to honour him because he had seen a record of how Mordecai had once saved the king's life. The queen's banquet also had a very different outcome than Haman expected.

King Ahasuerus again asked Esther what it was that she wished to request. This time Esther pleaded that her people should not be destroyed. The king wanted to know who would dare to do such a thing. When Esther named Haman, he was terrified. The order was given that he should be hanged on the gallows he had made for Mordecai. The Jewish people were saved from destruction.

Read:

Esther chapter 4; 5: 1-4 and 7: 1-6

(If you have time, read all of Esther chapters 4-7.)

A Question for you

What do you think Mordecai meant when he asked Esther, "Who knows whether you have

come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”
(Esther 4: 14)?



Chapter 43 - Satan asks God a Question

“Does Job fear God for nothing?”
(Job 1:9)

Who asked the Question?

Satan.

Who was being spoken to?

Satan was speaking to God.

The Time and place of the Question

We do not know when the events we read about in the Book of Job took place. It may be a very ancient book, dating back to the time of Abraham (about 2000 B.C.). The question was asked in heaven.

The Reason for the Question

God had spoken highly of Job's character. Satan then questioned whether Job really loved God, or whether he lived as he did only because God had been so good to him?

The Effect of the Question

God gave Satan permission to do as he wished with Job's possessions. He was not allowed to hurt Job himself.

What happened after

Job had seven sons and three daughters. One day they were together having a meal in their oldest brother's house. While they were there, Job had four messages brought to him and all were very bad news. The first messenger told Job that all his donkeys and oxen had been stolen; the second told him that fire had fallen and burnt all the sheep; the third messenger said that all the camels had been stolen. Each of these three messengers said that they had managed to escape, but all Job's other servants had been killed.

The fourth messenger brought the worst news of all. A strong wind had caused the house where Job's sons and daughters were, to fall on them. All had been killed.

Job had been a wealthy man who owned hundreds of animals. In one day he had lost them all and also his large family was gone. Job said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord". He did not show any anger or blame God for his great loss.

Read:

Job chapter 1

A Question for you

God allowed Satan to test whether Job's love for God was genuine. Was Satan able to do exactly as he wished, or did God limit what he could do? (see verse 12).

Chapter 44 - A Question about what we can learn from creation

“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (Job 38: 4)

Who asked the Question?

This question was asked by God.

Who was being spoken to?

Job.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked following what had been for Job a time of great trouble.

The Reason for the Question

After he lost all his possessions, his family and then his health as well, Job was visited by three friends. The friends spent a long time trying to convince Job that he must have done wrong, for God to allow him to suffer so much. After all the friends finished speaking, God began to speak to Job and to question him.

The Effect of the Question

God continued to ask Job many questions. The effect on Job was that he realised the greatness and power of God. He also realised that there were things he could not understand because God

was so much greater and so much wiser than he was.

What happened after

After a second interview with God, Satan had been allowed to cause Job to suffer physical illness. We may find it hard to understand why God allowed this. We do know that Job came through this testing time, with his faith in God strengthened.

God spoke to Job about the wonders of creation. As Job listened and considered God's great power, he knew that he had no right to question God. God had a message for Job's friends, because what they had spoken was not right, especially all that they had said about God Himself. God said that they must bring an offering and that Job must pray for them.

God gave to Job more than he had lost: twice as many animals, gold and silver, and again seven sons and three daughters.

Read:

Job 38: 1-7; chapter 42

A Question for you

What two things show the strengthening of Job's faith in chapter 13 verse 15 and chapter 19 verse 25-26?

Chapter 45 - Foretold: A Question from the cross

“My God, my God, why have you
forsaken me?”

(Psalm 22: 1 and Matthew 27: 46)

Who asked the Question?

The Lord Jesus Christ asked the question, although the words were written by King David.

Who was being spoken to?

The Question was addressed to God the Father.

The Time and place of the Question

David wrote this Psalm about one thousand years before the Lord Jesus was crucified. David may have had some of his own troubles in mind as he wrote, but God's Holy Spirit helped him to write words that describe the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. As He hung on the cross, Jesus used the words of Psalm 22: 1.

The Effect of the Question

For David, the sense of God forsaking him led to an assurance that God had heard and answered him (Psalm 22: 21 and 24). He then went on to express his faith in God and to praise Him.

What happened after

The Lord Jesus had always been in unbroken fellowship with His Father in heaven. So why, on the cross, did he express a sense of being forsaken by Him? The reason was that He was bearing the sin of everyone who would trust in Him for forgiveness. We read in Habakkuk 1: 13, “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness.” The physical pain of crucifixion was not as painful to the Lord Jesus, as the sense of His Father turning His face away from Him, because of His people’s sin being laid on Him.

The Lord Jesus died and His body was laid in a grave. On the third day, He rose again: He had conquered death. Forty days later He ascended into heaven and ten days after that the Holy Spirit came to the disciples, to give them power to tell others about the Lord Jesus.

Read:

Psalm 22: 1-5; 18-24

Matthew 27: 33-46

2 Peter 1: 21

A Question for you

Find a verse (besides verse 1) in Psalm 22 that is found in Matthew chapter 27.

How was David able to write about the crucifixion, so many years before it took place? (see 2 Peter 1: 21).

Chapter 46 - A Question about how we can come near to God

“Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place?” (Psalm 24: 3)

Who asked the Question?

King David.

Who was being spoken to?

David wrote for the people of Israel and for all who are able to read his words.

The Time and the place of the Question

David wrote about one thousand years before the birth of Christ.

The Reason for the Question

The Bible tells us that we are all sinners, and that our sin separates us from God. The most important question we face is to know how this great problem of being separated from God can be solved.

The Effect of the Question

David goes on to answer his own question (verse 4). “Clean hands” means hands that are not used for sinful actions. “A pure heart” means a heart free from sinful thoughts.

What happened after

The Psalm continues with the theme of who can come to God and how God blesses those who do so. Then from verses 7-10 there is a change: these verses speak about the King of Glory making a triumphant entrance. To understand this, we need to think about three Psalms. Psalms 22, 23 and 24.

Psalm 22 is all about the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross. Psalm 23 tells us about the Lord Jesus as the Shepherd of His people. We remember Jesus's words in John 10: 11, "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep". Psalm 24: 7-10 shows us the Lord Jesus being received back into heaven, after triumphing over sin and death.

Read:

Psalms 23 and 24

A Question for you

We have sinful hearts and we do sinful things. How can this be put right, so that we can know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and Friend? (see Ephesians 2: 8-9).

(Grace: kindness we do not deserve.

Faith: believing God.

Works: our "good deeds".)

Chapter 47 - A Question about when evil people seem to be winning

“How long will the wicked triumph?”
(Psalm 94: 3)

Who asked the Question?

We are not told the name of the Psalmist.

Who was being spoken to?

The Psalmist was speaking to God.

The Time and place of the Question

Whilst we have no details about when or where this Psalm was written, we can say it was at a time when the writer was troubled about the words and actions of evil people.

The Reason for the Question

The question was asked because the writer wanted to see God take action against evildoers.

The Effect of the question

The Psalmist realises that God will deal with sinful people who persecute those who love God.

What happened after

As the psalmist thinks about the problem of how evil seems to triumph, he considers the difference between those who trust in God and those who

delight in doing evil things. He sees that those who think God does not see their behaviour, are fools.

The God who created the ear, hears their words. The God who created the eye, sees their actions. These people may think that they can live as they choose, but the day is coming when God will be their Judge. God is very patient: He allows time for people to change their ways (2 Peter 3: 9). If evil people refuse to repent, they will face punishment. This reminds us that we must seek God's forgiveness for our sin. No unforgiven sinner can enter heaven (Revelation 21: 27).

The truly happy people ("blessed" – Psalm 94: 12), are those who trust God and obey His law. They know that God will never leave them. They find that He comforts them and is their refuge in every trouble. They also know that God is just and that those who persist in doing evil will be dealt with by Him.

Read:

Psalm 94

A Question for you

How does the psalmist describe the behaviour of the wicked? (verses 4-7 and 21). How does he describe the benefits of trust in God? (verses 12-14; 19; 22).

Chapter 48 - A Question of how to do right

“How can a young man cleanse his way?” (Psalm 119: 9)

Who asked the Question?

Some people think that King David wrote this psalm, but we are not told and so cannot be certain who the writer was.

Who was being spoken to?

The Psalmist is speaking to God.

The Time and the place of the Question

We do not know.

The Reason for the Question

The decisions we make when we are young are important. We can so easily make sinful choices, which we will regret later on.

The Effect of the Question

The psalmist answers his own question: God's Word will teach him to do right (verses 9 and 11).

What happened after

We find two things after the question in verse 9. One is the writer's determination to live in a way that is pleasing to God. The other is that he knows that he needs to ask God to help him to do this.

Commandments, statutes, judgements, testimonies and precepts, are all words about law. We often think of laws as being there to stop us doing what we want. We might wonder why the psalmist finds pleasure from thinking of God's law. God's law is very special in two ways. First, it tells us something about what God is like. It shows us that God is Holy: He loves goodness and hates everything sinful. Secondly, because God is good, his law brings the greatest happiness to those who obey it. God has not given us His law to stop us enjoying our lives, but to show us the very best way to live.

Sadly, not one of us is able to keep God's laws perfectly. The only Person to do this was God's own Son, the Lord Jesus. He died on the cross to take the punishment that we deserve for our sin (Romans 6: 23). God will forgive our sin if we trust in the Lord Jesus. God then gives us His Holy Spirit, who helps us to live in a way that pleases Him, as the writer of Psalm 119 so wanted to do.

Read:

Psalm 119: 9-16

Psalm 1

Exodus 20: 1-17

John 14: 15

A Question for you

Exodus 20: 1-17. How many of these commandments are about our duty to God? Find which commandments fit these headings: respect

for parents; respect for life; respect for marriage;
respect for other people's property; respect for the
truth; contentment.



Chapter 49 - A King who dares to challenge God

“And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?” (Daniel 3: 15)

Who asked the Question?

King Nebuchadnezzar.

Who was being spoken to?

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego.

The Time and place of the question

The question was asked at the time of the dedication of a golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar.

The Reason for the Question

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego had refused to bow down to the golden image. They were therefore threatened with being thrown into a burning furnace.

The Effect of the Question

The three men answered that God was able to deliver them. But even if God did not deliver them, they still refused to worship the image.

What happened after

The king was very angry. He gave orders that the furnace should be heated much more than usual. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego were bound and thrown into the furnace. So great was the heat, that the men who dealt with them were killed.

The king was watching all that happened. He spoke to his advisors. Instead of three men bound so that they could not move, he saw four men walking in the fire. The fourth man had the appearance of being the Son of God. Nebuchadnezzar called Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego to come out of the furnace. When they did so, the king and his officials could see that the fire had not affected the three men. Neither their hair nor their clothes were singed or damaged in any way.

Nebuchadnezzar then acknowledged the greatness of the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. In fact he said that no-one must speak against their God: anyone who did so would be killed.

Read:

Daniel chapter 3
Exodus 20: 4-6

A Question for you

What do we learn from Daniel chapter 3 about the character of Nebuchadnezzar and the faith of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego?

Chapter 50 - A Proud question

“Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power...?” (Daniel 4: 30)

Who asked the question?

King Nebuchadnezzar.

Who was being spoken to?

He was congratulating himself.

The Time and place of the Question

Nebuchadnezzar was in his palace in Babylon, twelve months after God had warned him in a dream, that He was going to deal with him.

The Reason for the Question

Nebuchadnezzar's pride in all that he had accomplished.

The Effect of the Question

A voice spoke from heaven, telling the king that he would lose his reason and behave like an animal until he recognised that it is God who rules over all.

What happened after

The words Nebuchadnezzar had heard were immediately fulfilled. Instead of remaining in his palace, the king lived in the fields like an animal.

He had in fact been warned a year earlier that this would happen. He had a dream that had troubled him and God had enabled Daniel to tell him the meaning of the dream. Daniel appealed to Nebuchadnezzar to give up his sinful ways, but he did not change. He continued to be a proud and despotic ruler. Eventually, he expressed his pride in the words of the question in chapter 4: 30. Immediately he experienced God's judgement, and this we are told lasted for "seven times" which may mean seven years.

At last, Nebuchadnezzar's mind was restored. He recognised the greatness of God and he once again took his royal position. In Daniel chapter 4 we have in Nebuchadnezzar's own words, the whole of this experience. At the beginning and the ending of the chapter, we have his own testimony of what he has learned about the character of God.

Read:

Daniel 4: 1-9 and 30-37

A Question for you

What was Nebuchadnezzar's great sin and in what way did he change?

Chapter 51 - A Question asked in great danger

“Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us?” (Jonah 1: 8)

Who asked the Question?

Some seamen.

Who was being spoken to?

The Prophet Jonah.

The Time and place of the Question

It was asked on board a ship sailing from Joppa (now Jaffa) to Tarshish (possibly in Spain).

The Reason for the Question

The ship had been caught up in such a severe storm, that even the experienced seamen thought that there must be a reason for it. It seemed likely that the ship was about to be broken up.

The Effect of the Question

Jonah told the men that he was running away from the God of heaven.

What happened after

The seamen were very afraid and asked Jonah what they should do. He said that they should throw him into the sea, but they were very reluctant to do this. Eventually, while asking God

not to blame them, they did as Jonah had said. Immediately the sea became calm and the men realised that Jonah's God was the true God.

Jonah did not drown. God sent a large fish to swallow him and from inside the fish, Jonah prayed. After three days, the fish deposited Jonah on dry land.

For the second time, God told Jonah to go to Nineveh with His message. This time Jonah did not try to run away, but obeyed God. When Jonah gave the people of Nineveh God's message, that in forty days the city would be overthrown, they believed. Even the king told the people to fast, to call on God and to give up their evil ways. Because the people changed their ways, God said that He would not destroy Nineveh.

Read:

Jonah 1; 3: 1-4 and 10; 4: 1-3 (If you have time, read the four chapters of this very short book.)

A Question for you

The people of Nineveh were both evil and cruel, and yet God sent Jonah to them with a warning. Why did Jonah not want to take God's message to Nineveh? (see chapter 4: 2).

Chapter 52 - A Question that troubled a king

“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” (Matthew 2: 2)

Who asked the Question?

Wise men from the East.

Who was being spoken to?

The people of Jerusalem.

The time and place of the Question

The question was asked at Jerusalem after Jesus had been born in Bethlehem.

The Reason for the Question

These men had seen a particular star, which they understood to mean that a special king had been born in the land of Israel.

The Effect of the Question

King Herod was troubled by the question. He called the priests and scribes together and asked them where the promised Messiah would be born. They were able to tell the king that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. They knew this because the prophet Micah had written about it, about seven hundred years before (Micah 5: 2).

What happened after

King Herod told the wise men to go to Bethlehem. He also told them that when they had found the Child, they should come back and tell him, so that he could go and worship Him. The star which the wise men had seen in the East, now led them to the house where Jesus was, with Mary His mother. The wise men bowed down and worshipped the Child and presented gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

In a dream, God warned the men not to return to King Herod, so they travelled back to their own country another way. Mary's husband, Joseph, was told by an angel to take Mary and the Lord Jesus to Egypt, because Herod would try to destroy Him. Joseph obeyed the angel's message. In the night he set off towards Egypt with Mary and the Child. They remained in Egypt until the death of King Herod.

Read:

Matthew 2: 1-16

Micah 5: 2

A Question for you

There are many promises in the Old Testament that God would send a Saviour into the world. What do the following verses promise?

Matthew 24: 30 Luke 21: 27

John 14: 3 Acts 1: 11

(Son of Man is a name Jesus sometimes used for Himself.)

Chapter 53 - The Pharisee's question

“How can a man be born when he is old?” (John 3: 4)

Who asked the Question?

A Pharisee named Nicodemus.

Who was being spoken to?

The Lord Jesus.

The Time and place of the Question

The Lord Jesus had been in Jerusalem for the Passover Feast and it is likely that His meeting with Nicodemus took place in that city. The question was asked at night.

The Reason for the Question

The Lord Jesus had told Nicodemus that it was necessary to be “born again”.

The Effect of the Question

Jesus answered by explaining the difference between our natural birth and the new life, or second birth, that only the Holy Spirit can give.

What happened after

The Lord Jesus continued speaking to Nicodemus. He reminded him of the time when the Israelites were travelling through the wilderness.

Because of their complaining against God and against Moses. God had sent snakes among them. Many of the people were bitten and died. Moses was instructed by God to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole. Whoever was bitten and looked at the bronze serpent, was saved from death. Jesus said that He too would be lifted up, so that everyone who believed in Him, would have eternal life. He was speaking, of course, of being “lifted up” on the cross.

We read about Nicodemus on two further occasions. In John chapter 7, we find him refusing to join the other Pharisees in speaking against Jesus. In John chapter 19, we read of Nicodemus helping Joseph of Arimathea in the preparation and burial of Jesus’s body, after the crucifixion.

Read:

Numbers 21: 5-9

John 3: 1-17

John 7: 45-52

John 19: 38-42

A Question for you

When the Lord Jesus was arrested, we read that “all the disciples forsook Him and fled” (Matthew 26: 56). In contrast, what do the verses in John 19 tell us about Nicodemus?

Chapter 54 - A Practical Question

“Where then do You get that living water?” (John 4: 11)

Who asked the Question?

A Samaritan woman.

Who was being spoken to?

The Lord Jesus.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked by a well in the city of Sychar. It was midday.

The Reason for the Question

The woman had come to the well to draw water. The Lord Jesus asked her to give Him a drink. He also said that if she knew who He was, she would have asked Him and He would have given her “living water”. She did not understand His words, as the well was deep and He had nothing to draw water with.

The Effect of the Question

The Lord Jesus said that anyone drinking water from the well, would get thirsty again. But anyone receiving the water He would give, would never thirst again.

What happened after

The Samaritan woman still did not understand what Jesus had said, but she liked the idea of not having to keep coming back to the well. Jesus told her to call her husband but she replied that she had no husband. Jesus surprised her by telling her some truths about herself. The Lord Jesus continued speaking to her, until the disciples arrived after buying food.

The Samaritan woman told the men of the city to come and see a Man who had told her all about her life. She asked whether this Man could be the Christ: the One God had promised to send into the world.

Many Samaritans believed in the Lord Jesus because of what the woman had said. But when they had heard Jesus speak, they believed because of His words to them. They asked Jesus to stay with them, and so He stayed in Sychar for two days.

Read:

John 4: 1-26

John 7: 37-39

Some Questions for you

1. Using the verses from John's gospel, what is the meaning of "living water"?
2. What did the Lord Jesus say about needing special places to worship God? (John 4: 21-24).

Chapter 55 - A Searching Question

“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?”
(Luke 6: 9)

Who asked the Question?

The Lord Jesus.

Who was being spoken to?

The scribes and Pharisees.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked in a synagogue.

The Reason for the Question

The scribes and Pharisees were trying to find fault with the Lord Jesus. There was a man present in the synagogue whose right hand was “withered”: it was useless. If the Lord Jesus healed the man’s hand, the scribes and the Pharisees would accuse Him of breaking the commandments by working on the Sabbath day.

The Effect of the question

The scribes and Pharisees heard what Jesus said and saw what He did, and they were very angry.

What happened after

After the Lord Jesus had asked His question, He asked the man to stretch out his hand. As he did so, his hand was healed. That hand that had made his life so difficult, was now strong. What a difference this must have made to the man's life.

Surely those who saw what had happened should have felt so glad that the Lord Jesus was able to do this. Instead they were filled with anger and talked together about what they could do to Jesus. They could not deny the miracles that He performed. They refused to admit that those miracles showed quite clearly that Jesus was the Son of God.

Read:

Luke 6: 6-11

Exodus 20: 8-11

Matthew 23: 1-7; 27-28

A Question for you

Some of the sternest words the Lord Jesus ever spoke, were about the Pharisees. He said that they were hypocrites (this means someone who acts a part, trying to appear better than they are). In what way were the Pharisees hypocrites? (These verses will help you: Matthew 23: 4-7 and 27-28). ("Rabbi" means "teacher".)
(The Pharisees were a religious group who were keen to keep God's law but actually added to it. They separated themselves from 'sinful' people, not realising the sinfulness of their own proud hearts.)

Chapter 56 - A Question about being sure

“Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?” (Matthew 11: 3)

Who asked the Question?

Disciples of John the Baptist.

Who was being spoken to?

The Lord Jesus.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked while John was in prison and the Lord Jesus was teaching in various cities in Galilee.

The Reason for the Question

John had been put in prison by King Herod, because he had told the king that it had been wrong of him to take his brother's wife. Before this John had told the people that Jesus was the Saviour who God had promised to send. Many people had come to John and had been baptised by him as a sign of their repentance. It would seem that John was seeking reassurance that Jesus really was the Messiah promised by God. Or he may have wanted his disciples to have this reassurance.

The Effect of the Question

The Lord Jesus gave John's disciples a message to give Him.

What happened after

The Lord Jesus told John's disciples to tell John what they had seen and heard: blind people now able to see; lame people able to walk; lepers cured; deaf people able to hear and even some who had been dead made alive again. Added to all this, poor people, looked down on by the religious leaders, were now having the Gospel preached to them.

John's disciples went to tell him all these things. After they had gone, Jesus began to speak about John. He used words written by the prophet Malachi about four hundred years before. He explained that John was the messenger that Malachi had written about, the one who would prepare the people for the coming Saviour.

Read:

Malachi 3: 1

Matthew 11: 1-12

John 1: 29-34

A Question for you

Think of the ways that we can be sure that Jesus is the Son of God, the Saviour of everyone who trusts in Him.

Chapter 57 - A Question asked in fear

“Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” (Mark 4: 38)

Who asked the Question?

The disciples.

Who was being spoken to?

The Lord Jesus.

The Time and place of the Question

The Question was asked during a storm on the Sea of Galilee.

The Reason for the Question

The Lord Jesus was sleeping in a boat whilst He was with His disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee. The disciples were afraid when a great storm arose, and so they woke Him with their question.

The Effect of the Question

The Lord Jesus stood up and stilled the storm with the words, “Peace, be still!”

What happened after

After the Lord Jesus had spoken, the sea became calm and the stormy wind was stilled. Then the Lord Jesus had questions for his

disciples: “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” Many of the disciples were fishermen, used to the storms that came suddenly to the Sea of Galilee. This particular storm must have been an unusually severe one, for them to become so afraid.

We might think that it was natural for these men to have been afraid, when it seemed likely that they could have drowned. But we need to remember what they already knew about the One who was with them. They had already seen Him perform many miracles of healing, which no ordinary man could do. They had also listened as He taught the people in a way that none of their religious leaders could. All that they had seen and heard should have been making it clear to them that Jesus was the Son of God. This should have given them faith in Him to bring them safely through the storm.

Even though the disciples had seen many miracles of healing, they were amazed that the Lord Jesus had such power over the storm. They had not yet fully understood who He was.

Read:

Matthew 8: 23-27

Mark 4: 35-41

Luke 8: 22-25

A Question for you

What does the miracle of the stilling of the storm, teach us about the Lord Jesus?

Chapter 58 - A Disciple's Question

“... what are they among so many?”
(John 6: 9)

Who asked the Question?

One of the disciples named Andrew.

Who was being spoken to?

The Lord Jesus.

The time and place of the Question

The question was asked in the district of Galilee, just before the Feast of the Passover.

The Reason for the Question

A great crowd of people had followed the Lord Jesus, because they had seen the wonderful miracles of healing that He had done. Jesus asked one of His disciples, whose name was Philip, where they could buy bread so that the people could have something to eat. Jesus knew what He would do, but He wanted to hear Philip's response to His question. Andrew said that a boy had five barley loaves and two small fish and then asked his question – “what are they among so many?”

The Effect of the Question

Jesus told the disciples to make the people sit down. There were more than five thousand people there and they sat down on the grass.

What happened after

The Lord Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and then handed bread to the disciples who handed it to the people. They did the same with the fish and the people ate as much as they wanted. Jesus instructed his disciples to collect up the leftovers. They did so and filled twelve baskets with pieces of bread that had been left.

The people who had seen this miracle said that the Lord Jesus must be the prophet who God had promised to send into the world (Deuteronomy 18:15). Jesus saw that they wanted to make Him their King, but He went away from them, to spend time alone on the mountain praying.

Read:

John 6: 1-15

John 1: 1-3 ('The Word' is used as a title for the son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.)

A Question for you

What particular power did the Lord Jesus show in this miracle? (Think about the words of John 1: 3.)

Chapter 59 - A Question for the disciples

“Who do men say that I am?”
(Mark 8: 27)

Who asked the Question?

The Lord Jesus.

Who was being spoken to?

The disciples.

The Time and place of the Question

The Question was asked at Caesarea Philippi.

The Reason for the Question

The Lord Jesus would have known what people were saying about Him, but He was going to give His disciples the opportunity to say who they thought He was.

The Effect of the Question

When the Lord Jesus asked a second question, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ”. (The word “Christ” means “the anointed one”, the same as the Hebrew word “Messiah”.)

What happened after

The Lord Jesus began to teach His disciples about what was going to happen to Him. Peter had

rightly said that Jesus was the promised Messiah. If he thought that the Lord Jesus was about to become King in Jerusalem, and that the Jewish people would no longer be ruled by the Romans, Jesus' words must have seemed very strange to him. Jesus explained that the Jewish leaders would reject Him and put Him to death. He also told His disciples that He would rise again after three days.

Peter told Jesus that these things must not happen to Him. (Peter's rebuke in Mark 8: 32 is given more fully in Matthew 16: 22.) Jesus rebuked Peter, because Peter did not understand what God would do through His death and resurrection.

The Lord Jesus then began to speak to other people as well as His disciples. He made it clear that following Him would not be easy. To "deny yourself" means no longer living just to please yourself but living to obey and please God. Making the gospel known to others may cost life itself, and these words have been shown to be true in the history of the church's missionary outreach. There is also a second meaning to Jesus' words: a life of ease and pleasure may be lost while a life of loving obedience to God continues. The Lord Jesus also made it clear that there will be a time when He comes to this world again. At that time, those who have not followed the Lord Jesus, will not share in His glory.

Read:

Mark 8: 27-38

Some Question for you

Did the Lord Jesus say that it would be easy to follow Him? What is one soul worth?



Chapter 60 - The Neighbours' Question

“How were your eyes opened?”
(John 9: 10)

Who asked the question?

People who knew a man who had been blind all his life.

Who was being spoken to?

The blind man whose sight the Lord Jesus had restored.

The Time and place of the Question

The Question was asked in Jerusalem after the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Reason for the Question

People had seen this man sitting begging. Now it was obvious that he could see: they naturally wanted to know how this had happened.

The Effect of the Question

The man who had been blind, told the people that Jesus had put clay on his eyes and told him to wash at the Pool of Siloam. He did as Jesus had said and when he had washed, he was able to see.

What happened after

The blind man was taken to the Pharisees, who were very strict about keeping God's commandments but who had added rules of their own to God's law. Some of the Pharisees said that Jesus could not have come from God because he had cured the blind man on the Sabbath day. Others argued that a sinful person could not have performed such a miracle.

The Pharisees sent for the man's parents and began questioning them. They would not answer all the questions because they feared being put out of the synagogue. The Pharisees then began questioning the man again, but he did not want to keep repeating his answers. He told them the one thing he was sure of, "though I was blind, now I see". He would not agree with the Pharisees that Jesus was a sinful person. He believed that Jesus had come from God. He was excommunicated: not allowed to attend the synagogue any more, which was what His parents had been afraid of.

The Lord Jesus came to talk to the man to whom He had given sight. We read their conversation in John 9: 35-38.

Read:

Read John chapter 9.

A Question for you

In what way were the Pharisees blind?

Chapter 61 - A Rich man asks a Question

“Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”
(Mark 10: 17)

Who asked the Question?

A Rich young man.

Who was being spoken to?

The Lord Jesus.

The Time and place of the Question

The Lord Jesus and His disciples were in the southern part of the land of Israel, known as Judea.

The Reason for the Question

The young man wanted to be sure of having eternal life but evidently believed that this depended on what he did.

The Effect of the Question

The Lord Jesus reminded the young man of God's commandments.

What happened after

Jesus told the rich young man that there was one thing missing in his life. He needed to sell his

possessions and give to the poor. Then, Jesus said, he would have treasure in heaven.

The young man was very sad when he heard this because he was very rich, and did not want to give up his possessions. The Lord Jesus understood this man. He knew that his riches were too important to him.

Jesus explained to His disciples that it is very hard for those who trust in their riches, to enter God's kingdom. This surprised them: we often look up to people who are wealthy as if they deserve our respect.

Peter reminded the Lord Jesus that he and the other disciples had left everything to follow Him. Jesus said that anyone who had given up anything for Him, home; family; or land, would receive much more in return. They would also suffer persecution but could look forward to eternal life.

Read:

Mark 10: 17-31

A Question for you

The Bible does not tell us that it is sinful to be rich. What was the problem with this young man?

Chapter 62 - A Question asked in perplexity and sorrow

“Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26: 22)

Who asked the Question?

The disciples.

Who was being spoken to?

The Lord Jesus.

The Time and place of the Question

The disciples were with Jesus, sharing the Passover meal before the Lord Jesus was crucified.

The Reason for the Question

Jesus had told the disciples that one of them would betray Him (hand Him over to His enemies).

The Effect of the question

Jesus explained that His betrayer was one He handed a piece of bread to. He then handed the bread to Judas Iscariot, who immediately went out (John 13: 26-30).

What happened after

As the meal continued, Jesus explained that the bread and wine portrayed His body and His blood, which would be shed so that sin could be forgiven. The Lord Jesus then took the eleven disciples to

the Garden of Gethsemane. Leaving eight of the disciples in one part of the garden, He took Peter, James and John to be with Him while He prayed to His Father.

Jesus knew all that lay ahead: trial and crucifixion. Because we have sinful hearts, we cannot fully understand what it meant to the pure and holy Son of God to know that He would bear the sin of everyone who would put their trust in Him.

While Jesus prayed, the three weary disciples slept. Then, Judas came, leading a large group of men carrying swords and clubs. Judas had given them a sign that the Person he kissed was the One they must arrest. He greeted Jesus and kissed Him. Jesus was led away to the High Priest, where all the religious leaders had gathered.

Read:

Mathew 26: 14-16, 20-25, 47-50

John 13: 21-30

A Question for you

Think about the question the disciples asked. Was there anything that made them suspect that Judas was the betrayer? What can we learn from this?

Chapter 63 - A Question that caused fear

“You are not also one of this Man’s disciples, are you?” (John 18: 17)

Who asked the Question?

A servant of the High Priest.

Who was being spoken to?

Peter, one of Jesus’s disciples.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked in the courtyard of the High Priest’s house after Jesus had been arrested.

The Reason for the Question

The Lord Jesus was being tried by the religious leaders. The servants would have been suspicious of a stranger being there.

The Effect of the Question

Peter answered that he was not a disciple of Jesus.

What happened after

In the courtyard of the High Priest’s house it was cold and so the servants made a fire. Peter stood with them near the fire. While the trial continued, Peter was asked twice more whether he had been with Jesus. Each time, he denied it.

Then Peter heard a cock crowing and he saw the Lord Jesus turn and look at him (Luke 22: 61).

Peter remembered some words that Jesus had said to him, when he had promised that he would die rather than be unfaithful. Jesus had told him that before the cock crowed, he would deny Him three times (John 13: 37-38). Peter went out and wept because he did love the Lord Jesus, but he had failed to be faithful to Him.

Why would a disciple have acted in such a way? He was afraid of what would happen to him if he was known as a disciple of Jesus. The religious leaders hated Jesus so much and wanted Him to be condemned to death. Who could tell what they might do to His followers?

Read:

John 13: 36-38

Luke 22: 54-62

A Question for you

What can we learn from Peter's words in John 13: 37 and what happened afterwards?

Chapter 64 - A Question of guilt

“Are you the King of the Jews?”
(Luke 23: 3)

Who asked the question?

Pilate, the Roman governor.

Who was being spoken to?

The Lord Jesus.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked in Jerusalem, when the chief priests and scribes had handed Jesus over to Pilate, for a further trial.

The Reason for the Question

The Jewish leaders accused the Lord Jesus of blasphemy: claiming to be the Son of God. They declared Him to be guilty and that He should be put to death. However, they were not allowed to impose the death penalty: this could only be done by the Roman governor.

When they took Jesus to Pilate, they brought a different accusation: that He claimed to be a king. If this was true, it would be a crime against the Roman Emperor who at that time ruled over the land of Israel.

The Effect of the Question

The Lord Jesus simply answered, “It is as you say”.

What happened after

When Pilate had examined Jesus, he told the Jews that he found no fault in Him. When he heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he sent Him to King Herod who ruled (under the Romans) in that area. Herod was unable to find any fault in Jesus and he sent Him back to Pilate.

Pilate informed the Jews that neither he nor Herod found Jesus guilty of the things He was accused of. At the time of the Passover feast, one prisoner was released. Pilate wanted to release the Lord Jesus, but the Jewish leaders called for Him to be crucified. They asked for a man named Barabbas to be freed. Barabbas was accused of rebellion and murder.

Pilate gave in to the Jews. He released Barabbas and handed Jesus over to be crucified.

Read:

Matthew 27: 3-5

Luke 22: 66-71, and 23: 1-19

A Question for you

How many people stated that they found no fault in the Lord Jesus? (see Luke 23: 14-15; Matthew 27: 3-5)

Chapter 65 -The Stranger's Question

“What kind of conversation is this that
you have with one another as you walk and
are sad?”
(Luke 24: 17)

Who asked the Question?

The Lord Jesus.

Who was being spoken to?

A man named Cleopas and his companion.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked on the road from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. It was the day when Jesus had risen from the dead.

The Reason for the Question

Cleopas and his companion were followers of the Lord Jesus. They were talking together of all that had happened in Jerusalem. Their sadness and perplexity obviously showed in their faces. They did not realise that “the Stranger” they had met, was the risen Lord Jesus.

The Effect of the Question

They told the Lord Jesus all about what was troubling them. They explained that they had hoped that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

They spoke of how He had been condemned and crucified. Added to all this, was their confusion when some women reported seeing angels who said that Jesus was alive.

What happened after

Jesus told these two sad people, that they had been slow to believe what the Old Testament prophets had said. He then began to teach them how Moses and all the prophets had spoken of all that would happen when Christ came. They should have understood that Christ would suffer before He was glorified.

When they arrived at their destination, the two friends asked “the Stranger” to come in and have a meal with them. Sitting at the table, the Lord Jesus blessed and broke the bread and gave it to them. As He did this, they recognised Him. Immediately, He was gone.

The two returned straight away to Jerusalem, where they met with the eleven disciples. Then the Lord Jesus came and stood among them, and they were filled with Joy.

Read:

Luke 24: 13-32
Isaiah chapter 53

Some Questions for you:

1. What does Isaiah say about the welcome the Son of God will receive when He comes into the world? (verse 3).
2. Why would the promised Messiah suffer? (verses 5-6). (Transgression and iniquity are words for sins.)
3. Find the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy in verse 9, in Luke 23: 32-33 and 50-53.

Chapter 66 - The Lord Jesus's question

“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” (John 21: 15)

Who asked the question?

The Lord Jesus.

Who was being spoken to?

Simon Peter.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, after Jesus had risen from the dead.

The Reason for the Question

The Lord Jesus knew all about how sorrowful Peter had been because of his failure. He now gave Peter the opportunity to show how truly he did love the Lord.

The Effect of the Question

The question was repeated three times and each time Peter confirmed that he loved the Lord Jesus.

What happened after

Each time Peter answered the question, the Lord Jesus made it clear to him that there was work for him to do. Peter may have thought that he would never again be trusted to do the work of telling others about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's instruction to him "feed my sheep", meant being a shepherd to people who needed to hear the good news of salvation. Peter knew that his failure was forgiven and that there was work for him to do.

The Lord Jesus also made it clear to Peter that one day he would die for his faith. We know that Peter understood this because of what he wrote in his second letter (2 Peter 1: 13 – 14). The Lord Jesus then repeated the words that Peter had heard Him say once before by the Sea of Galilee, "Follow Me" (Matthew 4: 18 – 20).

The Lord Jesus dealt with Peter in a way that is a lovely example of what King David had written many years before: "He restores my soul" (Psalm 23: 3). Christians may fail, but God is able to restore those who fail, even to useful work for Him.

Read:

Psalm 23

Matthew 4: 18-20

John 21:1-19

A Question for you

What do we learn from Peter's life, about the way God deals with Christians who have times of failure?

Chapter 67 - The Angels' Question

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven?” (Acts 1: 11)

Who asked the Question?

Two angels.

Who was being spoken to?

The Disciples.

The Time and place of the question

The Question was asked at the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem.

The Reason for the Question

The disciples had been talking with the Lord Jesus. Then, as they watched, He was taken up and a cloud hid Him from them.

The Effect of the Question

The angels explained that Jesus had gone up to heaven and that He would one day return to the earth. The disciples then returned to Jerusalem.

What happened after

The eleven disciples stayed together at Jerusalem. Some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, were with them and so were Jesus's brothers. (We know from Matthew 13: 55 that Jesus had four brothers.) Other followers of Jesus joined them, so that about one hundred and

twenty people were together. Jesus had told His disciples to wait at Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came to them. He said that the Holy Spirit would give them power to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, other parts of Israel and then to all the world. A witness is someone who can tell others what he has seen or heard. Jesus's followers would be able to tell others that Jesus was the Son of God. They would explain that He died on the cross so that sin could be forgiven and that He rose again and then ascended into heaven.

Jesus's followers stayed in Jerusalem as He had told them to. They prayed together and also appointed a man named Matthias to take the place of Judas as one of the twelve apostles. After ten days, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to them. Straight away, they were able to speak to people from many lands who had come to Jerusalem for the Feast.

Many people were distressed when Peter told them that they had crucified the promised Messiah. That day, three thousand people believed in the Lord Jesus.

Read:

Acts 1: 1-11

Acts 2: 1-8, and 36-42

Some Questions for you

1. What was the promise that the angels gave to the disciples? (Acts 1: 11)

2. Years later, what did Peter say that people would say about that promise? (2 Peter 3: 4)
3. What answer would Peter give? (2 Peter 3: 8-9)

Chapter 68 - The Religious leaders' Question

“By what power or by what name have you done this?” (Acts 4: 7)

Who asked the Question?

The Jewish religious leaders.

Who was being spoken to?

Peter and John.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked in Jerusalem.

The Reason for the Question

A lame man, who had never been able to walk, used to be carried each day to the temple. There, at a gate of the temple, he would beg for money from all who went by. When Peter and John saw him, Peter told him, in the name of Jesus, to get up and walk. Peter took him by the hand, and he walked into the temple with them, praising God.

Many people saw what had happened and gathered round. Peter was then able to tell them about the Lord Jesus who had been crucified and had risen from the dead. The religious leaders did not allow them to go on speaking about Jesus. They had Peter and John imprisoned for the night. The next day all the religious leaders met together and asked their question.

The Effect of the Question

Peter and John were able to answer that the man had been healed by the name of Jesus Christ: the One they had crucified, but who God had raised to life.

What happened after

The religious leaders talked among themselves. They could not deny that a miracle had happened and that many people had seen it. They decided to forbid Peter and John to speak any more about Jesus. They threatened them with what would happen to them if they disobeyed.

Peter and John answered by saying that the leaders must judge whether they should obey them or obey God. They said they must speak of all that they had seen and heard. They were allowed to go free and they then went to meet with other Christians. They prayed together that God would give them courage to speak for Him.

Read:

Acts 3: 1-16

Acts 4: 1-4

A Question for you

Why do you think the religious leaders wanted to stop Peter and John speaking about the Lord Jesus? (Matthew 27: 17-18)



Chapter 69 - A Helpful Question

“Do you understand what you are reading?” (Acts 8: 30)

Who asked the Question?

A man named Philip.

Who was being spoken to?

An Ethiopian man who was the Ethiopian queen’s treasurer.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked beside a chariot on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza.

The Reason for the Question

The Holy Spirit had told Philip to go to the chariot. When he did so, he found an Ethiopian man who was reading from the book of Isaiah.

The Effect of the Question

The man’s reply made it clear that he would like someone to help him understand. He asked Philip to sit beside him in the chariot.

What happened after

The man in the chariot was reading from Isaiah chapter 53. He wanted to know who it was that the prophet had written about. The verses he read described Someone who suffered and died for other people’s sins. Philip was able to explain that

Isaiah wrote about the Lord Jesus. God had helped Isaiah to do this about 700 years before the Lord Jesus died on the cross.

As the chariot came near to some water, the Ethiopian could not see any reason why he should not be baptized. Philip told him that he could be baptized if he truly believed what he had heard. He then told Philip that he believed that Jesus is the Son of God, and so he was baptized there on his way back to his own land. After this, the Holy Spirit directed Philip to another place. The man continued his journey full of joy.

Read:

Isaiah 53: 1-6

Acts 8: 26-40

2 Peter 1: 21

Some Questions for you

How could Isaiah write about the death of the Lord Jesus, so many years before it took place? (See 2 Peter 1: 21). How does Isaiah explain why the Saviour would die? (see Isaiah 53: 6) ("Iniquity" is another word for sin.)

Chapter 70 - A Question that changed a life

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” (Acts 9: 4)

Who asked the Question?

The Lord Jesus.

Who was being spoken to?

A man named Saul who came from the city of Tarsus.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked on the road to Damascus. This was after the Lord Jesus had ascended into heaven.

The Reason for the Question

Saul was on his way to Damascus to find any Christians who were there. He intended to bring them to Jerusalem where they would be punished. As he came near to the city, a very bright light caused him to fall to the ground. He then heard the Lord Jesus speaking to him from heaven. It was clear from the question He asked, that persecuting the followers of Jesus, was as if he was persecuting the Lord Jesus Himself.

The Effect of the Question

Saul asked, “Who are you, Lord?”. When the Lord Jesus answered him, Saul trembled and asked, “Lord, what do you want me to do?”

What happened after

The Lord Jesus told Saul to go into the city and he would then be told what he must do. Saul had to be led into Damascus because the brightness of the light had blinded him. For three days he did not eat or drink. After this, the Lord Jesus sent a Christian named Ananias to see Saul. At first, Ananias found it hard to be asked to visit a man who he knew had come to Damascus to persecute the Christians there. But the Lord Jesus assured Ananias that He had chosen Saul to do a special work for Him.

Ananias did as he had been told to do and visited Saul. When he laid his hands on him, Saul’s sight returned and he was baptized. He stayed for some days with the Christians at Damascus and then he began to preach to the people in the synagogue, that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God.

Read:

Acts 9: 1-22

A Question for you

What made the difference between Saul as we read about him in verse 1, and Saul as we read about him in verses 19-21?

Chapter 71 - A Very important Question

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”
(Acts 16: 30)

Who asked the Question?

The jailer in the City of Philippi.

Who was being spoken to?

Paul and Silas who were being held as prisoners, because someone had told lies about them to the magistrates.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked in the prison, in the middle of the night.

The Reason for the Question

There had been an earthquake, opening the prison doors and freeing the prisoners from their chains. The jailer was afraid the prisoners had escaped and drew his sword to kill himself, because he knew he would be held responsible if this happened. It was when Paul assured him that all the prisoners were there, that he asked his question.

The Effect of the Question

Paul and Silas replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16: 31).

What happened after

Paul and Silas continued speaking to the jailer and his family. They explained all that the Lord Jesus had done so that we can be saved from sin and its punishment. The jailer and his family believed and were baptized. Paul and Silas had been severely beaten before they were imprisoned. The jailer washed their wounds and provided a meal for them.

The next day, the magistrates gave orders that Paul and Silas could be released. Paul was not satisfied with this. Paul and Silas knew that their treatment had been unlawful. Paul told the jailer that as Roman citizens, they should not have been beaten and imprisoned without trial. He said that instead of trying to send them quietly away, the magistrates should come themselves. When they were told what Paul had said, the magistrates realised they had acted wrongly. They did come themselves to ask Paul and Silas to leave.

Read:

Acts 16: 16-40

A Question for you

What can we learn from the way Paul and Silas reacted to harsh and unjust treatment? (see verses 25 and 36-37).

Chapter 72 - A Question of Curiosity

“May we know what this new doctrine
(teaching) is of which you speak?”
(Acts 17: 19)

Who asked the Question?

Some philosophers in the city of Athens.

Who was being spoken to?

The apostle Paul

The Time and place of the Question

The Question was asked at the Areopagus (Mars Hill), while Paul waited at Athens for Silas and Timothy.

The Reason for the Question

In the City of Athens there were many idols. Paul began speaking to the people about Jesus: to the Jews in the synagogue and others in the marketplace. The Athenians wanted to hear what Paul had to say, because they liked listening to anything new.

The Effect of the Question

Paul had a perfect opportunity to speak to all the people who had gathered.

What happened after

Paul spoke to the people about all the idols he had seen in their city. He had even observed an altar with the words “to the unknown god” written on it. Paul said he was going to tell them about the God they did not know. He introduced them to God the Creator of the world. He explained how foolish it was to worship things that they had made from gold, silver or stone.

As the people listened, Paul told them that God said they must repent, because a day was coming when they would be judged. He told them that their Judge would be the One who God had raised from the dead. Some of the listeners mocked when Paul spoke of the resurrection. But there were others who said they would like to hear more. Then there was a third group: people who believed the message Paul brought. Among them was a man named Dionysius and a woman named Damaris.

Read:

Acts 17: 14-34

A Question for you

People hear the same Gospel message but respond in different ways. What were the three different responses to the message Paul brought? (see verses 32-34).

Chapter 73- A Question to an angry crowd

“What man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana...?”
(Acts 19: 35)

Who asked the Question?

The city clerk at Ephesus.

Who was being spoken to?

A crowd who had gathered at the theatre in Ephesus.

The Time and place of the Question

The question was asked at Ephesus during Paul's visit to the city.

The Reason for the Question

Demetrius the silversmith and other craftsmen in Ephesus, earned their money by making and selling silver shrines of the goddess Diana. He told the craftsmen that they would lose their trade, because Paul was telling people that gods (idols) that people made, were not real gods at all. The silversmiths became angry. A crowd gathered and rushed into the theatre. Some of the people had no idea what it was all about, but joined in anyway. They began shouting, “great is Diana of the Ephesians” and kept this up for two hours.

The city clerk arrived on the scene and managed to quieten the crowd. He then asked his question, to make the people see that they did not need to be so upset.

The Effect of the Question

The crowd became quiet enough for the city clerk to continue speaking to them.

What happened after

The city clerk explained that no-one had actually done anything wrong. He said that if the silversmiths really thought that they had been wronged, they should have their complaint dealt with properly at the court. He warned the crowd that behaving the way they did, they could be accused of starting a riot or rebellion. He then sent the people away.

Read:

Acts 19: 23-41

Psalm 115: 3-8

A Question for you

Why did the people at Ephesus have a great need to hear the Gospel? Was the religion they had of any use to them? (see Psalm 115: 3-8)

Chapter 74 - The Commander's Question

“What is it that you have to tell me?”
(Acts 23: 19)

Who asked the Question?

The commander of the Roman soldiers in Jerusalem.

Who was being spoken to?

Paul's nephew (the son of Paul's sister).

The Time and place of the Question

The Question was asked in the barracks at Jerusalem after Paul had been arrested.

The Reason for the Question

Paul's nephew had learned of a plot to kill Paul and he went to the barracks to tell Paul. Paul asked for his nephew to be taken to see the commander. The commander took him to a quiet place and asked his question.

The Effect of the Question

Paul's nephew explained that there were forty men who said that they would not eat or drink until they had killed Paul.

What happened after

The commander, whose name was Claudius Lysias, realised that it was not safe for Paul to remain in Jerusalem. He gave orders for a large number of soldiers to take Paul to Caesarea. Lysias wrote a letter to Felix, the Roman governor at Caesarea, explaining why he was sending Paul to him. Felix read the letter and decided that Paul must be held until those who had accused him came.

After five days, the Jewish religious leaders arrived and with them a man named Tertullus, who made a speech accusing Paul of causing trouble and profaning the temple.

Paul was then allowed to speak in his own defence. He explained that he had not been involved in any dispute or trouble-making. He also declared his belief in the resurrection and that he belonged to “the Way”, as the Christian faith was then known.

Paul remained a prisoner at Caesarea during the time of Felix and the next governor whose name was Festus. He also made his defence before King Agrippa, who came on a visit to Festus. Paul decided to appeal to Caesar Augustus and so arrangements were made for him to travel to Rome. We know from the last chapter of the Book of Acts, that Paul remained in a house in Rome for two years. There in the capital city of the Roman Empire, he had many opportunities to preach the Gospel.

Read:

Acts 23: 11-24

Acts 24: 1-9

A Question for you

Was Tertullus speaking the Truth? (See Acts 21: 26-32) and compare this with what Tertullus said in Acts 24: 5-7.



Chapter 75 - A Question asked in heaven

“Who are these arrayed in white robes,
and where did they come from?”
(Revelation 7: 13)

Who asked the Question?

Someone called an “elder” who was present in John’s vision of heaven.

Who was being spoken to?

The apostle John.

The Time and Place of the Question

The Apostle John had been exiled to the Island of Patmos because of his teaching about the Lord Jesus. (Revelation 1: 9). Patmos is an island in the Aegean Sea, south of Samos. While he was there God gave him a vision of heaven, and of events that were going to take place in heaven and on earth.

The Reason for the Question

John saw a great number of people from all the nations, standing before the throne of God. All were clothed in white robes. The elder gave John opportunity to say whether he understood who they were.

The Effect of the Question

John was not able to answer the question, instead he replied, “you know”.

What happened after

The elder explained to John that these were people who had been through a time of great trouble during their life on earth. In their trouble, they had trusted in the Lord Jesus to forgive them and cleanse them from their sin, through His death on Calvary.

Because all these people were forgiven and cleansed from sin, they are described as being dressed in white robes, a picture of righteousness. John sees them now freed from trouble and suffering, in the presence of God. On earth they had known pain, hunger and thirst. Now they are cared for by the Good Shepherd. Every tear they have ever shed has now been wiped away.

Read:

Revelation 7: 9-17

A Question for you

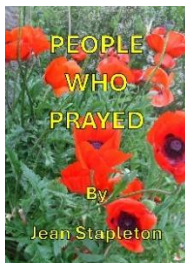
The Book of Revelation contains a lot of picture language. Why do you think the people we read about in chapter 7 are described as wearing “white robes”?

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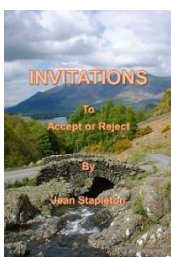
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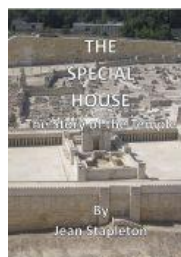
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