

A person stands in a bright, glowing cross-shaped opening in a textured, greyish-brown wall. A beam of light shines down from the opening, illuminating the floor and creating a reflection of the person. The overall atmosphere is one of hope and divine light.

QUESTIONS
JESUS ASKS

WHERE DIVINITY MEETS HUMANITY

Israel Wayne

First printing: March 2015

Copyright © 2014 by Israel Wayne. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations in articles and reviews. For information, write:

New Leaf Press, P.O. Box 726, Green Forest, AR 72638

New Leaf Press is a division of the New Leaf Publishing Group, Inc.

ISBN: 978-0-89221-734-2

Library of Congress Number: 2015932311

Cover by Diana Bogardus

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible.

Please consider requesting that a copy of this volume be purchased by your local library system.

Printed in the United States of America

Please visit our website for other great titles:

www.newleafpress.net

For information regarding author interviews, please contact the publicity department at (870) 438-5288.



New Leaf Press
A Division of New Leaf Publishing Group
www.newleafpress.net

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Introduction — Was Jesus Omniscient? | 5 |
| 1. Who Do People Say That I Am? (Christology) | 13 |
| 2. Didn't You Know? (Virgin Birth)..... | 21 |
| 3. Who Are My Mother and Brothers? (Family) | 29 |
| 4. What Are You Seeking? (Discipleship)..... | 35 |
| 5. What Will It Profit a Man? (Money) | 43 |
| 6. Who Touched Me? (Healing) | 51 |
| 7. Do You Want to Get Well? (Counseling)..... | 59 |
| 8. Why Are You Afraid? (Fear)..... | 67 |
| 9. What Is Your Name? (Demonology)..... | 73 |
| 10. What Were You Arguing About? (Servanthood) | 85 |
| 11. Whose Image Is This? (Government)..... | 95 |
| 12. Has No One Condemned You? (Forgiveness) | 105 |
| 13. Are You Not in Error? (Apologetics) | 113 |
| 14. Why Do You Call Me Lord? (Lordship) | 121 |
| 15. Are You Still Sleeping? (Prayer)..... | 129 |
| 16. Why Have You Forsaken Me? (Suffering) | 139 |
| 17. Do You Love Me? (Love) | 147 |
| 18. Why Do You Persecute Me? (Persecution) | 153 |
| 19. How Are You to Escape from Hell? (Hell) | 161 |
| 20. Do You Believe This? (Resurrection)..... | 173 |
| Appendix I: Hypostatic Union | 182 |
| Appendix II: Communicatio Idiomatum..... | 184 |

Introduction — Was Jesus Omniscient?

My previous book, *Questions God Asks*, explored 19 questions asked by God to various individuals in the Old Testament. One of the intriguing concepts in that book is why an omniscient God, who knows the answer to every perceivable question, would ask questions.

It is obvious that the purpose of the question is not there for God's benefit but rather for the benefit of the person being asked. God wants that person to reconsider his or her assumptions, biases, preconceived ideas, and prejudices.

As I have endeavored to address this new subject of the *Questions Jesus Asks*, I have had to wrestle with a related question: "Was Jesus, in His incarnate state as a man on earth, omniscient?"

Did Jesus know everything that could possibly be known, or was His knowledge limited in some way because of His humanity? Let us explore these considerations.

Was Jesus Fully God?

Philippians 2:6 declares that Jesus was, in very nature, God. Colossians 2:9 says the fullness of God dwelt bodily in Jesus Christ. John 1, in referring to Jesus as "the Word," insists that the Word was with God and the Word *was God!* Hebrews 1:3 calls Jesus, "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature." There are many other passages to which we could refer, but suffice it to say, Jesus was not partially God. He was completely, totally, and fully God, all the while being fully a human male. Theologians call this doctrine of the dilemma of Jesus' manhood and Godhood the

“Hypostatic Union” (see appendix). Jesus walked in fullness of all of the “Communicable Attributes” of God (see appendix).

Was Jesus Born Knowing Everything?

When Jesus was a little toddler, did He know not to touch a hot kettle? Did He know how to speak every language on earth? Did He automatically get the potty training thing from day one? The only personal glimpse we get into the childhood of Jesus, at age 12, shows Him in a learning posture.

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.” And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:46–52).

Jesus’ habit of asking questions began when He was quite young. In the very first place in the Scripture where it references Jesus speaking, He is asking questions. Why was He asking questions of the teachers of the law? Did He not understand certain concepts about the book He inspired? He certainly *did* understand who His Heavenly Father was, and that He had a unique call on His life. When Luke tells us that Jesus “increased” in wisdom, wouldn’t that imply that He was born with a finite amount of wisdom? Omniscience, by definition, cannot be added to. “Increase” demonstrates that there was a growth, from a finite point to a more complete part.

The Book of Hebrews reiterates this concept of Jesus learning (as opposed to being born with infinite knowledge): “Although he was a son, he *learned* obedience through what he suffered” (Heb. 5:8, emphasis added).

Jesus Had Special Knowledge

There is no doubt that Jesus knew things that other people did not know, nor could have known.

In John 1:45–51, Philip found Nathanael and told him that he and his friends had found the long-awaited Messiah. Nathanael isn’t buying it. He’s like, “Dude? From Nazareth? For real?” But when he met Jesus, he quickly changed his mind. Jesus said, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit.” Nathanael asked, “How do you know me?” Jesus then told Nathanael that He saw him under the fig tree. That blew Nathanael’s mind, and he declared, “You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus assured him that he ain’t seen nuthin’ yet, and the best was yet to come.

In Matthew 17:24–27, Peter was asked if Jesus made a habit of paying the temple tax. Peter assured them that Jesus did pay the tax. Peter then entered the house where Jesus was staying, and Jesus raised the topic of paying tax. There was no way that Jesus could have known, in the natural, what they were discussing. This was special knowledge.

Jesus saw [the lame man] lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time (John 5:6).

He knew that the disciples would abandon Him (Mark 14:27), Peter would deny Him (Matt. 26:34), and Judas would betray Him (John 13:27).

In Mark 9:33, the disciples had been arguing about who was the greatest in the Kingdom while they walked along the road, and Jesus seemed to hone in on it by asking them what they were talking about.

We are told that Jesus knew the hearts of people:

But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man (John 2:24–25).

There are a number of times we are told that Jesus knew what people were thinking: Matthew 12:25, Mark 2:8, Luke 5:22, Luke 6:8.

Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, “Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, ‘A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me?’” (John 16:19).

This experience was enough for the disciples to become convinced of the omniscience of Jesus, believing that He knew all things.

“Now we know that *you know all things* and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.” Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?” (John 16:30–31, emphasis added).

Jesus Was in Constant Communion with His Father

Some theologians insist that Jesus limited Himself, in His incarnate state, and did not make full access of the omniscience He had available to Him. Instead, He chose to rely on revelation He received from the Father.

“All things have been handed over to me by my Father” (Luke 10:22).

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise” (John 5:19).

“I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me” (John 5:30).

“I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me” (John 8:28).

“For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment — what to say and what to speak” (John 12:49).

While on the earth, Jesus did only the works that His Father told Him to do, and only spoke the words that His Father told him to speak. He was totally reliant upon His Father for wisdom and direction in His ministry (thus providing a model for us to follow).

Did Jesus Limit Some Aspects of His Divinity?

While it is incomprehensible for us to consider a fully-God person lacking some of the attributes of God-ness, we know there are aspects of His divinity that Jesus laid down when He took on human flesh.

Jesus was not omnipresent in His human state. He wasn't physically in every place at the same time. And while Jesus is eternal, His human form on earth was finite.

“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father” (John 10:17–18).

God cannot die. God is not biological. God is Spirit (John 4:24), and yet Jesus' physical body died. That doesn't mean that Jesus was any less divine, nor any less eternal in this fulfillment of God's will.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did

not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:5–8).

It is important for us to understand that in any way that Jesus was limited by His humanity, it was totally and completely voluntary. He was not weakened in any way that He did not choose to be.

Was Jesus' Knowledge Limited?

In Luke 8:45–46, some argue that Jesus was truly puzzled when He was touched by the woman with the issue of blood:

And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me."

Some believe that Jesus knew who had touched Him, but was wanting to draw the woman out of the crowd into a public confession of her need.

Others point to occasions where the Bible records that Jesus was surprised or astonished by a statement or a set of events (Matt. 8:10, Mark 6:6, Luke 7:9). It could even be said that Jesus was surprised that His parents were surprised that He was in the temple. "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49).

Some cite Jesus' cry on the Cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46), as a genuine expression of bewilderment.

To each of the passages cited above, there are explanations on the other side that would insist that Jesus is *not* asking these questions out of a lack of infinite knowledge but rather for the benefit of His hearers.

However, there is at least one place where Jesus clearly expresses that His knowledge is limited:

“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mark 13:32).

So Why Did Jesus Ask Questions?

While Bible scholars debate the extent of knowledge to which Jesus may or may not have limited Himself during the 33 years of His humanity, we do know that Jesus had such a close, intimate relationship with the Father that He knew anything He needed to know to fulfill His earthly ministry. He knew the inclination of people’s hearts. Many times it is demonstrated that He knew their thoughts.

I personally believe that Jesus’ motivation in asking questions was usually very similar to the reasons we explored in *Questions God Asks*. He isn’t asking the questions for His own personal benefit but rather on behalf of the person being asked. Jesus was full of love and compassion for people. His questions penetrate the heart and probe our deepest motives.

I love the fact that whenever others sought to trap Him with a question, Jesus would almost inevitably avoid answering and respond with a question of His own (which usually left His opponents speechless).

Because these questions of Jesus have been preserved for us in the Scripture, I believe they are there for our benefit as well. What does Jesus want us to consider about our assumptions, our prejudices, and our innermost thoughts and secrets? I invite you to join with me on this journey of discovery as we seek to find our answers through the *Questions Jesus Asks*.



Chapter 1

Who Do People Say That I Am?

(Christology)

When I was a teenager, I started a unique radio show. It was called, “Teen to Teen,” and it featured random “man-on-the-street” interviews I conducted with other teens. I would ask them questions to learn their views on various matters. It was actually a lead-in for evangelism. I would go to malls, skating parties, arcades (okay, teenagers: don’t ask . . . I know, I’m old!), and other places where teens hung out. I found that people will open up to a person with a microphone in his hand and engage in conversations they might not otherwise.

The show never became a broadcast success, but I learned that people have opinions about everything: divorce, drugs, suicide, relationships, religion . . . you name it! I learned a lot about the beliefs and values of my generation from asking questions and listening to their answers.

Who Is Jesus?

If you were to do investigative interviews with average Americans, you would likely receive many different responses to the question, “Who was/is Jesus?”

If you were to ask the famous atheist evangelist Richard Dawkins, you would hear this:

Jesus was a great moral teacher. Somebody as intelligent as Jesus would have been an atheist if He had known what we know today.¹

The late atheist author Christopher Hitchens denied Jesus’ existence:

Jesus of Nazareth is not a figure in history . . . there is no firm evidence that He existed.²

Famous atheist Bertrand Russell wrote:

I now want to say a few words upon a topic which I often think is not quite sufficiently dealt with by Rationalists, and that is the question whether Christ was the best and the wisest of men. It is generally taken for granted that we should all agree that that was so. I do not myself. I think that there are a good many points upon which I agree with Christ a great deal more than the professing Christians do. I do not know that I could go with Him all the way, but I could go with Him much further than most professing Christians can.³

Deepak Chopra, a new age guru, says, “I see Christ as a state of consciousness that we can all aspire to.”⁴

-
1. <http://www.theguardian.com/science/video/2011/oct/24/richard-dawkins-video-interview>.
 2. For a TV video of Hitchens at Politics and Prose Bookstore, Washington, DC, May 10, 2007, see http://fora.tv/2007/05/10/Christopher_Hitchens_at_Politics_and_Prose/.
 3. From his 1927 essay, “Why I Am Not a Christian,” <http://users.drew.edu/--jlenz/whynot.html>.
 4. <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0412/24/lkl.01.html>.

Former Bible college graduate and current agnostic professor Bart Ehrman has this opinion:

The Christians did not invent Jesus. They invented the idea that the Messiah had to be crucified . . . Whether we like it or not, Jesus certainly existed.⁵

Atheist author Sam Harris has this cynical view of Jesus:

Jesus Christ, a carpenter by trade, was born of a virgin, ritually murdered as a scapegoat for the collective sins of his species, and then resurrected from death after an interval of three days. He promptly ascended, bodily, to “heaven” — where, for two millennia, he has eavesdropped upon (and, on occasion, even answered) the simultaneous prayers of billions of beleaguered human beings. Not content to maintain this numinous arrangement indefinitely, this invisible carpenter will one day return to earth to judge humanity for its sexual indiscretions and skeptical doubts, at which time he will grant immortality to anyone who has had the good fortune to be convinced, on Mother’s knee, that this baffling litany of miracles is the most important series of truth claims ever revealed about the cosmos. Every other member of our species, past and present, from Cleopatra to Einstein, no matter what his or her terrestrial accomplishments, will (probably) be consigned to a fiery hell for all eternity.⁶

One world-renown religious leader declares Jesus to be merely another human being:

I think of Jesus as a human being, a historical person later understood as the Son of God. I relate to Him as a

5. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bart-d-ehрман/did-jesus-exist_b_1349544.html.

6. http://www.project-reason.org/archive/item/what_should_science_dosam_harris_v_philip_ball/.

natural Jesus, an extraordinary human being, one of the few who have become universal teachers.⁷

What do the majority of contemporary Americans believe about who Jesus is?

A 2013 Harris poll stated that most Americans believe Jesus is God or the Son of God (68 percent, down from 72 percent in 2005), He was born of a virgin (57 percent, down from 60 percent), and He rose again from the dead (65 percent, down from 70 percent).⁸

Who Do People Say That I Am?

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets” (Matt. 16:13–14, see also Mark 8:27–28).

Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And He asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” And they answered, “John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen” (Luke 9:18–19).

Why is Jesus concerned about what people think of Him? Is this a brief moment of insecurity? Is Jesus taking a poll to assess His popularity, or to discern the effectiveness of His recent public relations campaign?

Didn't Jesus already know what people thought about Him? Was this question for His benefit? Or was it for the benefit of the

7. Fr. Laurence Freeman (a monk of the Olivetan Benedictine Congregation of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, and Director of The World Community for Christian Meditation), <http://dalailama.com/news/post/900-dialogue-between-his-holiness-the-dalai-lama-and-fr-laurence-freeman-about-the-teacher-and-disciple-in-sarnath-varanasi>.

8. “Americans’ Belief in God, Miracles and Heaven Declines,” The Harris Poll® #97, December 16, 2013, by Larry Shannon-Missal, Harris Poll Research Manager, www.harrisinteractive.com

disciples? If for the disciples, what did Jesus want them to consider or understand?

It is evident from the passage that the disciples had heard the identity of Jesus discussed by people in the area. They knew the current opinions about Jesus. Apparently, the view of the masses was generally favorable. They put Him in the category of godly prophets and leaders they respected. That was a good thing, right?

Why Should We Care What People Think about Jesus?

As Christians, our mandate is to share the love and truth of who Jesus actually is with the world around us. An important part of evangelism and defending the faith (Christian apologetics) is knowing what people in our culture currently believe about who Jesus is.

Was He just a “good moral teacher”? Was He merely a Jewish carpenter who lived in the first century? Is He just another spiritual option in a pantheon of gods and deities? Knowing the preconceived ideas and notions of those around us will help us to converse with them more intelligently and effectively.

I’m sure that this was much of Jesus’ motivation in asking His disciples what their neighbors believed about Him. They could not be effective witnesses for Him (as they would later be called to do) unless they understood what people already believed to be true about Him.

Who Do *You* Say That I Am?

Jesus didn’t end His inquiry with the opinions of the masses. He then turned it closer to home and honed in on the personal beliefs of His own followers.

“But who do *you* say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15, emphasis added).

Jesus gave His disciples an opportunity to verbalize what they believed.

What Do Christians in America Believe about Jesus?

From my point of view, the future of Christianity in the West hinges on whether or not the youth embrace the Christian faith.

According to Christian researcher George Barna, the majority of church-ed youth have very unorthodox views about Jesus.

Although 87 percent of teens believe Jesus was a real person who lived on earth, and 78 percent believe He was born to a virgin, nearly half (46 percent) believe He committed sins, and more than half (51 percent) say Jesus died but never rose from the dead.⁹ The vast majority (65 percent) either believe or suspect there is “no way to tell which religion is true.”¹⁰

One survey of church-ed youth who self-identify as Christians revealed that only 24 percent would strongly and consistently affirm belief that Jesus is God.¹¹

These professing Christian youth, who regularly attend various denominational churches, were asked to affirm the following four statements:

1. The Bible is completely trustworthy in what it says about Jesus.
2. Jesus Is God.
3. Jesus physically lived, died, and came back to life.
4. Jesus is the only way to heaven.

Sadly, only 9 percent of church-ed youth would consistently express confidence in these doctrines.¹²

This lack of confidence in the truth of the Bible and the historical reliability of the deity of Christ has resulted in a tsunami of young people abandoning the church. Ken Ham, in his church-shaking book *Already Gone*, reveals that two-thirds of all Christian youth

9. George Barna, *Third Millennium Teens: Research on the Minds, Hearts and Souls of America's Teenagers* (Ventura, CA: Barna Research Group, Ltd., 1999), p. 48.

10. Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, *Right From Wrong* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1994), p. 263.

11. Mike Nappa, *The Jesus Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), p. 34.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 86, 88.

who are currently attending church, are “already gone” in their hearts.¹³ They plan to leave the church as soon as they can, with no plans to return.

You Are the Messiah!

When Jesus asked His disciples who they thought Jesus was, the Apostle Peter, who was never at a loss for words, was the first to pipe up:

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16).

Jesus was pleased with the answer.

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven” (Matt. 16:17; NIV).

Jesus affirms Peter’s declaration, but then, as if to demonstrate that He was in no way trying to win a popularity contest, “He strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ” (Matt. 16:20).

As a side note, the account of this event recorded in Mark’s gospel does not record the positive words that Jesus spoke to Peter, but only the rebuke a few verses later. Peter was very close friends with John Mark, even calling him “my son” (1 Pet. 5:13) and most likely related these accounts to him personally. The fact that Peter included the rebuke, but not the commendation, probably reflects the humility of Peter after his transformation at Pentecost.

Who Do You Say Jesus Is?

This question is not merely for the 12 disciples of Jesus. It resonates in our hearts today. Who do you believe Jesus is/was? I believe this is the most important question we can ever answer.

I love C.S. Lewis’s (1898–1963) response to this question:

13. Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, with Todd Hillard, *Already Gone* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009), p. 22.

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. . . . Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.¹⁴

It is my sincere hope that you will not respond to this question lightly. If Jesus' claims are true, then eternity is in the balance.

14. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Collins, 1952), p. 54–56 (in all editions, this is Bk. II, Ch. 3, “The Shocking Alternative”).