

“GOTCHA” QUESTIONS

Scripture Reading: Read Luke chapter 20

“Gotcha” questions. Politicians hate them. They can be questions that have a hidden or misleading premise and are intended to trip up the person answering the question. They can be knowledge questions in which the questioner attempts to make the answerer look stupid. At times, they might even appear on the surface to be harmless or legitimate but they’re not. There is an underlying harmful agenda at work, and, at times, even cruelty. The goal is to confuse or trip up the answerer.

In our chapter reading today, we find Jesus questioned by the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Now, this shouldn’t surprise us. Luke already commented (in 11:53-54) on the fact that the religious leaders haven’t been too happy with Jesus since he pronounced woes on them for their ungodly behavior: *“When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say.”* Notice, Luke implies they planned on using “gotcha” questions to trip Jesus up.

Chapter 20 gives us an opportunity to see a couple of these questions. The question about paying taxes to Caesar is an obvious example. The religious leaders approach Jesus with flattering speech about how honest he is. They look like they’re admirers of Jesus but, in actuality, they’re trying to set him up. As was discussed previously in the devotional on the parallel passage in Matthew 22, the religious leaders thought they had him. If Jesus said “yes,” the people would reject him. If he said “no,” the religious leaders would turn him over to the authorities. It was a lose-lose situation for Jesus, or so they thought. Jesus, however, answered brilliantly and his questioners were astonished into silence.

The next “gotcha” question came from the Sadducees. This one was a doctrinal “gotcha” and, on the surface, it looks like a legitimate question based upon a reading in the Law of Moses. The questioners’ underlying motive, though, is to trip Jesus up on the question of the resurrection of the dead, a doctrine to which they did not hold. Again, Jesus answered brilliantly. He pointed out their error not only on the issue of marriage in the afterlife but also on the whole issue of life after death. So powerful was Jesus’ answer that one of the teachers of the law had to praise him. *(FYI: the teachers of the law and the Sadducees were at odds with each other doctrinally so this teacher, even if he may not have liked Jesus’ teaching earlier, was probably pleased that Jesus beat the Sadducees in a debate!)*

“Gotcha” questions. Jesus faced them and overcame them with God’s wisdom. So did Stephen (see Acts 6:9-10). Jesus promised that when we’re challenged by unbelievers on our stand for the gospel, we’re not to worry about what to say, for the Spirit will give us the words in that hour.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: *The next time you’re confronted with a “gotcha” question about the gospel, pray for the Holy Spirit to do the talking through you.*

Take-away: *“Gotcha” questions don’t have to trip you up when you know who’s gotcha!*