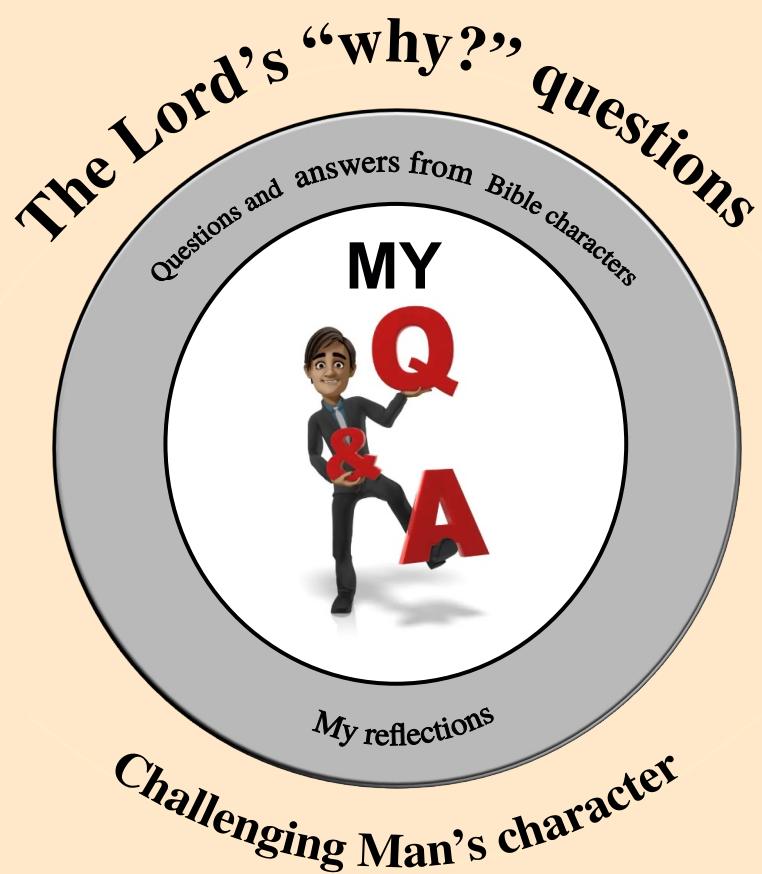


11



Note: Headings in this menu are hyperlinks.  
Click on them and they will take you to the relevant page

\*\*\*\*\*

[Introduction](#)

[Ignorance](#)

[Heart disease](#)

[Hypocrisy](#)

[Mockery](#)

[Deafness](#)

[Bullying](#)

[Anger](#)

[Sleeping](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

2/14



Following the previous paper on God's "why" questions, this MyQ&A 11 paper investigates some of Man's "why" questions addressed to God. Why would God, or man, ask "why" questions? In the first MyQ&A paper, The art of asking questions, I said that the purpose was to get the right answers. Accordingly, I suggested, questions may be investigative, interpretive, or evaluative. Specifically, investigative or exploratory questions determine what are the facts. Then interpretive questions seek to understand the facts, explain what the facts mean that can be supported with evidence from the facts. Evaluative questions seek to determine the importance of the facts.

On the basis of the above paradigm, then "why" questions are in the interpretive category seeking to understand the facts, explain what the facts mean that can be supported with evidence from the facts. I've selected a few of the Lord's "why" questions directed to the attitudes, emotions, and behaviour of human beings.

### 1. Ignorance

*48 When they saw Him, they were overwhelmed, and His mother said to Him, "Child, why did You do this to us? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously searching for You." 49 And He said to them, "Why is it that you were searching for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in the things of My Father?" But they did not comprehend what he was talking about (Luke 2:48-50).*

The backdrop to this event occurred in the life of the 12 year-old Jesus as His parents were returning from the Feast of the Passover celebrated in Jerusalem every year. While Joseph and Mary had begun the return trip, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents did not know, until they detected that He was missing after the first day of travel. Indeed, they would have been frantic, in grinding pain and distress not knowing His whereabouts. So, they returned to Jerusalem and found Him after three days. Then we have the text above.

Jesus was in the Temple enjoying Himself among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. They were all quite taken with him, impressed with the sharpness of his answers. But his parents were not impressed; they were upset and hurt.

So, Jesus was blamed for his parents' neglect of a minor! It's always someone else's fault, isn't it? It has been that way since Adam and Eve. So, the Lord's *Why is it that you were searching for Me* is appropriate? If Joseph and Mary had been responsible parents they would have ensured that a 12 year old was in the travelling party.

"Did you not know?" He asked, "but they did not comprehend what he was talking about". Rather interesting, they had 'brought Him up' for 12 years, lived under the same roof, saw how He behaved, thought, and spoke, but they didn't recognise and understand the significance of His life and ministry? How can you be so near, and yet so far in your appreciation of this heavenly visitor? It's rather bewildering ignorance, I think.

### Fear

*And He said to them, "Why are you so fearful, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm (Matthew 8:26).*

### Arguing

*But Jesus, aware of this, said, "you men of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves that you have no bread? (Matthew 16:8).*

These texts are not about the quantity but the quality of faith; not about its volume, but its value. For, 'little' (*oligopistos*) means not so tuned in, under-informed, or having little reason to be confident or ultimately successful. Tradition commonly relates this word as one with religious nuance that it really doesn't have. English doesn't appear to have proper synonyms for this word, apart from "pea brain" or "mental midget", or "blundering amateur" ([Abarim Publications](#)).

**Note: Headings in this menu are hyperlinks.  
Click on them and they will take you to the relevant page**

\*\*\*\*\*

[Introduction](#)[Ignorance](#)[Heart disease](#)[Hypocrisy](#)[Mockery](#)[Deafness](#)[Bullying](#)[Anger](#)[Sleeping](#)[Conclusion](#)[References](#)

3/14



In Matthew 8:26 little faith is the cause of the disciples' fear. This implies that a person of informed faith is someone who is able to calmly review and master any situation because they have knowledge, wisdom, and faith. But the disciples didn't answer the Lord's question, however, they were amazed at Him and discussed among themselves what sort of person He is.

But why was the disciples' faith under-informed? After all, before this event in a storm, in a boat on the Sea of Galilee, they had witnessed outstanding miracles done by Jesus. For example, they had seen His first miracle, the water turned to wine in Cana (John 2), and the healing of Simon's mother-in-law, and when the whole city of Capernaum was gathered He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons (Mark 1). You would have thought that such demonstrations of heavenly power would have informed and strengthened their faith. Did they not see and believed, or did they need a bigger miracle like calming the storm to enlarge their faith? The following text suggests not: *And He could do no deed of power there (Nazareth)...He was amazed at their unbelief* (Mark 6:5-6). That is, no faith, no miracle.

In Matthew 16:8 little faith is connected to the disciples' reasoning (*dialogizomai*), meaning to think or talk thoroughly through, to discuss among themselves. The Lord had said to the disciples, "Watch out," beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Now, the disciples thought that in taking the boat ride to the other side of the Sea of Galilee they had forgotten to take bread. And arguing among themselves they concluded that the Lord's comment *beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees* referred to their forgetfulness about taking bread.

Why would they conclude that? It doesn't seem to have any connection to what the Lord said? Hence His chastisement of them as midgets in faith, and His rebuke: *Don't you remember the five loaves for the 5,000, and how many baskets you took up? Or the seven loaves for the 4,000 and how many baskets you took up? How could you not understand that I was not speaking to you about bread? But beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!*" Then they understood that he had not told them to be on guard against the yeast in bread, but against the *teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees* (Matthew 16:5-12).

No, the Lord was not speaking about bread but the teaching of the Pharisees, which He doesn't define. More of that shortly.

### Worry

*...do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? Why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field...if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today* (Matthew 6:25-33).

This question from Matthew's text was directed to the Lord's disciples, and it's found in the Beatitudes and may have been towards the start of the Lord's ministry. Again, the Lord focuses on their midget faith, and in this text, as the cause of their worry.

Note: Headings in this menu are hyperlinks.  
Click on them and they will take you to the relevant page

\*\*\*\*\*

[Introduction](#)

[Ignorance](#)

[Heart disease](#)

[Hypocrisy](#)

[Mockery](#)

[Deafness](#)

[Bullying](#)

[Anger](#)

[Sleeping](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

4/14

## Worry continued

'Worry' (*merimnao*) means to care or be filled or encumbered with many cares and concerns. The Lord concentrated on clothing, but also mentioned worry about life, food, and drink, and that "little faith" was the cause of their worry. Further, worry was not to occupy them about tomorrow either because today's trouble is enough. 'Trouble' (*kakia*), means badness and describes any ugliness, uselessness, counter-productiveness, waste or even faint-heartedness, or cowardice ([Abarim Publications](#)). The Lord seems to use 'trouble' as a synonym for 'worry'.

The Lord reminds them that it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things such as how long they will live, food, drink, and clothing. But, His disciples are to strive in the first place, or chiefly for the kingdom of God.

The Lord proclaimed the "**kingdom of God**" (Luke 4:43-44). According to [Gates](#), the kingdom of God means that God is its central figure. Agreeing, [Constantineanu](#) asserts that the accent falls not on "kingdom" but on "God", that God is the king, and every aspect of His kingdom is derived from His nature, character and action. [du Toit](#) also supports this view, arguing that the qualifying genitive "of God" is not simply a possessive genitive or a genitive of origin; it is subjective, indicating that God is actively at work. It therefore qualifies the kingdom as God-determined, as the product of God's personal being and activity. So, as [Santram](#) points out, because it is the kingdom of God there is no capability in humans to bring it about, or to bring it in, or to extend it. It always is and remains God's kingdom. As the Lord Himself said, *Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom* (Luke 12:32). It is always there as a gift from God. Human beings can only seek, pray for, see, proclaim, receive, accept, enter into, rejoice about and celebrate the kingdom of God.

Also, the label the kingdom of God is similar to the kingdom of Saul (1Chronicles 12:23), which points to Saul as king, as does the kingdom of Ahasuerus (Esther 3:6). Further, the NT equates the Kingdom of God with the Kingdom of Christ in Paul's *the kingdom of Christ and God* (Ephesians 5:5), and John's, the *kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah* (Revelation 11:15). These texts confirm Gabriel's words of Him as the Son of the Most High, which is the equivalent of the Hebrew El Elyon, meaning "God Most High" (Genesis 14:18–20). That is, Jesus has the same essence as the Most High God, and 'most high' indicates that no being is higher than He. So, the person of the king is both divine and human.

## 2. Heart disease

### Evil thoughts

*2 And behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, child; your sins are forgiven." 3 And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man blasphemes." 4 And Jesus seeing their thoughts said, "**Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?** 5 For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?' 6 But so that you may know that the **Son of Man** has authority on earth to forgive sins"—then He said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your bed and go home." 7 And he got up and went home. 8 But when the crowds saw this, they were afraid, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men (Matthew 9:2-8)."*

This event took place in Capernaum probably close to the start of the Lord's ministry (Mark 2:1-12). The Lord referred to the paralytic, not as 'son' but as 'child' (*teknon*), more generally meaning offspring or posterity ([Abarim Publications](#)). He along with his bearers had enough faith to realise Jesus could heal him.

Blaspheming for the Scribes was Christ's usurping of God's majesty to forgive sins (Net Bible Notes). But they were thinking this through silently within themselves, in their hearts, evil thoughts that were debasing Jesus, with a strong unspoken desire to hinder and impede Him. However, Jesus was aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves - He recognised and understood what they were up to, hence His question, *Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?*



## Evil thoughts continued

Note: Headings in this menu are hyperlinks.  
Click on them and they will take you to the relevant page

\*\*\*\*\*

[Introduction](#)

[Ignorance](#)

[Heart disease](#)

[Hypocrisy](#)

[Mockery](#)

[Deafness](#)

[Bullying](#)

[Anger](#)

[Sleeping](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

5/14



Whatever his ancestry, the paralytic may have still been young but mature enough to know that his sins were responsible for his paralysis. Indeed, this is the connection Jesus Himself made in asking the question, *For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?* One is just as easy as the other to say, hence *But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins*—then He said to the paralytic, “Get up, pick up your bed and go home”.

When the Lord identified Himself as the Son of Man, most likely He had Daniel 7:13-14 in mind. *Daniel saw one like a son of Man was coming with the clouds of the heavens. He went up to the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him. To him was given ruling authority, honour, and sovereignty. All peoples, nations, and language groups were serving him. His authority is eternal. His kingdom will not be destroyed* (Daniel 7:13-14).

This text speaks to the ascension of Christ and His receiving the kingdom from the hand of God, and ‘son of man’ (*bar enasha*) refers to a man-like but divine figure in the heavens. However, in 8:17 (in the Hebrew section), ‘son of man’ (*ben adam*) refers to Daniel. So, a distinction is made between an ordinary man and the man-like, divine one.

Moreover, Jesus identified himself as ‘the son of man’ far more than by any other descriptor. However, the Gospels were written in Greek, which identifies a human being with *anthrōpos*. Therefore, if Jesus used ‘son of man’ to mean human, why didn’t the Gospel authors translate His words directly by *anthrōpos*, but they did not. Why?

As [Whitefield](#) says, they wrote Jesus’ Aramaic literally in the Greek as ‘the son of man’, which is not a Greek phrase, indicating that they wanted their readers to make sure they knew exactly what Jesus said in the Aramaic, rather than translating what Jesus said into regular Greek. By so doing, their readers would recognise Jesus used ‘the son of man’ as a title, and the Jewish leaders understood the distinction for they equated ‘Son of man’ with ‘Son of God’ (Luke 22:69-70).

As [Pett](#) puts it, Daniel 7:13 was descriptive of the ‘son of man’s connection with the God of the clouds, and therefore as a heavenly being, for God surrounded Himself with the clouds (Exodus 13, 19, 24, 34, 40, 2 Samuel 22, 1 Kings 8, Psalms 68, 97, 104), and makes the clouds His chariot.

Both the Lord and Daniel used the expression ‘coming on the clouds’. ‘Coming’ is *erchomai*, which can be translated either ‘coming’ or ‘going’ depending on the viewer’s perspective. The high priest would interpret that the Son of Man was going on the clouds (Mark 14:62), a claim by Jesus that He would shortly be enthroned at the right hand of God, the place of supreme authority, and that those on earth would then see the consequences of His enthronement. On the other hand, Daniel’s viewpoint is from heaven and from that perspective he sees the Son of Man ‘coming on the clouds’.

[Ellis](#) agrees observing that in Daniel’s vision, the ‘son of man is seen to be coming to heaven because the prophet is in heaven watching His glorious and triumphant arrival. He received, on His ascension, an abiding kingdom, ruling authority, honour, and sovereignty over all nations. But, when did the Jewish leaders see Jesus coming on the clouds of heaven? They saw when his prophecies of famines, earthquakes, great distress, Jerusalem surrounded by armies, the temple stones coming down, came true in their lifetime. As Ellis pointed out, Jesus made 40 specific prophecies about the fall of Jerusalem, and all of them were fulfilled within 40 years. Each prophecy-come-true was a sign pointing to the One who had come on the clouds and now sat enthroned in heaven, having been coronated as King.

But so that you (the Scribes) may know, Jesus said, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, He said to the paralytic, “Get up, pick up your bed and go home.”<sup>7</sup> And he got up and went home. But when the crowds saw this, they were afraid, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Note: Headings in this menu are hyperlinks.  
Click on them and they will take you to the relevant page

\*\*\*\*\*

[Introduction](#)

[Ignorance](#)

[Heart disease](#)

[Hypocrisy](#)

[Mockery](#)

[Deafness](#)

[Bullying](#)

[Anger](#)

[Sleeping](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

6/14

## Fear

This second question about fear occurs at the the end of the Lord's ministry.

*Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." But they were startled and terrified, thinking they saw a spirit. Then he said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; it's me! Touch me and see; a spirit does not have flesh and bones like you see I have." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still could not believe it (because of their joy) and were amazed, he said to them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" So they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in front of them (Luke 24:36-43).*

'Frightened' (*tarasso*) is the opposite of being calm and at peace, and means to be stirred or troubled, both in a physical sense, and a mental sense. The disciples were terrified when they saw Jesus imagining Him to be a spirit, and doubts over His identity began arising in their hearts. "Why He asked? But He received no answer. However, He invited them to feel His materiality, and asked for food to eat. Nevertheless, despite these evidences, they could not believe, which means either to actively disbelieve or passively be untrustworthy. This first question about fear associated it with the disciples as 'faith midgets'. Here, at the end of Christ's public ministry, they are still 'faith midgets'.

## 3. Hypocrisy

### Two-tiered justice

*1 "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. 2 For by the standard you judge you will be judged, and the measure you use will be the measure you receive. 3 Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye, but fail to see the beam of wood in your own? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye,' while there is a beam in your own? 5 You hypocrite! First remove the beam from your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. 6 Do not give what is holy to dogs or throw your pearls before pigs; otherwise they will trample them under their feet and turn around and tear you to pieces (Matthew 7:1-6).*

In Luke 12:1, Jesus defined the leaven of the Pharisees, as hypocrisy (*hypokrisis*), meaning pretense. It's the same as our English word "hypocrisy": "The practice of falsely presenting an appearance of virtue or falsely professing a belief to which one's own character or conduct does not conform; dissimulation, pretense" (Oxford Dictionary).

In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord warned His disciples about the hypocritical, perception bias of the Pharisees. They had a two-tiered system of justice - a much higher standard for others, and a much lower standard for themselves.

Unclear perception means a distorted way of seeing things. Perception bias works like a selective filter, screening, selecting, organising, and interpreting stimuli, such as words or objects, in order to give them meaning. Our brain chooses to home in on one or very few stimuli out of the multitude of stimuli surrounding us. Consequently, we unfairly label people or make inferences about their abilities on the basis of superficial observations or stereotypes. In brief, our perception is not a photographic representation of reality but a unique representation, informed by our beliefs and expectations, and our hopes, desires, and emotions ([Nikolopoulou](#)).

Such people are often biased in their self-perceptions, failing to assess themselves accurately as were the Pharisees. Also, the Pharisees had social perception bias forming negative impressions of others. These Jewish leaders understood themselves to be much better than others, which accounted for the way in which they judged themselves versus others.



### Hypocrisy is heart disease

*1 Then Pharisees and experts in the law came from Jerusalem to Jesus and said, 2 “Why do your disciples disobey the tradition of the elders? For they don’t wash their hands when they eat.” 3 He answered them, “And why do you disobey the commandment of God because of your tradition? 4 For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Whoever insults his father or mother must be put to death.’ 5 But you say, ‘If someone tells his father or mother, ‘Whatever help you would have received from me is given to God,’ 6 he does not need to honor his father.’ You have nullified the word of God on account of your tradition. 7 Hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied correctly about you when he said, 8 ‘This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, 9 and they worship me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men’” (Matthew 15:1-9).*

### Whole hearted but still diseased

[Introduction](#)

[Ignorance](#)

[Heart disease](#)

[Hypocrisy](#)

[Mockery](#)

[Deafness](#)

[Bullying](#)

[Anger](#)

[Sleeping](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

7/14



### Help the poor

The rich man didn't recognise his own deficiency before the law. However, the Lord highlighted his 'all-for-me' attitude as a law breaker, when he had the resources to help the poor but did not. As Proverbs puts it: *Oppressing the poor in order to enrich oneself, and giving to the rich, will lead only to loss* (Proverbs 22:16). *If one shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered* (Proverbs 21:13). *Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full* (Proverbs 19:17). And, what about Deuteronomy 15:7-8: *If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need.*

These are commands this rich man didn't want to know about but his keeping of some but not all commands, as James later put it brilliantly, summed him up nicely: *For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws* (James 2:10).

### What is eternal life?

Notice the words that I have underlined in Matthew's text on the previous page. The rich man asked about eternal life, but the Lord in reply mentioned treasure in heaven, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, to which the disciples added being saved. These are synonyms for 'eternal life'.

### Treasure in heaven

Treasure is our word *thesauros*, which stores words and is a source of wisdom and knowledge. In the New Testament this word denotes the proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord, which Paul described as having this treasure (*thesauros*) in clay jars (2 Corinthians 4:7). Spectacularly, Paul explains that in Christ are hidden all the treasures (*thesauros*) of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). Numerically, (*thesauros*) mostly refers to the kingdom of God or heaven (Matthew 13:44, 19:22, 24, Mark 10:24-25). Moreover, this heavenly treasure is without expiration, for it cannot be stolen, nor can it be destroyed (Luke 12:33).

## ***The kingdom of heaven***

**Note: Headings in this menu are hyperlinks.  
Click on them and they will take you to the relevant page**

\*\*\*\*\*

[Introduction](#)

[Ignorance](#)

[Heart disease](#)

[Hypocrisy](#)

[Mockery](#)

[Deafness](#)

[Bullying](#)

[Anger](#)

[Sleeping](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

8/14



Many scholars argue that the Jewish setting of Matthew explains his preference for the term "kingdom of heaven" rather than "kingdom of God". For [du Toit](#), the genitive is a typically Jewish, reverential way around mentioning the divine name. Others contest Matthew's view that he tries to shroud the name and personality of God, for in that case he would have entirely avoided speaking of the kingdom of God, which he did not (see 12:28; 21:31, 43).

Thus, an alternative interpretation of the genitive "of heaven" needs to be found. [Pennington](#) says that many times Matthew uses "kingdom of heaven" as part of a contrast between the two polar realms, heaven and earth (e.g. 17:24-18:5; 4:1-11), to point out the great disjunction between heaven's way of doing things and earth's. [du Toit](#) also acknowledges that Matthew may have wanted to stress the absolutely incomparable, transcendent, cosmic-universal character of the reign of God in contrast to other, "earthly" ones. Similarly, [Henry](#) adds that the earth is subject to man's dominion, but not so the heavenly realities, and the kingdom of God comes to us from there, and hence it is appropriately depicted as the kingdom of Heaven. God's kingdom is first in heaven, then on earth (Matthew 6:10).

Thus, "**kingdom of heaven**" orients the Jewish reader back to Daniel 2-7, where the Kingdom from the God of Heaven was promised to supplant the kingdoms of the earth, which Matthew describes in both human and satanic terms. This theme of heavenly and earthly kingship runs throughout, climaxing in the Great Commission of Jesus' authority in heaven and earth ([Miller](#)).

[Walker](#) supports this view that Matthew uses "Kingdom of Heaven" because it fits with his theology of the Christ coming in His kingdom. [Bauer](#) concurs, showing that Matthew develops Jesus' kingship in 1:18-2:23 by contrasting it with that of Herod as legitimate, effective, humble, righteous, and committed to the salvation of the people from their sins through sacrifice. Herod's kingship, on the other hand, represents God-opposing systems and persons whose goal is maintaining their own power, even to the point of destroying others. God is manifesting his rule through Jesus for Jew and Gentile, and it renders every opposing claim to power ridiculous.

Additionally, [Carter](#) suggests that Matthew employs the imperial paradigm, and re-applies it to God's work. God's imperial kingdom of Heaven, is not like that of the great men of the Gentiles, because it works among marginal people and communities, mercifully effecting life-giving social and economic structures. Gentile empires and their rulers wreak havoc and destruction on people from which only God can save by establishing His empire and rule over all at the return of Jesus in power and triumph. Applying the entire paradigm to God, it renders the things of Caesar to God.

### ***Saved***

'Saved' is the final synonym of 'eternal life' appearing in this story (Matthew 19:25, Mark 10:26, Luke 18:26). 'Save' is part of a cluster of words that revolves around wholeness and soundness. As such, the word reminds of the familiar Hebrew word *shalom*, peace, from the verb *shalem*, to be or make whole or complete ([Abarim Publications](#)).

Saving someone means to break the chains that hold them and setting them free. Freedom is a person's most precious quality and *it's for freedom that Christ has set us free* (Galatians 5:1). So in the mind of the disciples, this rich man needed freedom from the shackles that bound him to the riches of this world, only then would he be saved, or made whole, and have eternal life.

**Note: Headings in this menu are hyperlinks.**  
**Click on them and they will take you to the relevant page**

\*\*\*\*\*

[Introduction](#)

[Ignorance](#)

[Heart disease](#)

[Hypocrisy](#)

[Mockery](#)

[Deafness](#)

[Bullying](#)

[Anger](#)

[Sleeping](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

9/14

## Clouded judgment

*54 And He said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming,’ and so it happens. 55 And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, ‘It will be a hot day,’ and it happens. 56 You hypocrites! You know how to examine the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not examine this present time?*

*57 “Why do you not even judge for yourselves what is right? 58 For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. 59..you will not get out of there until you have paid the last lepton” (Luke 12:54-59).*

The Lord is speaking directly to the crowds which included His disciples, who knew how to examine the clouds and wind and make accurate predictions about the weather. He called them hypocrites, pretenders, falsely presenting an appearance of virtue because they didn't show the same diligence in examining the time in which they lived. 'Time' (*kairos*), for which there's no proper equivalent in English, came to denote mostly the right, proper or opportune time. The ancients had no clocks and watches, and regarded time not as an absolute stage upon which events unfolded but rather as a series of cycles (called *chronos*) brought about by the interactions of all things. Particularly when mankind made the transition to agriculture, understanding the year and its precise times, periods and seasons became crucially important. In the New Testament, (*kairos*) refers to a specific period in which an associated event can, will or must take place; a period not in the sense of any old stretch of time but a period specifically for an associated goings on. That is, (*kairos*) speaks of an opportune time for some particular event, which may not be mentioned but is thus referred to ([Abarim Publications](#)).

But, hadn't the Lord been sent into the world to save it, not condemn it (John 3:17)? Luke's text presents the opposite, a message of judgment not salvation, but such a message was for the hypocrites in the crowds. They hadn't examined the opportune time of salvation that they were living in, and had clearly rejected Jesus, and were led by the nose by the Jesus-hating Pharisees and other Jewish leaders. Hence His question: *Why do you not even judge for yourselves what is right?* In using a legal analogy, the Lord paralleled their actions with a man who issues a lawsuit against his opponent. There is an opportunity to settle the dispute out of court, but the man refuses, only to find himself before a judge who throws him into prison. The offender can't get out until he pays the minutest part of the debt, the last lepton, which was the smallest Greek copper coin, about 1/128 of a labourer's daily wage. Make the right judgment the Lord warns, because there will be some in your household who will do so, accepting the Lord and His message, and others of the same family who will not. Be warned.

## Back scratchers

*15 Then the Pharisees went and took counsel together about how they might trap Him in what He said. 16 And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. 17 Therefore, tell us, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a tax to Caesar, or not?”*

*18 But Jesus, knowing their wickedness, said, “Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? 19 Show Me the coin used for the tax.” And they brought Him a denarius. 20 And He said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” 21 They said to Him, “Caesar’s.” Then He said to them, “Therefore, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.” 22 And hearing this, they marvelled, and leaving Him, they went away (Matthew 22:15-22).*

'Wickedness' (*poneria*), means impeding or hindering Christ's freedom. 'Testing' (*peirazo*), meaning to pierce, probe, try, and thus to tempt. Once again, the Lord called out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, their wicked pretense. They back scratched Him with *Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any*, but behind this was entrapment, which the Lord could see. Of course, if the Lord said that a Roman tax was illegal, they would bring Him before the authorities for trial and punishment. However, their attempt failed, and once again they did not answer the Lord's 'why' question.



Note: Headings in this menu are hyperlinks.  
Click on them and they will take you to the relevant page

\*\*\*\*\*

[Introduction](#)

[Ignorance](#)

[Heart disease](#)

[Hypocrisy](#)

[Mockery](#)

[Deafness](#)

[Bullying](#)

[Anger](#)

[Sleeping](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

10/14

## 4. Mockery

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" 36 But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." 37 He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. 38 When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.

39 When he had entered, he said to them, "**Why do you make a commotion and wail?** The child is not dead but sleeping." 40 And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" 42 And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. 43 He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat (Mark 5:35-43).

The Lord approached the synagogue leader's house to be confronted by a tumult, an uproar. This was a disturbed crowd roaring with angry revolt. The crowd was wailing too. Unabashed wailing was more common in the ancient world because wailing was not considered a sign of weakness. Rather the absence of wailing when wailing was due was deemed inappropriate, which spawned a lucrative cottage industry of professional wailers (Mark 5:38, James 5:1). And since in the ancient world life was much more wrought with peril, injustice, violence and disease, wailing could be heard pretty much continuously ([Abarim Publications](#)).

The Lord's strategy to respond to their wailing was to assert that *the child is not dead but sleeping*. Their response to His 'why' question and His subsequent assertion was to abuse Him - they jeered and laughed scornfully at Him.

[Petric](#) notes that abusive human behaviour can have various forms, but the motivation is almost always the same: power and control over the victim. Mockery, derision, and insults are powerful weapons in bullying and mobbing. Derision is used to destabilise and humiliate the victim and is often associated with envy and a lack of constructive self-criticism. It is especially dangerous when there is a group of peers, colleagues, or other people, that mock and humiliate together. Mockery can also be used as a method of manipulation with a goal to discredit a rival.

Further, people who make fun of others are insecure. This crowd may have felt threatened by the Lord's strengths and abilities, and so they resort to belittling Him. Relatedly, they were probably jealous of His power and widespread popularity.

## 5. Deafness

43 **Why do you not know what I say? It is because you cannot hear my word.** 44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. 46 Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, **why do you not believe me?** 47 Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God" (John 8:43-47).

The Lord answers His own question here. They did not hear Him, not because He spoke a language foreign to them. No, they had the ability to know or understand what He said, but they preferred not to do so. Why did they not hear? The Lord then asks, *why do you not believe me?* They don't hear because they don't believe. Why? Again, the Lord answers His own question - they don't believe because they are not of God.



Note: Headings in this menu are hyperlinks.  
Click on them and they will take you to the relevant page

\*\*\*\*\*

[Introduction](#)

[Ignorance](#)

[Heart disease](#)

[Hypocrisy](#)

[Mockery](#)

[Deafness](#)

[Bullying](#)

[Anger](#)

[Sleeping](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

11/14

## 6. Bullying

*6 Now while Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, 7 a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of expensive perfumed oil, and she poured it on his head as he was at the table. 8 When the disciples saw this, they became indignant and said, “Why this waste? 9 It could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor!” 10 When Jesus learned of this, he said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a good service into me. 11 For you will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me! 12 When she poured this oil on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. 13 I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her” (Matthew 26:6-13).*

### Simon the leper

Presumably Simon had leprosy at some time in the past, but he had been cleansed. Given the Hebrew Bible's regulations about isolating the leper, he would not have been a leper on the occasion of this gathering. The descriptor “Simon the leper” remained with him to distinguish him from the eight other Simons in the NT. As [West](#) observes, it was appropriate that the One who was rejected by His nation and its rulers (verses 1-5) should be entertained by a man who would have known something of being “despised and rejected of men” himself.

### The ointment

The alabaster box was made of marble-like stone found near Albastron in Egypt, shaped like a flask with a long, sealed neck. The neck would be broken to gain access to the perfume or ointment. This ointment was burdensomely expensive, so precious that its acquisition required a huge burden for the buyer. It was a David said, I will not offer to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing (2 Samuel 24:24)? Indeed, a sacrifice that costs nothing is worth nothing [West](#) .

### The anointing

In Jewish tradition, anointing with oil was associated with hospitality, honor, and consecration, a ritual act to set apart and consecrate priests, prophets, and kings. By anointing Jesus, the woman was acknowledging Him as the Anointed One of God. Also, the extravagant and costly oil demonstrated the woman's immense love and devotion to Jesus, and recognition of His' unique status as the Anointed Prophet and King.

### The Bullying

The disciples became indignant, greatly irritated or vexed at the 'waste' (*apoleia*). This is an awfully strong word meaning an extermination, a loss, a ruin, to destroy. In the NT, *apoleia* refers to the state after death wherein exclusion from salvation is a realised fact. When Jesus learned of this, he said to them, **Why are you bothering this woman?** Or, **Why are you beating this woman?** They were bullying her, to violently take control over her behaviour to force her to do what she didn't want to do (Abarim Publications).

The Lord valued the unidentified woman's sacrifice quite differently. He called it good, a beautiful act of devotion and service into Him, not just on Him externally, touching the core of His being. Why? In Jesus' time, Jews anointed the body after death to prepare it for burial, not before. But, this woman recognised that there would be no point in anointing the Lord after His death, like some women were preparing to (Luke 23:56; 24:1), because she looked forward to His resurrection as the incorruptible, anointed King.

Accordingly, the Lord's commendation of her was the highest of all the acts recorded in the New Testament. Moreover, His words of appreciation of her service have come true, as her act of devotion has come down to us in the gospel record. We might well say that the hand of the Master has erected a memorial to her which shall never perish, though much else might be forgotten ([West](#)).



## 7. Anger

**Note: Headings in this menu are hyperlinks.  
Click on them and they will take you to the relevant page**

\*\*\*\*\*

[Introduction](#)

[Ignorance](#)

[Heart disease](#)

[Hypocrisy](#)

[Mockery](#)

[Deafness](#)

[Bullying](#)

[Anger](#)

[Sleeping](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

12/14



*19 Hasn't Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law! Why do you want to kill me?" The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is trying to kill you?" 21 Jesus replied, "I performed one miracle and you are all amazed. 22 However, because Moses gave you the practice of circumcision... you circumcise a male child on the Sabbath. 23 But if a male child is circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses is not broken, why are you angry with me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? 24 Do not judge according to external appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:19-24).*

So, putting the two questions alongside each other it's clear that anger is the cause of the desire to kill. Just as it was with Cain (Genesis 4). 'Kill' (*apokteino*) means to condemn to death, rather than to actually kill. It's the formal and procedural act of declaring the death penalty, but does not describe the act of making someone dead ([Abarim Publications](#)).

The crowd's response to the Lord's first question was "*You have a demon! Who is trying to kill you?*" "To have" in English mostly emphasises possession and control of external things, but in Greek, (*echo*) mostly describes the set of features that collectively define identity. When someone "has" something, that something helps to determine who that person is, what his past might have looked like, and what his future might be all about. It sums up the substance of one's reality.

'Demon' (*daimonion*) are entities considered independent, with private wills and intents. The badness of a demon lies not in its essential constitution but in its perceived autonomy ([Abarim Publications](#)). So, the crowds were saying in anger, that the hallmark of Jesus was His independence from God, and from Moses' law, and was just doing His 'own thing'. Accordingly, the Lord challenged them to not judge according to external appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.

*"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4, 22:7, 26:14).*

*9 I was convinced that it was necessary to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus the Nazarene. 10 Not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons in Jerusalem by the authority I received from the chief priests, but I also cast my vote against them when they were sentenced to death. 11 Often in all the synagogues I made them pay the price, forcing them to blaspheme. Because I was so furiously enraged at them, I went to persecute them even in foreign cities (Acts 26:9-11).*

Saul gives the meaning of angry persecution in his own words. He was hostile to Jesus, imprisoned the Christians, voted for their deaths, forced them to blaspheme, was furiously enraged at them, pursuing them in foreign countries. To persecute the Christians was to persecute Jesus Himself.

The light of the glory of God from Heaven forced Saul to the ground, and from the light came the voice of God with the tumultuous question: "*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*" Saul thought his task was to destroy the Christians thereby defending God's name. How could he then be persecuting the Lord? That didn't make sense, so he asked that the speaker to identify himself.

To hear the heavenly voice say, "I am Jesus" (Acts 9:7), must have been like an earthquake, theologically, for Saul. After all, he knew that Jesus was dead and buried, but no, Jesus had risen! As Pett put it, the conclusion smote him with irresistible force. Stephen had been right after all when he had spoken of seeing the Lord Jesus in His glory. In a blinding flash Saul was being made to face up with the One against Whom he was venting his anger and hatred, the One in Whom these people he was persecuting believed. His opposition to Jesus crumbled at His feet in the Syrian dirt.

**Note: Headings in this menu are hyperlinks.  
Click on them and they will take you to the relevant page**

\*\*\*\*\*

[Introduction](#)

[Ignorance](#)

[Heart disease](#)

[Hypocrisy](#)

[Mockery](#)

[Deafness](#)

[Bullying](#)

[Anger](#)

[Sleeping](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

13/14



*39 And He came out and went as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. 40 Now when He arrived at the place, He said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” 41 And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, 42 saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me, yet not My will, but Yours be done.” 43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently, and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. 45 And when He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, 46 and said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise up and pray that you may not enter into temptation” (Luke 22:39-46).*

The Gethsemane experience for the Lord was draining, and He need heavenly help. An angel came to invigorate Him, to strengthen Him because He was engaged in contest. Was it a duel between two competing wills, His own and His Father's, that made Him sweat clots of blood?

On finishing his praying, He found His disciples sleeping from sorrow, temporarily unaware of the reality around them. He instructed them pray to preserve them from entering the probing examination that was near at hand, because while He was speaking there was an advancing crowd of chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him. He said to them, *this is your hour, and the power of darkness*. Of course, darkness is the absence of light. Light is substantial, but darkness is not. Light comes from a source, but darkness does not. Light consists of colours, but darkness does not. Light conveys information, but darkness does not. Light gives life (John 1:4), and darkness does not. Light and darkness relate like fullness and emptiness, and both stem from the same Creator (Isaiah 45:7)([Abarim Publications](#)).

Sometimes darkness is not the result of a thing being dark, but rather of an inability of an observer to recognise light, which was the case of the advancing crowd. The power of darkness had arrived, and it would provide a probing test of the disciples and their loyalty to Jesus. They failed the test, for *all the disciples left him and fled* (Mathew 27:56). In a sudden departure out of fear, the disciple took flight to escape from Gethsemane. It pays to stay awake and alert.

### Conclusion

My takeaways from this MyQ&A paper are:

1. With a couple of exceptions, the Lord's 'why' questions were not answered.
2. The Lord challenged the ignorance of those who should have known, under-informed faith that caused fear and carnal reasonings and worry. Spiritual heart disease that caused evil thoughts, fear and hypocrisy that gave rise to a two-tiered system of justice, clouded judgment, and back scratchers. Mockery, spiritual deafness and bullying. Anger that produced the death of Christ and believers. Sleeping that means disciples are unaware of the testing and probing reality around them that leads to a failure of loyalty. Stay awake and alert and pray.
3. There were two types of people that the Lord challenged equally. About half the total were the believing disciples, and the other half were the unbelieving Jewish leaders and the crowds that followed them. Which ever group we find ourselves in, the Lord puts His finger on enough wrong in our characters and behaviour to challenge. Will we respond in the way that He would want?

**Note: Headings in this menu are hyperlinks.  
Click on them and they will take you to the relevant page**

\*\*\*\*\*

[Introduction](#)

[Ignorance](#)

[Heart disease](#)

[Hypocrisy](#)

[Mockery](#)

[Deafness](#)

[Bullying](#)

[Anger](#)

[Sleeping](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

**14/14**



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